'IN A WORLD OF THEIR OWN': MEMORY AND IDENTITY IN THE FISHING SONGS OF A MIGRANT EWE COMMUNITY IN GHANA

by

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Abstract. The musical traditions of the southern Ewe of Ghana; particularly the Anlo, have been subject to a substantial amount of research. Existing research has focused on Anlo musical traditions as practiced in its original context. Comparably little is known about these musical traditions as performed by Anlo migrants living and working among a linguistically and culturally different ethnic group. Furthermore, fishing songs of the Anlo, even at home, have escaped most academic research. In this article, I address both shortcomings by focusing on Anlo fishing songs as performed by a migrant Anlo community living among the Fante in Cape Coast. Employing a variety of qualitative research techniques such as in-depth interviews, participant observation and a two- way inter-subjectivity, I explore the extent to which these fishing songs serve purposes beyond their perceived role of accompanying and easing work. Specifically, I examine how the fishing songs of the migrant Ewe community provide a solid basis for negotiating individual and collective memories and identities.

Keywords. Music, identity, memory, migration, fishermen songs, Anlo, Ewe, Fante.

Introduction

In Ghana, the year of 1983 has received perhaps the most negative and dramatic descriptions ever: "The harshest year in Ghana's modern history… the most devastating year in our collective memory" (Gyan-Apenteng 2013: 1), "one year Ghanaians won't mind blotting out of history… 1983 started an avalanche of woes and thrust Ghana into the abysmal recesses of poverty" (Ofori-Atta 2013: 1, 3). These descriptions, which are a few out of many emotionally-intense and trenchant expressions, bear a clear testimony to the magnitude of the chain of events that found their climax in this infamous year. Politically, Ghana was yet to find its feet after the series of coup d'états between 1966 when Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first president was overthrown, and 1981. This chaotic period of fifteen years had six successive governments, a decline in education and the fleeing of many Ghanaians abroad, mostly to neighboring west African countries.

It was in the very trying circumstances of 1983 that Kwami Eyram Axovi, the leader of the migrant fishing group that is the focus of this article, was compelled by further events, to leave his hometown in Keta in the Volta Region of Ghana, and move to Cape Coast in the Central Region to live with his maternal uncle. While he was sad

to leave many things behind, the music, which he had always sung with his father and his kinsfolk as they engaged in various fishing activities, was one asset he would firmly hold on to as he moved to his new settlement. The value of this music to him, as it was and continues to be for the other fishermen, is immeasurable. In this article, I shed light on this music that accompanies the work of Ghanaian seine fishermen. I first provide a general overview of the songs of the fishing culture in Ghana and then using the fishing group of Axovi as a case study I describe the music as practiced within this migrant community. In so doing I focus primarily on how memory and identification manifest in the fishing songs of the migrant fishermen. The selection of Axovi's fishing group for this study was based on three main considerations. Axovi is one of the few people in the migrant community whose name is readily mentioned in relation to fishing songs. The group is unique in the sense that its members are fairly representative of the major characteristics of the fishermen in the migrant community, and Axovi, like other members in this group, has a rather interesting life story that exemplifies various aspects of meaning in the fishing songs.

Singing-fishing culture in Ghana

Ghana's coastal belt, a stretch of land of about 528 km along the shores of the Gulf of Guinea, is populated by many communities whose major occupation is fishing by traditional means. There are about 200 Ghanaian coastal communities that directly depend on fish for their livelihoods (Mensah and Antwi, 2002). A common form of artisanal (canoe) fishing practiced by these fishermen is seine-net fishing; also known as dragnet fishing. Two common variations of this are the *adii* (where they cast the nets on the high seas and pull the catch onto their canoes before returning to the shore), and the *twiwee* (where they cast the net in a loop on the sea, return to shore and then pull the nets with the help of long ropes to get the catch ashore). A unique feature of this fishing tradition is its inextricable relationship with singing; a relationship which exploits the power of music to enhance productivity at work. Many of the gruelling fishing activities such as propelling the canoe against the pushing waves, casting and hauling the seines ashore, among other things, require the coordinated efforts of several people.

Music, in the form of group singing, helps to synchronize these individual efforts and increases the cumulative outcome. As Nunoo observes, these "fishermen sing to the movement of the paddles on their way to the deep seas for the catch, they sing as they return to the shore, and they sing as they mend their nets" (1974: 34). Fiagbedzi (1997) refers to the songs for rowing among the Ewe as *futuhawo/to̲dziha* or *vukuhawo*, and the songs for dragging the nets as *kahehawo.*

On the surface, it appears that the sole purpose of the songs is to provide important cues for the workers to synchronize their efforts and ease their labour. In his extensive studies of Sukuma labor associations Gunderson succinctly observes that "the primary function of music is to make the work easier" (2010: 11).True as this might be, I find the other functions equally relevant and not necessarily auxiliary to the primary function of easing work. A deeper focus on fishermen songs reveals a plethora of invaluable

functions that are likely to elude the perception of the casual observer. Among other aspects, the singing helps the fishermen to endure the hardship, distracts their attention from the hard labour and makes the time pass quickly. Singing also mutually ignites their spirits and keeps them united, giving them room to voice their concerns and express their views on sensitive issues. Further to this, singing attracts extra hands from watching crowds and pushes the very frontiers of their creative imaginations. In addition, singing draws potential buyers to their camps and provides a safe-haven; a cherished space for negotiating the complex nexus of politics, identity, religion, gender, social inequality and so on.[1]

The Ghanaian seine fishermen who practice the singing tradition along the coasts are geographically distributed within four administrative regions of the country: Volta, Greater Accra, Central and Western regions. Within the borders of each of these regions are bearers of distinct cultural forms and languages who constitute a dominant ethnic group. These are the Ewe, Ga, Fante and Nzema/Ahanta. Seated among the distinct dominant groups are also minority groups who have migrated for various reasons, principally economic. The fishing songs of one of the migrant groups, the Ewe migrant community living among the Fante, is the focus of this article.

The migrant Ewe fishing community in Cape Coast

The Ewe migrant fishing community where data for this article was collected is referred to as the Duakor village. It is located in Cape Coast; about a 4 km stretch of land between the University of Cape Coast and Elmina. They migrated from the Anlo/Keta area to their current location (a distance of about 300 km) between 1958 and 1962 (Akrofi and Kofie 2007).[2]

The settlement, which had about 500 inhabitants and up to 50 households in 2007, has increased in recent times to about 1320 inhabitants. Although they are mostly known for fishing, many of the inhabitants are also employed in various capacities at the University of Cape Coast and in the towns of Cape Coast as well as Elmina. The fact that many of the current inhabitants were born in Cape Coast and can speak *Fante* fluently, has not changed the reality that the major language spoken among the people in this community is Ewe.[3] They speak Fante only if necessary for purposes of trade or for communicating with non-Ewe speakers.

Duakor fishermen specialize in the *twiwee* form of artisanal fishing. They are believed to have introduced it to the shores of Cape Coast. Most of the fishermen here, as is the case in many of the coastal towns, do not own their own canoes. Vercruijsse (1979) has observed that only one out of four or five fishermen among these small-scale fishermen owned a canoe. The few fishermen who own canoes; like Axovi, are therefore

[1] These functions of fishing songs are summarized from my extensive fieldwork and interviews with many fishermen between 2013 and 2015.

[2] See the arrow in the map indicating their movement (see Figure 1).

[3] *Fante* is both a name for the people who constitute the dominant ethnic group in Cape Coast as well as for their language.

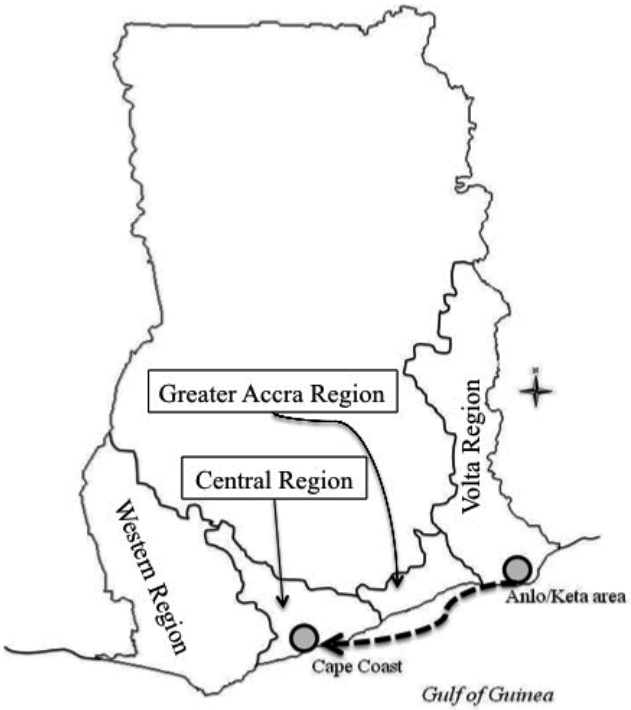

Figure 1. Map of Ghana showing the four coastal regions as well as points of origin and destination of the migrated group. Map by author.

accorded some level of respect. Each canoe has its own distinct crew of fishermen ranging from four people in the smaller canoes to about 30 in the bigger vessels (Addo 2014). They help each other in pulling both the canoes and the fish ashore once the casting of the net is complete. This activity is replete with a medley of enchanting tunes, often in the call and response form. Members in a crew identify themselves with a common name or phrase that usually stems from their philosophical views of life or belief system. Names or phrases are also reflected in the inscriptions and paintings that are made on the canoe. The writing on the canoe in Figure 2 (*edzila eyae kpɔne* meaning 'the one who seeks, finds') illustrates this behaviour.

Axovi's crew, for example, refers to themselves as the *Shatta boys*. The 'Shatta' is an adapted spelling of the English word, 'shatter'. The name implies that they are a formidable group that will literally break into pieces every obstacle that comes their way. The group of six is comparably younger to the cohort of other fishing groups in Duakor. They are vibrant and comparably less conservative. Their renditions of the fishing songs during work are spirited and the accompanying mélange of rather interesting bodily movements never fail to attract attention. The synchronized hand clapping, meticulous leg movements, skilful leaning on the ropes, and sporadic, individual dance moves are a few examples. During my fieldwork, I made many on-site recordings of the *Shatta boys* in action. I also took them to a professional recording studio at the University of Cape Coast where

Figure 2: Example of an inscription on a canoe. Photo by author.

they sang two, one-hour medleys of fishing songs. Recording in the studio allowed for a 'cleaner' version of the songs devoid of the din that comes with their work at the shore. The examples of fishing songs that are referred to in this article are from these recordings.

General features of the fishing songs

The text below is a transcription of one of the fishing songs sung by the *Shatta boys*:

Ewe	**Translation in English**
Ame si ƒo detsi vivi mate ŋu aklɔ asi ko adzo le	The one who prepares a sumptuous meal
Egbɔ maɖɔmaɖɔkpɔe o Wobe kutrikuku	Does not just wash his hands and walk away
Metsonu ye nye dzidzedzekpɔkpɔ. Ne ɖee	"Success should be the outcome of hard-work," they say.
Wònye nyateƒea manye afi sia manɔ egbe o	If that were true, this is not where I should be
Mele dzamevui dzem zã kple keli	I keep toiling night and day
Gake nyemate ŋu atɔ asi naneke dzi be eya ye	But I have very little to show for it
Nye viɖe si mekpɔ tso nye kutrikuku me o	'Monkey dey work, baboon dey chop'
Kese wɔ dɔ, fiẽ ɖu	Pick up your nets, get your paddles
Tsɔ wò ɖɔ kple ɖɔkplɔti	To the sea, to the sea
Miayi tɔ dzi, Miayi tɔ dzi	A bad job is better than none at all
Afi aɖe kpɔkpɔ nyo wu yame kpɔkpɔ	

The first two lines refer to a common traditional proverb, which literally implies that when one has worked hard on something, she or he must have a taste of the outcome.

Lines 3 and 4 point to an anomaly in the community between 'what ought to be' and 'what is', that is, the unfairness in society. In lines 5 and 6, the singer places himself within the context provided in the first four lines by pointing out how his propitious yet gruelling daily routine has earned him practically nothing worthwhile. He supports his claim in the next line where he quotes a popular metaphor which highlights the social inequality within set structures. As explained earlier, many of these fishermen are not canoe owners. They have entered into some kind of contractual agreement with the owners, most of whom know very little about fishing. When the catch came ashore, these canoe owners were entitled to bigger portions than the fishermen. According to Vercruijsse, the "fishermen give one fifth to one quarter of their catch to the owner of the boat" (1979: 95).[4] The remainder of the catch is then distributed among the crew as well as the people who are active in pulling it ashore. In all likelihood, the referent of the 'baboon' in line 7 of the text is the owner of the fishing equipment. In spite of the injustice, lines 8 and 9 signal the singer's acquiesce to the exigencies of his reality; consoled by the fact that 'a bad job is better than none at all' (line 10).

In a single breath, this song, like many other songs of the fishermen, stimulates depths of thought. The language is generally cryptic and indirect; employing a number of figurative expressions and literary devices such as metaphors, allusions, anthropomorphisms, intended ambiguities, and so on. Due to this practice in the language, the construction of meaning from the texts of these songs is rather subtle. Similar to Porter's observation in his study of English work songs, in fishing songs "the surface is constantly disrupted by metaphors or symbolic modes which extend the frame of reference to points of conflict and change in society, and thereby totalise the song" (1992: 80).

Apart from the difficulty that arises from the linguistic and literary structures, these fishermen employ a peculiar sub-language; one which I refer to as the 'fisher's tongue'. This sub-language carries most of the lexical words of the Ewe language but also uses a considerable number of borrowed words from other languages such as Fante, English, Ga and Hausa. The borrowing is attributable to years of having to work together in close proximity with people who speak these other languages. The larger distinctive feature of the fisher's tongue lies more in the manner in which the words are articulated than in its lexicon. The manner in which they mention the words and structure phrases makes it quite difficult to understand even for other Ewes who are not fishermen. In general, many words sound muffled, consonants are attenuated or elided, words are deliberately used in contexts which are incongruous to the 'regular' language and many of the borrowed words are (mis)appropriated so that even when one recognizes the language from which the word was borrowed, the words do not necessarily mean the same thing in the 'fisher's tongue.' Furthermore, several words are laden with ambiguities and are often interspersed with their own jargon and a lot of non-lexical vocalizations.[5]

[4] Though this reference is dated, the order has not changed much these days. If the owner of the canoe was also the owner of the fishing net, s/he could claim close to one-third of the catch.

[5] Non-lexical vocalizations are sounds which do not have any meaning in themselves. In the context of song, these words are often used as embellishments or as repetitive response patterns that help to

I speculate that the development of a unique language among the fishermen is a conscious attempt to own their physical and expressive space. For the fishermen, it is quite liberating to build this kind of world where they freely express themselves and vent their emotions without interference. Through code switching it is possible for them to talk about people in their presence without them having the slightest clue that they are the subject of ridicule or conversation. Code switching also helps them to target the recipients of some messages. The shores are open places where anybody can visit at any time. "In Ghana, coastal and fish resources are generally treated as a common property' (Marquette *et al.* 2002: 325), thus, without the fisher's tongue, they have very little privacy.

The difficulty in understanding the language used in the songs of the fishermen undoubtedly posed great methodological challenges to me. It was impossible to transcribe song texts directly. Recorded songs had to be played back to the fishermen for them to recite to me the words in each song, one after the other. Consequently, I had to adopt what Gunderson (2010: 2) describes as a "two-way, inter-subjective research process" where descriptive and evaluative terms were collected and fed back to subsequent interviews for discussions, verifications, clarifications and interpretations. Through this process, it became clear to me that different fishermen singing the same songs occasionally had different interpretations and meanings, sometimes in contrast to the texts of these songs. Such differing views, to paraphrase Gunderson, have the potential to illuminate aspects of deeper meaning. Examples of these differing views are provided later in this article.

While most of the songs are in the form of call-and-response, there are also songs in the cantor-and-chorus style where instead of a fixed repetitive response, the group will sing back exactly what the leader (cantor) sings. At work, anybody in the group can call out a song when one song has gone on for a while. The response parts are usually very simple and rhythmic; having various permutations of '*hmmm*', '*aah*', '*uuh*', and others. This makes it easier for anybody to join in at will. Most of the time, these response parts consist of words which have no specific meanings in themselves. Examples of some recurrent response parts include: *an-ko, kiriba, huh, keleba* and *ma-ako*. It is the response, rather than the calls, that provide any sense of a steady rhythm. The phrasing of the calls is sometimes irregular as people improvise and do word substitutions frequently. In the rest of the article, I use specific examples of Duakor fishing songs to speak to my focus on 'memory' and 'identity'.

On memory in Duakor fishing songs

Frith (1996) postulates that "making music isn't a way of expressing ideas; it is a way of living them" (11). In a way, he is hinting at the ability of music to create idyllic, virtual spaces where cherished memories may be re-created and where aspired states may be realized, albeit temporarily. Deep within the stylistically banal but linguistically

keep the rhythmic flow of the songs. Non-lexical vocalizations have been referred to differently by other writers as 'nonsense syllables', 'unintelligible sounds' and 'vague rhythmic utterances'.

convoluted songs of Duakor fishermen are encoded memories, the value of which can only be seen through the lens of the fishermen themselves. The songs are replete with memories of specific items, places, people and events. While some of these memories may be surmised from specific words or expressions in the lyrics, many others lie beyond what is explicitly mentioned or overtly portrayed in the song itself. This observation finds justification in Baily and Collyer's (2006) observation that "music has a power to evoke memories and capture emotions entirely separate from the lyrical content (or where lyrics are entirely absent)…" (168).

There are shared memories among the fishermen as well as individual memories associated with different songs. Due to these associations, different songs have different levels of meaning for different fishermen although they sing together in a way that makes such differences indecipherable on the surface. This came out clearly only during my individual interviews and focus group discussions with the members of Axovi's crew. For example, one of their songs ends with the line: "I will rather wear my Rawlings chain than to stare at the walls of jail."

Two of the younger crew members told me that the line brings back memories of a big silvery necklace that came into fashion in the late 1990s when Jerry John Rawlings was president of Ghana. This necklace was cheap and considered inferior in quality. The meaning of the line for them is that they would rather wear that necklace, which they could afford, than to aim for more expensive ones which will have them indulge in questionable activities that could send them to jail.

One crew member thought the 'Rawlings chain' was a metaphor for the hardships of life; an albatross around the neck which the song was admonishing them to endure rather than to participate in dubious acts which would make them rich overnight and risk being arrested. Other, more insightful memories associated with this line of the song was given by Axovi and three of the older crew members. They spoke about how this line in the song conjured up memories of the period described in the introduction of this article. Fl. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings, who had been retired from the military because of an attempted insurrection in 1979, led another insurrection to overthrow the Limann-led People's National Party government on the last day of 1981.The military rule, coupled with the intense famine in 1983, led to the coinage of the term, 'Rawlings chain'. According to Gyan-Apenteng (2013), the term was used to "describe the deep gorges formed around people's necks when their emaciated skin exposed protruding collar bones" (3). It was a symbol of extreme hunger, depravation and disease. The meaning of the line to these older ones was that they will rather stay hungry and free than steal and endure the solitary confinement of jail. Having illustrated that the same song can stir up different memories among the fishermen, I will focus now on the memories of Axovi in the following example:

Ewe	**Translation in English**
Ʋu yaa le 'gbetɔ me a	The blood in human
Ʋua menye fefe o	Isn't for fun
Ne ewɔ dɔa,	If you work,
Elebe nakpɔ nu vi aɖe	You need to get something
Miede dzi hã, miekpɔe o	We went up but got nothing
Miede anyi hã, miekpɔe o	We went down too but got nothing
Amevuvɔ lem hee	I feel lonely
Ʋugoviawo, amevuvɔ lem hee	Vugo's children, I feel lonely
Ameketɔwo, woxɔ sebla ɖe miaŋu	The enemies are the authorities
Yae amevuvɔ le ye loo.	So, I feel lonely

This is one of the songs that holds immeasurable depths of meaning for Axovi. His memories with this song are both intra- and extra-musical. While the words of the song remind him of specific people from his childhood years, the very rendition of the song, beyond the words, also invoke strong emotions tied up with notable events from his past. Juslin and Västfjäll (2008a) refer to this as 'episodic memory' in which "musical experiences may be regarded as markers of important events in life. Some events may be permanently fixed in memory; they mark transition from one phase of life into another" (Ruud 1997:10). Born in 1967 in Keta, Axovi's early years were times of great political upheaval in Ghana. Times were hard but the large family in which he grew up was supportive of one another. He was the first of the five children and he had eight other siblings from the two other wives of his father. He dropped out of school when he was only ten and assisted his father with fishing activities on a full-time basis to help provide for the younger siblings. For him, it was a fair price to spend time with his father who was his hero in every way. It was his dream to inherit his father's canoe someday and command the level of respect that came with it.

By the age of twelve, he was familiar with the fishing routines and with the song repertoire. He recounts times when his main role, at this young age, would be to lead the singing as they rowed to sea for fishing and how he would provide rhythmic accompaniments on a bamboo for hours as they hauled fishing seines ashore. It gave him a sense of place and made him the favourite of his father's children. His greatest moments as a child in the midst of all the events described earlier, was seeing the light in his father's eyes as they sang along with other kinsfolk during work. Sometime in late 1982 his father disappeared inexplicably. Life was never the same afterwards. The father's canoe was taken over by the father's mean, elderly brother who had no regard for anyone's wellbeing. And at sixteen, when he was leaving for Cape Coast, his mother was completely shattered by the deaths of two of his younger siblings and the loss of her husband.

In his new environment, he would spend time alone at the shore singing the songs that reminded him of the memorable past. He was hopeful that at one of those times, he would see his father walking towards him, but this never occurred. It was not a time of mobile phones when he could call his mother to find out about home. The last four lines of the song above remind him of his mother and siblings, the separation from them and how his father's brother who inherited the canoe had maltreated them. The first six lines of

the song reminded him specifically of his father: "There was never a time that we went to sea with my father and came back empty-handed" (Axovi interview 4 January 2015). His father had a gift for identifying which part of the sea would provide a catch. "He often said he would teach me. He often said I would understand when the time came but I am not half the fisherman that my father was" (Axovi interview 4 January 2015). The place of the music in invoking Axovi's deep memories is summarized by Lomax (1959: 29) who avers that:

> The primary effect of music is to give the listener a feeling of security, for it symbolizes the place where he was born, his earliest childhood satisfactions, his religious experience, his pleasure in community doings, his courtship and his work – all or any of these personality shaping experiences.

Within the world of these songs, Axovi, like the other fishermen, is able to reach the practically unimaginable and re-live cherished experiences from his past. The role of the music then, having moved from one place to serve such functions in another place is what Bohlman (2011) refers to as 'aesthetic agency'. The music serves as a medium for "reaching the unreachable" and "laying claim to the ephemeral" (Bohlman 2011: 150). In the words of Ruud, the music provides "the feeling of something indefinite and indescribable, something beyond the limits of language" (1997: 11).

On identity in Duakor fishing songs

Structurally, Duakor fishermen songs bear unmistakable signatures of southern Ewe Anlo musical traditions such as the use of cross-rhythms, pentatonic scales, harmonies in parallel fourths and fifths and call-and-response forms. Anku (2009: 39) emphasizes that "though the Ewe are linguistically homogeneous, the same cannot be said of their music". He goes further to note that the Anlo "maintain a pentatonic singing style typical of the Yoruba and the Anexor of the present Notsie region, and use cylindrical 'barrel' drums" (39). Without a doubt, Anlo music is among Ghana's most researched and most published. Various aspects of Anlo music such as its music and dance traditions (Ladzekpo 1971, Younge 2011), structural organization of drumming (Anku 2009, Pantaleoni 1972), history (Agbodeka 1997, Gbolonyo 2005), singing styles and expressive forms (Agawu 2016, Avorgbedor 2001), communal organization and performance practice (Amoaku 1975, Dor 2004), critique of form and structure (Agawu 2003, Fiagbedzi 2009) and so on, have received scholarly attention. The point of this article is not to exhaust these characteristics that make Anlo music identifiable, but to demonstrate that through these characteristics, Duakor fishermen have maintained a musical identity, which is distinct from that of the Fante who constitutes the cultural majority in Cape Coast.

In 2007, Akrofi and Kofie presented findings from their study on the role of music in preserving the cultural identity of Duakor fishermen. I address three of their major findings in the light of my current study. To begin with, the authors found that "the music of the local Cape Coast fishermen has not influenced the music of the Duakor fishermen" (97). An analysis of my data shows that while this may have been the case during the time of their study, it is no more strictly the case. From the many years of working together along the same shore, Fante influence is traceable in the songs of contemporary Duakor fishermen. Consider the following text in one of the recordings

made by the *Shatta* boys:

Fante and Ewe	**English translation**
Nyame wɔhɔ (Fante)	There is a God
Eee Nyame wɔhɔ (Fante)	Eee there is a God
Nyateƒe (Ewe) Nyame wɔhɔ (Fante)	Truly, there is a God
(A) Mawu ga li (Ewe)	A big living God

The song is a mixture of both Ewe and Fante languages; in fact there are more Fante than Ewe words. This is one example of a song that shows linguistic borrowing. Other songs include Ga, English and Hausa words. It must be stated that these bi-lingual songs constitute the minority of the repertoire. It is significant to note that the music culture of the Duakor fishermen is not as immune to the influence of other music cultures as might be portrayed in previous research. Although the song above has a good number of Fante words, the peculiar pentatonic melody and the tonal organization of parallel octaves and the occasional cadential parallel fourths and fifths make it stylistically analogous to Anlo Ewe singing traditions. See a transcription of this song below in Figure 3. The clappers and shakers provided the rhythmic timeline for the medley of songs performed in the studio. At work, the patterns played on the clappers (as seen in the transcription) are usually played with sticks on a piece of bamboo or on the body of the canoe itself. Melodic variations often occur when particular songs are repeated.

Furthermore, the authors note that "Duakor fishermen's songs are unique and peculiar to them and are not known by other people, not even other Ewe residents in Cape Coast who are not fishermen" (97). This means that they are in a world of their own in musical terms. While my data seems to support this finding, there is a slight modification to this general claim. The following song is one of many that I played to some southern Ewes who are not fishermen:

Ewe	**Translation in English**
Ede biã, agɔ biã	The palm-nut is ripe, the date-palm is also ripe
Gbeɖe, agɔ meɖaa ami o	But never can date-palm nut produce oil
Ʋaliƒo do hamelo be yele fu dzi	The vulture says "I am suffering"
Yemekpɔ yelɔla aɖeke o	"I have no lover"
Paradiso, yelɔlawo sugbɔ le	My lovers are many in Paradise
'Meyawo kpe fu yaatsa	People suffer in vain
Be yeayɔ wo ne woawɔ ɖagbe nawo	For the sake of others
Na agbemɔwo navu nawo	For their salvation
Maɖe tɔmelã ɖe gota	I want to go fishing
Fu nagblẽ, agbo nagblẽ	From the sea, the deep seas
Na miawo miakpɔ dzidzɔ	For our happiness
Nye se be migaflum o	"Don't confuse me" I say
Filɔsɔfa yae menye	I am a philosopher
Migaflum o loo, nye menye movitɔ o	Don't confuse me, I am not stupid
Dzidzɔm loo; mado yevugbe de ha me	I'm just excited; let me sing in English
Menye miadzum mele o	This is no insult
"Masta prɔmis neva fel"	Master, promise never fails
"I dey gɔn, gudubai"	"I dey gone" goodbye
"I dey catch, I dey down"	"I dey catch, I dey down"

The response was the same in every case. None of them knew any of the songs although they clearly recognized the style and could identify with it. A tenable reason could be the difficulty of the language as discussed earlier. The modification I present to this general claim is that, the full repertoire of Duakor fishing songs now contain 'general knowledge' songs that are known and sung by the Fante fishermen even if it is only a pastiche. The point is, that while the Duakor fishing songs may not be known to people outside the fishing community, some of their songs are known by the Fante fishermen who work with them along the shore.

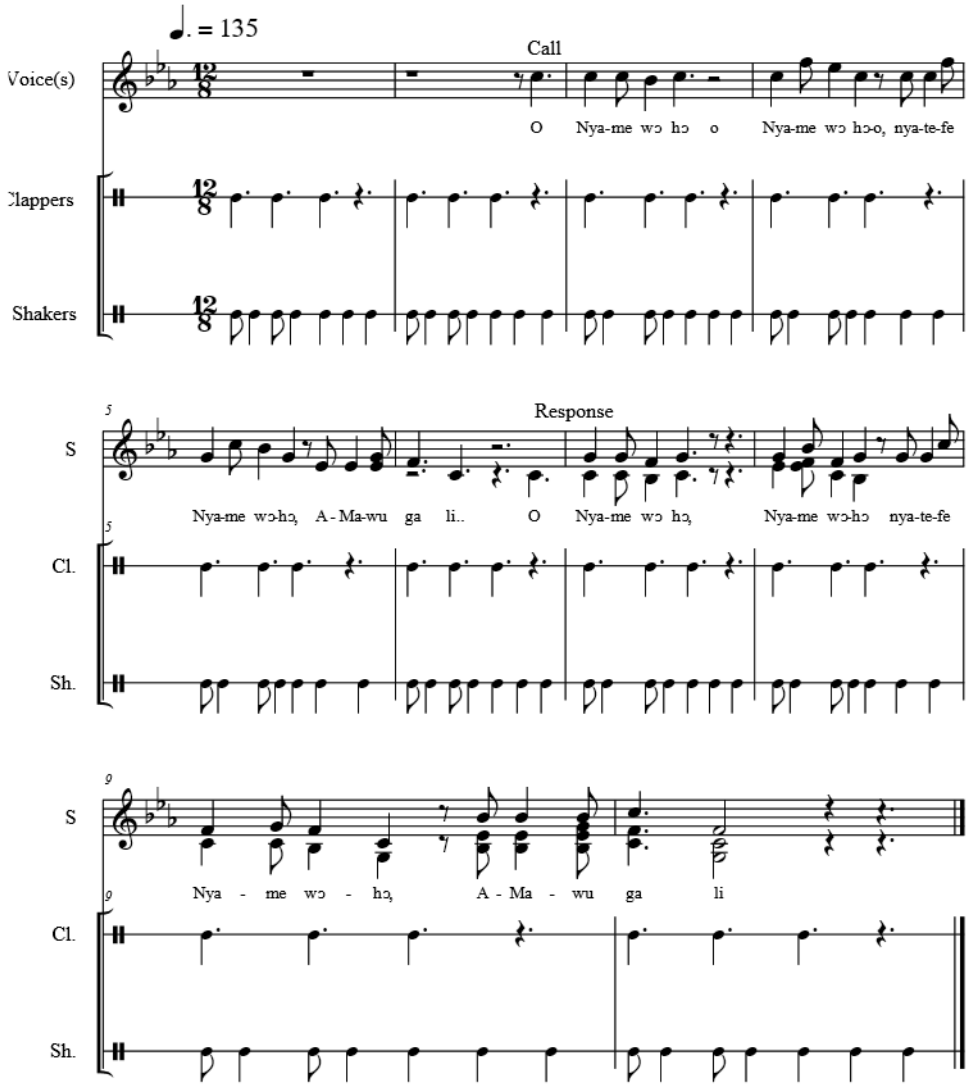

Figure 3: An example of a fishing song by the Shatta boys. Transcription by author.

Finally, the authors note that "Duakor fishermen's songs are/were not composed by any of their members". That "the songs were brought from their homeland and their preservation is a psychological means of maintaining their links with their roots, even when current musical practices in their homeland have changed in certain ways" (97). It is clear from the first two points that Duakor fishermen songs have clearly seen and embraced some changes. There have been noticeable additions to the original repertoire which was brought from their homeland. The changes include the borrowing of new words from other languages (as may be seen in the two immediate song texts above), the substitution of some words in old melodies with new words, the addition of new songs brought by later immigrants from the homeland, the adoption of some popular music tunes (usually highlife) and most importantly, the composition of new songs by some of their own members. The following song is an example of a song that was composed by Axovi:

Ewe	**Translation in English**
Ne ame aɖe fifi a,	If anyone has stolen (something)
Woato nyateʃe	S/He should say the truth
Ne ame aɖe hã mɔ amesrɔ a,	If anyone has committed adultery
Woato nyateʃe	S/He should say the truth
Fifia, mieva do ɖe Gelenu	Now, we are at "Gelenu"
Blewu, blewu, blewu	Gentle, gentle, gentle
Kofitse le mɔ dzi	*Kofitse* is on his way
Zãzelawo ʃe mo adze go	Witty ones will be disgraced

These observations speak to the fluidity of musical categories (Silver, Lee and Childress 2016) and the inevitable co-influences that come with mixing or contact with others. These observations also imply that identity is not a fixed entity but something that is in a constant state of construction. This is not to suggest in any way that Duakor fishermen have lost their musical identity; far from that. Their relatively peaceful co-habitation with the Fante fishermen over the years has made them comparably less defensive and less conservative. The Fante fishermen sometimes work with them on the same canoes and they assist one another in pulling the nets ashore. Since the music accompanies the work, it is only natural that such changes would occur with time. As Baily and Collyer (2006) point out, "spatial and cultural proximity between the place and culture of origin and the place and culture of settlement are likely to have important implications for what happens through music in the migration situation" (172). In spite of this, it must be stressed that the musical structure of the Duakor remains significantly different to that of the Fante fishermen and sets the two groups apart. Fante fishing songs generally employ a heptatonic scale, simple duple and quadruple time signatures and a different timeline to the one shown in the transcription above of the Ewe song.

Conclusion

It is difficult to write all there is about the songs of this migrant fishing group in a single article. There are many more elements that may be understood through a careful study of their song texts, performance and structure of the songs. The songs provide, among

others, a safe space for them to negotiate their unfolding identity, commentary on social issues, settling their differences, maximize their work output, entertain themselves, explore their creative potentials, build new relationships and strengthen existing social bonds. While Duakor fishermen have held on firmly to the musical traditions they brought with them from their homeland, unavoidable circumstances have brought changes to this tradition. The changes have been mostly manifested through people like Axovi who are progressive, in terms of preparedness to embrace inevitable change, and creative and expressive, in terms of the ability to skilfully modify existing art forms and create new ones.

The relationship between music, memory and identity has been discussed as they pertain to the songs of Duakor fishermen. The value and meaning of the songs to the fishermen lie not only in the lyrics and the musical structures, but also deeply in the associated individual and collective memories. The songs of Duakor fishermen, as exemplified through the Shatta boys, contribute in no meagre ways to expanding the dialogue on music, memory and identity.

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