

**Transforming Customary System in Ghana: Women's Participation in Small-Scale Gold Mining Activities in the Talensi District**

by

Elizabeth Nana Mbrah Koomson

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
(Social Work and Anthropology)  
in the University of Michigan  
2017

Doctoral Committee:

Professor Emerita Letha Chadiha, Co-Chair

Professor Stuart Kirsch, Co-Chair

Associate Professor Emerita Edith Lewis

Professor Elisha Renne

Associate Professor Trina Shanks

Elizabeth Nana Mbrah Koomson

[nanambra@umich.edu](mailto:nanambra@umich.edu)

ORCID NUMBER: 0000-0002-6354-3606

©Elizabeth N Koomson 2017

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I dedicate this research to the women and men in the small-scale gold mining community in the Talensi district in Ghana, especially to the women at Kejetia, who contributed to this research in many ways, revealing to me the many challenges to women's efforts in the small-scale mining industry. From my first day in Kejetia, the miners received me with kindness, opened their homes to me, and shared with me their personal and difficult lives. I am very grateful and humbled by the way women willingly allowed me entry into their private spaces, the ease with which we have developed lasting friendships, and supported me throughout my fieldwork. I am especially thankful to Monica for sharing her one-bedroom space, introducing me to her friends, and explaining my project to those who were amazed that a fellow Ghanaian woman would spend one year in their community to collect data for research. Kejetia, *bopowha wo mpohoya*.

To the staff of the Upper East Minerals Commission and the Talensi District Assembly, I am grateful for welcoming me into your offices and granting me interviews, in spite of your busy schedule. I am particularly indebted to the regional director of the Minerals Commission and the district planner of the Assembly. Patrick Awuni of the Talensi District Assembly deserves special mention for continuing to answer my questions and sending me maps several months after I had left Kejetia. To my friend, David, who introduced me to the Minerals Commission and travelled with me between Tongo, the district capital, and Kejetia during the nights as well as accompany me to visit other communities. I am also thankful to my roommate in Tongo, Hideco, who was a volunteer of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), for sharing stories with

me about Japan and your experience in the Talensi district in the evenings. Thank you for all of that.

In particular, I am very grateful to my dissertation committee: Letha Chadiha, Stuart Kirsch, Edith Lewis, Elisha Renne, and Trina Shanks. You brought into the dissertation useful unique experiences. A special thank you goes to Letha and Stuart for your time, support, and dedication to all the phases of my dissertation: pre-fieldwork, fieldwork, and writing. The monthly reports during my fieldwork produced guidance and focus for me. I would also like to thank the University of Michigan Rackham Graduate School, the Department of Anthropology and the School of Social Work who supported me throughout the years with funding. I am grateful to the former doctoral program directors of the School of Social Work, Berit Ingersoll-Dayton, whose smile was always welcoming and good advice guided me as well as the Department of Anthropology, Bruce Mannheim, whose support helped me to navigate the two programs. My special thanks goes to Todd Huynh for constantly reminding me to meet my doctoral requirements and answering all my questions, as well as Debbie Fitch for the support you offered throughout my doctoral degree. I also thank Laura Thomas for helping with all the bureaucratic tasks. My special thank you goes to Rosemary Sarri of the University of Michigan Institute of Social Research for supporting my work and ensuring my children's academic success. I am also thankful to Phyllis Stillman and Danielle LaVaque-Manty for supporting with editing. I am very grateful to the University of Michigan Center for the Education of Women for the generous fund you provided, especially for writing the dissertation as well as the African Studies Center.

Finally, to my husband Paa-Kofi and children Shirley, Sheila, Tawiah, and Ekow thank you for the love, guidance, encouragement, and financial support. You have made this work possible. I say “Ayekoo” to you all.

## Table of Contents

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES .....</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES .....</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>LIST OF ACRONYMS .....</b>	<b>xii</b>
<b>ABSTRACT.....</b>	<b>xiii</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION: SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL APPROACHES TO GENDER ROLES AND ACCESS TO RESOURCES .....</b>	<b>1</b>
My Family Story .....	1
Overview of Dissertation .....	2
Gender Roles: The Ghanaian Situation.....	8
Gender Roles among the Talensi .....	15
Women’s Struggle to Access Resources.....	16
Interconnection between Social Work and Anthropology .....	20
Social Work Research, Practice, and Policy .....	20
Conceptual Approaches to Anthropology.....	22
Interdisciplinary Approaches Explored .....	24
Methodology and Research Site .....	28
The Upper East Region of Ghana .....	29
The Talensi District.....	31
History of Talensi District.....	32
Talensi Small-scale Gold Mining Communities.....	34

Anthropological Dissertation Fieldwork in the Talensi Small-scale Mining Communities.....	36
Social and Demographic Characteristics of the Talensi Women Miners .....	41
Chapter Overview .....	41
<b>CHAPTER ONE: GENDER REPRODUCTION: WORK PATTERNS AND SOCIAL MECHANISMS OF TALENSI WOMEN IN SMALL-SCALE GOLD MINING IN GHANA</b> .....	<b>49</b>
Operationalization of Gender Reproduction.....	51
Azuma’s Story.....	54
Theoretical Approaches to Gendered Jobs in Talensi Small-scale Gold Mines.....	58
Gendered Practices and Symbolic Representations in Talensi Small-scale Gold Mines .....	64
Talensi Values and Ideologies.....	65
Demographic Characteristics of Talensi Women in Gold Production.....	66
The Daily Life of Women in the Talensi Mining Communities .....	67
Women as Shankers .....	69
Women in Salmabalga Work .....	70
Tools and Equipment for Shanking and Salmabalga.....	72
Doing Gender and Social Exclusion.....	77
Talensi Savings/Credit Schemes and Welfare Associations.....	80
Voluntary Association: Susu or Rotating Credit Scheme .....	80
Voluntary Association: Welfare.....	82
Voluntary Associations: Socio-Economic Networks of Support.....	85
Microcredit.....	88
Conclusion: Doing and Undoing Gender and Social Mechanisms.....	93
<b>CHAPTER TWO: WOMEN’S STORIES: THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN TALENSI HOUSEHOLDS AND SMALL-SCALE GOLD MINING INDUSTRY</b> .....	<b>97</b>
Yigba’s Story.....	98
Husband-Wife Relationships .....	103
Kinship Ties and Early Marriages among the Talensi.....	106

Small-Scale Mining: An Opportunity for Providing Jobs for Women .....	110
Co-Wives and Childcare .....	116
Mother-Child Relationships.....	118
Child Fosterage: Benefits and Harm to Children.....	119
Fosterage Patterns among Talensi in the Era of Small-scale Gold Mining .....	124
Women’s Roles in Household Decision-Making .....	126
Conclusion: The Social Impact of the Talensi Mining Activities.....	130
<b>CHAPTER THREE: GENDER ROLES AND WOMEN’S WAGES.....</b>	<b>133</b>
Sanpan’s Story.....	135
The Complexity of Informal Economic Activities .....	138
The Informal Economy: An Alternative to the Formal Economy .....	139
Women and the Informal Economy in West Africa .....	140
Gender Roles and Male Dominance .....	144
Significance of Male Dominance in a Local Context.....	146
Producing Gender Roles: Physical, Social, and Cultural Factors .....	147
Physical Factors.....	148
Social Factors .....	149
Cultural Factors .....	150
Talensi Work Organization: Structural Differences, Values, and Importance .....	152
Gender Wage Gap.....	155
Brief Background Information on Participants of Wage Analysis .....	156
Shanker A or Ammie.....	157
Shanker B or Sanpan .....	158
Shanker C or Buriah.....	159
Water Vendor or Dalamgda .....	161
Chiseler A or Boger.....	162
Chiseler B or Movie .....	162
Women in Mining Work.....	162
Women’s Expenditure .....	169



Non-Economic Determinants of Wages in the Mining Industry .....	170
Labor Recruitment and Wage Payments.....	171
Shanking Leaders or Work Supervisors.....	171
Participating Workers or Women the Leader Invites to Shank.....	172
Non-Participating Workers: Women not invited to Work .....	173
Kinship Relationships and Wages .....	174
Approaches to Understanding Gender Wage Gaps in Talensi Mines.....	175
Women’s Wages: Gender Characteristics and World Prices of Gold .....	177
Conclusion .....	179
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: “WE ALL STEAL LOAD/CHIPPING:” THE COMPLEXITY OF TALENSI WOMEN’S PRACTICES .....</b>	<b>182</b>
Conceptual Perspectives of Crime in the Empirical Literature .....	184
Making a Distinction between Criminal and Non-criminal Acts using Abena’s Story.....	194
Abena’s Story .....	194
Work Conflicts: Employers as Supervisor and Shankers as Thieves .....	197
Criminal Justice vs. Cultural Justice.....	205
The Ambiguity of Crime.....	207
Stealing, Organizing, and Protesting .....	208
Summary of the Chapter .....	213
Conclusion: The Social and Economic Contradictions of Crime .....	215
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: LAND AND PROPERTY RIGHTS: BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES TO TALENSI WOMEN .....</b>	<b>219</b>
Conceptual Framework: Land and Property Rights.....	221
The Small-scale Mining Industry and Land.....	223
Land Claims and Property Rights: Disputes between Land Tenure and Land Title .....	225
Pre-colonial Land System in Ghana.....	226
Colonial Land Titling .....	227
Evolutionary Theory of Land.....	228

Post-colonial Land Tenure and Land Titling .....	229
Gendered Lens in Land Access and Use.....	230
Talensi Women’s Access to Farmlands .....	231
Women, Mining, and Agricultural Lands .....	235
Conflicts and Disputes in Women’s Farmland and Mining Land .....	241
Women, Mining Land, and Property Rights .....	244
Contractual Arrangements in the Mining Industry: Implications for Women.....	248
Conclusion: Winners or Losers of Land and Property Rights .....	250
<b>CONCLUSION: TALENSI WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN SMALL-SCALE GOLD MINING ACTIVITIES .....</b>	<b>253</b>
The Value of Ethnography in Social Science and Social Work Research.....	255
Implications of Research for Social Work .....	256
Implications of Research to Anthropology .....	258
Women’s Land Claims and Property Rights .....	259
Women and Informal Economies .....	260
Implications of the Research for Ghana and West Africa .....	263
Anthropology of the Native: A Ghanaian Woman Researcher in Ghana .....	264
Empirical Findings to Guide the Design and Development of Policy .....	266
Future Research: Beyond Kejetia and the Small-scale Gold Mining Industry .....	268
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>272</b>
<b>NOTES.....</b>	<b>292</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Gold Production Process .....	12
Figure 2: Map of Ghana .....	27
Figure 3: Map of the Upper East Region of Ghana .....	28
Figure 4: Map of the Talensi District.....	31
Figure 5: Talensi Women Before and During Shanking .....	69
Figure 6: Women as Salmabalga Workers.....	70
Figure 7: Blue and Yellow Appiah-Dankwa Containing Chipping/Load .....	71
Figure 8: Organizational Chart of Talensi Small-Scale Mining Activities.....	152
Figure 9: Number of Days Spent for Work in Two Quarters in 2015 .....	164
Figure 10: Quantities of Load/Chipping for Wages in Two Quarters in 2015 .....	165
Figure 11: Quarterly Wages of Small-Scale Mining Workers in 2015 .....	165
Figure 12: Shankers Getting Ready to Work .....	199
Figure 13: Teenage Schoolchildren Weeding a Contract Farm for Wages .....	240

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Workers' Wages in Load/Chipping per Number of Work Days .....	155
Table 2: Total Number of Work Days and Wages over Two Quarters in 2015 .....	165

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization

GDHS: Ghana Demography and Health Survey

GSS: Ghana Statistical Services

IFAD: International Fund for Agricultural Development

ILO: International Labor Organization

IMF: International Monetary Fund

MoGCSP: Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection

UN: United Nations

## **ABSTRACT**

The overall goal of my interdisciplinary dissertation research in social work and anthropology is to explore how the socio-economic roles of women involved in the Talensi small-scale gold mining activities in Ghana produce opportunities and challenges for them. In the context of women's work in the Talensi small-scale gold mining industry in Ghana, I investigate: 1) the intersection between women's expected socio-economic roles in the mining activities and the Talensi social organization; 2) women's rights to the mining resources (income, land, mining pits, and houses); and 3) women's response to the challenges of gender roles and rights to mining resources.

This research examines the intersection of women's participation in the Talensi small-scale gold mining industry in Ghana, and the benefits and challenges of the mining activities. It is based on 12 months of fieldwork in the Talensi small-scale gold mining communities between 2014 and 2015. I used ethnographic methods of semi-structured interviews with female and male workers and other community members and leaders; participants' observation of the organization of gold production activities; focus group discussions; and archival materials, to collect and analyze the data. I have focused my research and scholarship on exploring the everyday practices of women involved in the male-dominated small-scale gold mining activities.

This research provides a micro-level view of Talensi women's everyday experiences in the small-scale gold mining industry. I provide a theoretical framework for rethinking how the informal space of the small-scale gold mining industry offers opportunities for women and, at the same time, undergirds the negotiations women make between the idealized gender relationships

within the larger social organization and everyday practices.

Overall findings from this research indicate that women are becoming key players in the gold mining industry. Still, gender roles that women experience in Talensi households shape gender roles in the mining industry. Limitations placed on women's roles in the mining industry constrain them from enjoying the full benefits of that industry, relative to men, such as women's inability to access and own mining pits and engage in tasks that yield high economic rewards. However, women in the mining industry are resisting unfair treatment relating to their gender, such as organizing collective activities that favor their interests, forming social networks for welfare and savings through rotating credit and savings schemes, or simply "stealing" gold rocks to add to their wages. These findings suggest three recommendations: 1) policy interventions promoting gender-specific resources to support women in the work organization; 2) analysis, evaluation, and intervention for the organization of small-scale informal economies; and 3) policy and intervention for women's economies that recognize and incorporate programs with transformational capacity to redefine the normative practices that shape women's lives.

## INTRODUCTION

### **SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL APPROACHES TO GENDER ROLES AND ACCESS TO RESOURCES**

#### *My Family Story*

The main question that sums up the theme of my educational pursuit is “When customary systems of kinship, land tenure and property distribution exclude women from owning or managing resources, how do women respond?” I have witnessed first-hand the long-standing feud between my father’s family and my mother. After my father’s death, my mother was thrown out of her husband’s home in a town in Ghana because of traditional notions of inheritance. She started a “table-top” shop in front of her uncle’s home where she sold all kinds of goods, ranging from food items to clothes. As a young child, I would take care of my mother’s shop when she went to get more goods to restock. Together with my siblings, we successfully managed her table-top business. A few years later, my mother’s table-top shop expanded into a “provisions” or grocery shop. My family situation awakened my passion to investigate gender relationships in socio-economic organizations, rural women’s claim to land and property, and women’s economic opportunities. I have become increasingly concerned with traditional norms and gender practices of the Ghanaian society and have gained great interest in women’s rights to equitable resources within the constraints of customary norms.

This dissertation investigates the everyday realities of Ghanaian women who work in the small-scale gold mining industry in the Talensi district. Small-scale mining industries provide employment and income for the inhabitants of many rural communities in West Africa.



However, in the Talensi mining communities the complexity of gender relationships, which is evident in gender roles, ambiguous work practices, conflicts in land claims and property ownership as well as changes in household organization, highlights tensions in the organization of work in gold production. Although women are becoming key players in gold production in the small-scale mining industry, they still face challenges in achieving equity in this industry. Gender differences in roles and practices in Talensi households create unequal access to land claims, mining pits, and other resources in the small-scale gold mining industry. What makes Talensi patrilineal organization a concern is that, patrilineality shapes not only the social organization of the household, but it also shapes the organization of work economies and other spheres.<sup>1</sup> Women in Talensi mining activities devise their own responses in dealing with the challenges they face in order to improve their benefits, especially their wages. One of the measures women use to improve their income is to form networks of associations. The associations can be financial, where the women contribute into a savings fund locally known as *susu* and receive lump sums while rotating the benefits in turns, or the association can be for the purpose of welfare, supporting the members in difficult situations, such as bereavement.

### **Overview of Dissertation**

The overall goal of my interdisciplinary research in social work and anthropology is to explore how the socio-economic roles of women involved in the Talensi small-scale gold mining activities in Ghana produce opportunities and challenges for them. Specifically, my research:

---

<sup>1</sup> Patrilineality, explained later in detail, is a fundamental ideology of the lineage that creates idealized descent groups. Lineages that create descent groups through the male line are regarded as patrilineal while lineages that organize descent through the female line is referred to as matrilineal

1. Investigates the intersection between women's expected socio-economic roles in the mining activities and the Talensi social organization
2. Investigates women's responses to the challenges of gender roles and their rights to resources, including the organization of savings and welfare associations
3. Examines gender roles and rights to the mining resources (wages, land, mining pits, and houses) and in other spheres/organizational contexts

In the Talensi mining industry, the social and cultural ideologies of the society pervade the organization of the mining activities, producing persistent "marginal" roles and lower benefits for women. This research seeks to understand the challenges women face in the mining industry, while highlighting the efforts women put into resolving their problems. Whereas understanding women's challenges and benefits from the industry are important for improving their lives, identifying women's survival mechanisms (e.g. the formation of associations and the practices they engage in to increase their wages such as "stealing") is important knowledge to inform interventions and policy.

The dissertation focuses on the workers who are directly involved in gold production. In the Talensi small-scale gold mining industry, two categories of women workers exist: 1) women who are wage laborers and 2) those who are self-employed. The female wageworkers are women who directly engage in labor for gold production; it is from this group of women that the sample for this study was drawn. The self-employed women do not directly engage in gold production, but in activities such as retailing and selling food and water or, if they work for someone else, they provide services such as laundry or work in local restaurants.

My graduate school experiences in social work and anthropology, my roots in Ghana, and my perceptions of gender relations and resource allocation in Ghanaian households as well as in

production groups that I observed during prior research in rural Ghana, all have influenced the orientation of my dissertation. When I was growing up, the norm in my community was that women engaged in all types of income-earning jobs. In West African households, children, women, and men work side-by-side to produce food for the family and to sell the excess produce in markets, according to Ekejiuba (1995). However, my family story suggests interactions within these households may not always favor women.

My family story, for instance, shows the complex kinship organization of households in the southern part of Ghana. My mother could not inherit my father's house even though she lived in it with the rest of the family before her husband passed. According to my mother, she had made tremendous physical and financial contributions toward the construction of the house, but because my parents belong to matrilineal groups, my father's family had the right to inherit the house.

Some African households continue to organize along lineage lines. In Ghana, some ethnic groups, organized by matrilineal descent, base claims to membership and property inheritance on a line of descent from a maternal ancestress. Other ethnic groups, organized by patrilineal descent, base claims to membership and property inheritance in a direct line of descent from a paternal ancestor. These two idealized descent groups function as part of the localized norms, although in reality their organization may be flexible and dynamic. Even though patrilocal residence is common in my matrilineal family, we—my mother and her children, who belong to her family's matrilineage—were required to leave my father's family house, which belonged to his matrilineage after my father passed.

Traditionally, West African women are responsible for the majority of the household roles including care of the home, providing laundry services, and preparing household

meals. Children support the activities of the household by running errands. Men do not generally participate in household roles, but in predominantly agricultural societies, they perform heavy tasks such as plowing the land for crops. These complementary roles ensure that there are people to carry out all the necessary roles for a functioning household. The differences in gender roles and control of household resources shape the allocation and distribution of resources. For instance, among the Talensi, male family members become inheritors of family property, make major decisions for the rest for the household, and exercise control over family property; these practices are also apparent in the gold mining industry.

My family story demonstrates how women in Ghana may take advantage of opportunities to work to earn wages. In view of the separation in gender roles, traditional household roles keep women close to their homes and encourage them to perform home-based economic activities. To supplement household income, most women in Ghana are self-employed and engage in small-scale businesses such as trading, especially in large marketing centers (Clark 2010). Clark argues that women's capacity to earn income is important in societies where they have a commitment to contribute to lineage-shared expenses such as funerals. As new forms of paid employment emerge in the small towns, women participate in wage jobs as well. Women in Talensi society have become increasingly involved in wage labor, working hand-in-hand with men, as shown by the small-scale mining industry.

The West African lineage relationship is closely linked to land claims and property relations (Leach 1961). According to Leach (1961), land is important because it serves as a resource for livelihood in rural areas; it also serves as a source of social capital and authority for communities. This makes the ability to own land key to women's right (Tsikata and Golah 2010). In the Talensi district, miners confirmed that land ownership is vested in the Tendanaas or

“the earth priests,” who are only men and oversee the land that belongs to the lineages.

Tendanaas in the Talensi district are always men and are the custodians of lineage lands, although in other neighboring districts such as Nabdam, a few women serve the office of the Tendanaa. In the Talensi district, Tendanaas supervise chiefs and lineage heads, who are men, to protect the lands from encroachers and pass them on as an inheritance from one generation to another. In most cases, the Talensi cannot acquire and own land outside the lineage and without the approval of the Tendanaa.

The distribution of these lineage lands to its members falls under the mandate of men. Men have hegemonic advantage for customary land tenure. According to Tsikata and Golah (2010), men’s control over land and other factors such as inheritance systems, marital status, division of labor, and land use patterns restrict women’s control over land. Tsikata and Golah also argue that women use sections of lineage lands acquired from their male counterparts for activities such as farming and gardening. Even though my mother secured the land for her shop and the initial capital to start her table-top business from her matrilineage and saw a lot of success afterwards, the situation can be different for other women. Some women may not be able to secure loans to start a business, may not have lineage land, or the lineage land may not be close enough to the community to set up a business. In the small-scale gold mining industry, the inability of women to own land limits their access to other resources, including mining pits. Among the Talensi, women access land through two main ways. Talensi women may access land through their own patrilineages. Talensi women have access to their fathers’ land, which their fathers in turn, make claims to the land through his patrilineage.

The dynamic of gender relationships in Ghana is important because in Ghanaian households, gender relationships move beyond the household, affecting other major

organizations where males and females interact. The division of labor that begins in the Talensi household extends to economic activities and becomes the foundation for organizing the Talensi small-scale mining economy. Men and women who constitute the gold production workforce perform different roles. Only men are allowed to perform underground jobs. The separation of gender roles produces a dynamic whereby women cannot work underground in this male-dominated industry despite the desire of some of the women to do so. Due to measures that prevent women from engaging in some of the roles in the mining industry, women's roles in gold production have become marginalized, less lucrative, and are often overlooked (Hinton et al. 2003). In addition, the perception of the men that women should perform roles the men do not want to perform contributes to women's marginal roles and affects their ability to realize the full benefits of the industry. According to Hinton et al. (2003), women would not be able to realize the full potential of the mining industry unless their activities attracted the attention of researchers and policy makers to support them. The mining industry parallels the social organization of the Talensi society, which results in women's disproportionate access to resources.

In exploring the relationship between the different aspects of the work organization, this research highlights the benefits and challenges of the female workforce directly engaged in gold production. Even though gender divisions in labor may promote efficiency in production, in the Talensi mines the restrictions on women's efforts to engage in jobs other than those designated to them negatively influence their opportunities. The fundamental contribution of this dissertation is based on the main theme: Who gains and who loses from the establishment of the small-scale gold mining industry in northeastern Ghana? This theme pulls together the other factors that affect the marginalized groups in small-scale gold production. Although women

generally realize fewer benefits from the industry, those who work in gold production fare relatively better than the farmers in the villages who have lost their land to mining activities.

### **Gender Roles: The Ghanaian Situation**

In Ghanaian households, gender roles intricately connect with resource allocation and distribution. Dako Gyeke and Owusu (2013) posit that the difference in the roles of women and men begin in the household, where there is a strong emphasis on differential gender roles in the socialization processes of boys and girls. In Ghana, according to Dako Gyeke and Owusu (2013), young boys are socialized to take up culturally defined masculine roles such as working on household farms and tending the household animals while women are socialized into the more feminine household roles, such as preparation of meals and providing laundry services. They argue that knowledge about gender differences between men and women is entrenched in Ghanaian society. Furthermore, it is likely that children will hold these views of gender differences throughout their lives, which will show up in the type of work they do.

Differences in agricultural roles for men and women perpetuate gender roles in households. Ghana is mostly rural, with over 70 percent of the population working in agriculture (GDHS 2014). Gender division of labor shows up in the different crops men and women plant, as well as in access to land, labor, technology, and marketing practices. According to Dako Gyeke and Owusu (2013), Ghanaian society uses stereotypical processes such as proverbs to explain the roles of men and women and reinforce gender differences in agricultural practices. The restrictions on women's roles adversely affect agricultural productivity and ultimately rural development in not only Ghana, but also in all of West Africa, given the high proportion of rural dwellers (Dako Gyeke and Owusu 2013).

Understanding gender roles is important for highlighting questions of social justice. The reinforcement of gender differences in Ghana through socialization and other practices denies women access to resources. While women in Ghana contribute to the livelihood of the household to reduce poverty and hunger, their potential is constrained by observance of gender role differences. The 2014 MoGCSP Report stated that Ghana continues to deal with key challenges including the negative cultural perceptions of gender equality and inadequate access of women to productive resources such as land and technology. According to the report, gender differences create disparities that prevent women from enjoying full social, economic and cultural rights. Although measures taken by the government of Ghana such as setting up the Ministry of Gender and Social Protection have helped to reduce gender disparities within rural populations, it is difficult to erode cultural ideologies of some of the ethnic groups that continue to create gender differences in roles (Dako Gyeke and Owusu 2013).

### **Small-scale Gold Mining Opportunities: Employment and Government Revenue**

The ascendancy of small-scale gold mining in West Africa and other developing countries has led to the interplay between women's desire to work and governments' need to increase foreign earning from gold production. The emergence of small-scale mining has drawn many people into the gold production industry. Many developing countries promote the industry in their national agendas. Globally, gold continues to be a major contributor to the foreign earnings of many countries. Artisanal and small-scale gold mining produces about 20 percent of the world's gold and provides employment to 11.5-13 million people in 55 countries, where women pan for gold and carry or wash rocks (Hinton et al. 2003; World Bank Report 2003). According to Juliane Kippenberg (2013), a Senior Researcher at Human Rights Watch, the International Labor Organization states that in the past few years, tens of thousands of small-

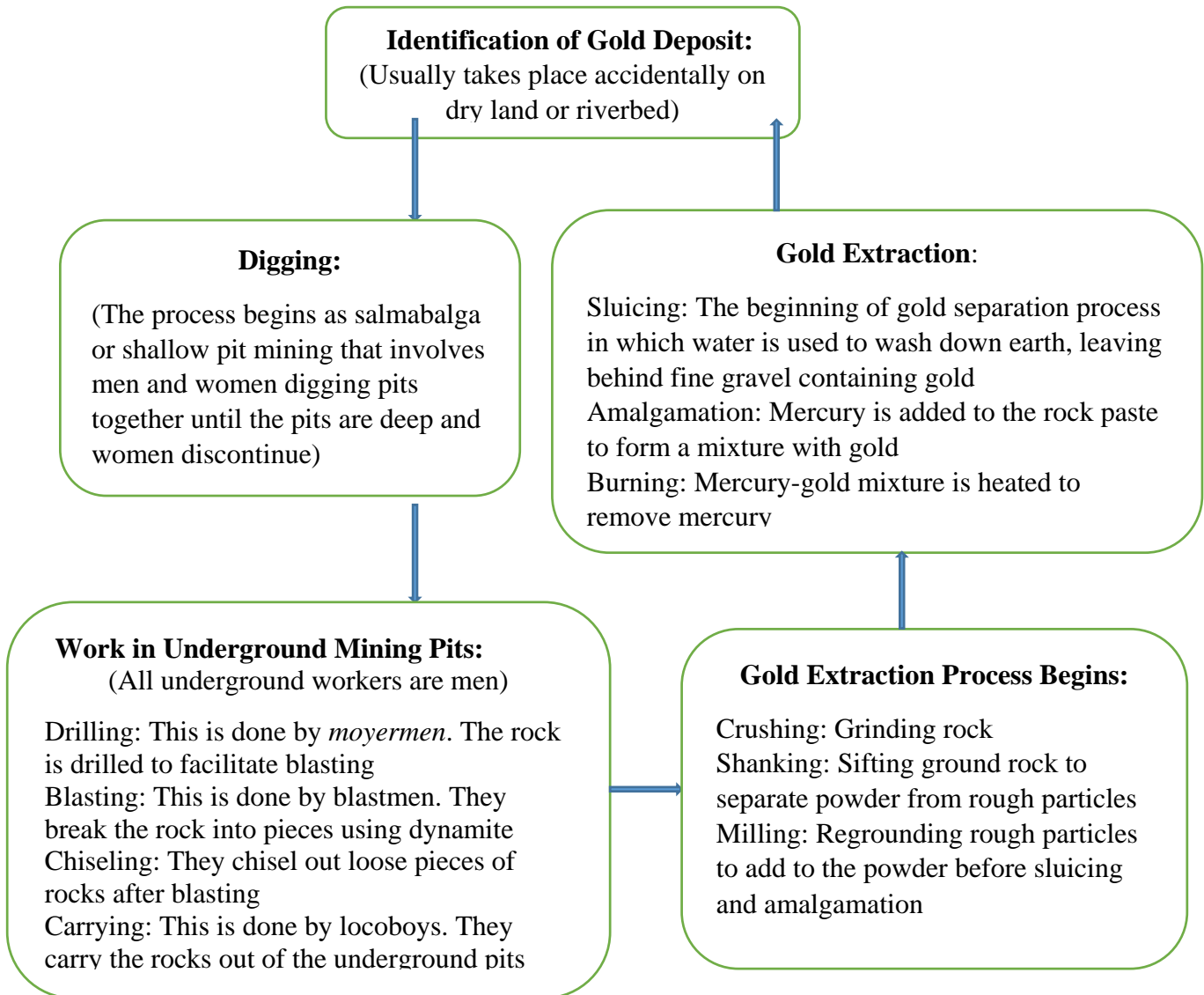


scale gold mining sites have surfaced across Asia and Latin America as well as parts of Africa. The boom in artisanal and small-scale gold mining forms a thriving economic sector in Africa (Kippenberg 2013).

The history of Ghana is synonymous with mining in gold, diamond, manganese, and bauxite. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Portuguese were the first Europeans to come to Ghana; they named the land Mina (mine) after the most predominant economic activity. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the British came to Ghana and renamed it the “Gold Coast.” When the country achieved independence in 1957, it was renamed Ghana. Minerals continue to be a major foreign earner for Ghana. Mining in Ghana consists of large-scale foreign and small-scale local operations. Gavin Hilson (2002) estimates that about one million people are directly or indirectly involved in small-scale gold mining for their livelihood. Women constitute about 50 percent of the total population of small-scale miners in Ghana (Banchirigah 2008; Yakovleva 2007). This total population, which translates to about 200,000 people directly working in gold production, is likely to expand rapidly; this number does not include illegal miners who work without a state license. In Ghana, small-scale mining is popularly referred to as *galamsey* (gather and sell) or *alakpiri* in the Talon language. However, in recent times, *galamsey* refers to “illegal” small-scale mining activities. Due to the continuous increases in the world price of gold, small-scale gold mining has become exceedingly lucrative, attracting more workers to the sector (World Bank Report 2003). According to Hentschel et al. (2000), national governments are becoming increasingly aware of the sector’s importance as a means of poverty alleviation and a generator of national income. Despite these changes, the implementation of legislation remains problematic at the local level, and many miners do not have faith in the ability or commitment of their governments to provide assistance for the sector (Hilson 2002).

To promote the small-scale mining activities all over Ghana, in the early 1970s the government moved to open up the small-scale gold mining industry in the northeastern part of the country including the Talensi district. Women grabbed this opportunity and moved into the mining industry to work. Instead of women joining their husbands who have moved into mining sites to manage their households as Nash (1979) described in Bolivian tin mining, many of the Talensi women have taken on major roles in gold production. Women directly involved in gold production are shankers (sifting crushed rock to separate the powder from the rough particle) or *salmabalga* (shallow pit miner) workers. Men work in small teams of about 15-30 workers and these teams called *ghetto* or “gangs;” this workforce includes diggers, *moyermen* or drillers, blastmen who use dynamite to break the rocks into pieces, and locoboys who carry the broken pieces of rock ore from underground.<sup>1</sup> These workers work in deep mining pits. Other male workers who work above ground are *kaimen* or pounders and washers who sluice or rinse the crushed rock before amalgamation or chemical separation of gold and rock using mercury.

**Figure 1: Gold Production Process**



In Figure 1, the gold production process involves many interconnected jobs with large numbers of workers. The production process begins by identifying gold on any part of the mining community or on neighboring land. Workers, farmers, adults, or even children may identify an unusual piece of rock and show it to one of the miners, who use sight and taste to determine the gold content. If there is any hint the piece of rock has gold, which apparently tastes salty, the whole community rushes to the spot and immediately demarcates individual plots and

begins digging. After digging to about six feet, some of the buyers who own manual gold testing instruments come around to test the shallow pits. Once the testers confirm that the land has commercial quantities of gold, the miners continue to dig. Otherwise, the miners stop digging and relocate to another area in search of gold, despite the time and energy wasted on the initial work. The miners do not view this process as non-beneficial since they believe that if the test is positive, they will recoup their investment of labor from monetary returns.

Small-scale mining is significant to the lives of the miners. Hilson (2002) argues that insufficient study of the social and economic significance of the small-scale mining industry limits the ability to highlight some of the key measures that could be used to resolve current problems and improve the sustainability of mining operations. Hilson further confirms that women's issues are often overlooked in government programs and policies so that women do not receive the full benefits of the industry. Hilson's study identified some of the socio-economic and technical constraints women face with lower educational levels and their insufficient knowledge of mining techniques compared to men. Hilson's study also indicates that cultural values often interfere with women's attempt to secure loans for the capital-intensive small-scale mining industry. Talensi women indicated that most of the programs introduced to improve the mining opportunities target men. Even intervention programs cannot reach women if studies do not highlight the challenges and benefits of mining for them. In spite of the barriers women face, their participation in the small-scale mining industry has been increasing steadily due to the lack of alternative employment opportunities, increasing difficulties with farming, and women's pursuit of greater economic independence (Hilson 2002).

In addition to providing the contextual realities of women's life in the gold production industry in the Talensi district, it is also important to understand the global economic, social, and

political forces for the gold mining industry beyond the Talensi district in Ghana. James Ferguson (2006:48) argues that Africa's exclusion from global environmental interventions is a form of contemporary non-integration into a "global society." Ferguson's global society refers to a spatial landscape that relies on transnational funding, institutions, and moral concerns to operate. Ferguson argues for the need to move beyond ordinary anthropological methods to promote an ethnographic vision of the larger order of relationships, institutions, and hierarchies in the global world that would not exclude any place such as Africa. However, other scholars have critiqued Ferguson's proposal. For example, Misty Bastian argues that Ferguson's abiding interests is in moving beyond the ordinary anthropological fascination with accounts of individual local situations by promoting an ethnographic vision of larger order relationships, institutions, and hierarchies in the global world (2007:743). Even though Ferguson's call to integrate studies of Africa into global studies has been critiqued, in the mining industry, individual-level experiences intersect with broader views of gender roles and gender differentials in access and claims to resources, such as wages and land, which reflect the strategic social mechanisms and practices regarding women in most African communities.

The world price of gold, the quantity of gold produced, and the stability of the Talensi mining communities are interconnected. Even though some miners continue to work regardless of the price of gold on the world market, work at the mine generally slows down when gold prices fall and some of the sponsors pull out of the business. When I began my fieldwork in September 2014, the price for a blade (a standard measure of gold in the Talensi mining communities that equals 0.8 grams) was GH¢120 but had fallen to GH¢80 by July 2015.<sup>2</sup> Some miners who continue to work anticipate price hikes; others sell the gold for survival, irrespective

of the price. Women form the largest number of the latter group because of their high dependency ratio and low earning capacity.

There are also interconnections between the larger forces at play in the global world and the local context of the mining industry. Ferguson (2006:86) argues for moving beyond a state-centered framework to understand the social and economic convergence of factors, which would bring to light inequalities and issues of social injustice. Ferguson urges the local communities in Africa to explore general questions about the continent and its place in the contemporary world. Through understanding local problems and questions, large-scale issues of economic development, colonialism, worldwide inequities, and social justice can be better understood (Ferguson 2006). Ferguson's assertion is particularly important for the small-scale gold mining industry that has spread all over Africa and into other developing countries and is linked to Africa's colonial history. In view of the disproportionate benefits from the small-scale mining industry, detailed anthropological knowledge about the larger impact of the industry should be a concern.

### **Gender Roles among the Talensi**

Talensi is an appropriate place to study the dynamics of gender roles. The Talensi miners believe that gender roles are cyclical, linked to their religious beliefs and controlled by the ancestral world. They believe a person is born with the responsibility to perform roles that match his/her gender and that they will continue to perform the same roles in the ancestral world after death. In Fortes' (1949) studies of the Talensi society, the worship of the ancestors is a culturally standardized projection that tangles together the principles of attachments, reciprocities, and tensions as well as binding grandparents, parents, and children to one another; this transcends beyond life into the mystical afterlife. According to Fortes, dead parents are the

prototypes of all the ancestors. The politico-religious system of the Talensi ancestral world defines the roles of men and women. When spiritual beings are reborn, Fortes argues, they carry with them expected roles, and the people are socialized into those roles.

One of the greatest problems emerging from Talensi household gender roles is its influence on the work organization of the mining industry. Gender role differentiation has several implications, especially concerning women's wages. In the difficult, health-hazardous environment of the small-scale gold mining industry, the inability of Talensi women to accrue enough wages from the work they do places them in a worse situation. Unless women are able to accrue enough wages from the work they do in the industry, they will continue to face challenges that make them move out of the industry in search of more lucrative jobs elsewhere. Unfortunately, women have few job opportunities inside and outside their local communities.

This dissertation investigates the relationship between Talensi household gender roles and the roles men and women perform in the mining industry. Understanding the underlying processes for the formation of gender roles in the mining industry will help capture the complexities of the work organization as well as resource allocation and distribution in the industry while highlighting some of the unconventional practices that occur.

### **Women's Struggle to Access Resources**

Findings from my dissertation research pinpoint equity problems as one of the major social justice issues for women in gaining access to resources in the mining industry. Social justice issues are also a concern for social work. Such equity issues can be linked to women's experiences in other spheres or contexts of the society. Despite legislation on gender equity, customary norms continue to limit rural women's ownership and control of land (IFAD 2012). IFAD (2012) and other international agencies have done studies regarding equity for women and

found that support for gender equity for resources such as land is essential to the viability of proposed plans for the use of land and other natural resources in rural areas. In many rural communities in Tanzania, for instance, IFAD calls for the need to help secure women's land rights led to the establishment of the Village Land Use Planning. In Ghana, through IFAD programs, the government has negotiated with Tendanaa or landlords in the Talensi society, who serve as religious custodians of land as well as chiefs, husbands, and other male leaders in the Upper East region for the release of land to women. These equity challenges regarding resources extend into the Talensi small-scale mining industry; one major inequity is the inability of women to own mining pits, which influences women's wages and other resources in the industry.

Anthropological interests in relational differences in power and resource control between men and women cannot be over-emphasized. Guyer and Peters (1987) argue that anthropologists focus their attention on differential power by looking at resource control between men and women. They further argue that the specific arrangements by which societies channel conjugal ties, raise children and organize production, consumption, and investment are very diverse. The historical and contemporary arguments reveal the need to promote both men and women in social life so that the activities of women may receive equal attention to that of men. According to Guyer and Peters (1987), if cultural definitions and gender practices form part of investigations into the patterns of resource allocation and distribution, meanings attached to the major flow and transfers of resources between individuals and units would be revealed. This dissertation seeks to reveal some of the meanings for the allocation and distribution of resources by examining gender roles. It also examines how the miners perceive and interpret the roles of men and women in the activities of the industry.



Among most rural African societies, the flow of resources does not favor women. The long-standing struggle of rural African women for equitable distribution of household resources has generated research interest. Mikell (1997) shows how African women have struggled for increased participation in the social, economic, cultural, and political spheres in order to shape their lives. However, increased participation in life outside of the domestic sphere does not equal a fair allocation and distribution of resources (Mikell 1997). The strong link between household dynamics and the allocation and distribution of resources shows that Talensi women benefit less than men do from the mining industry. The internal and external dynamics of Ghanaian households not only influence the forms and organization of the household, but also determine the social and economic behavior of its members. Brown (1996) has offered various reasons for women's relatively poor access to resources in Ghana; among them, Brown indicates is that both the matrilineal and the patrilineal systems favor men. For instance, my mother lost everything to the extended matrilineage of her husband when he died. However, Brown cited exceptions, including the case of the Anlo ethnic group in Ghana. The Anlo people integrate matrilineal practices within their patrilineal system. The practices of *Nonududu*, which means inheritance of female-owned property, and *Mammududu*, which means inheritance through females, allow women to own land through inheritance. Brown's study explicates how the integration of the two unilineal systems in Ghana could benefit both men and women. This type of integration, however, is not a common practice as most ethnic groups in Ghana are unilineal, and the women in the lineages continue to be disadvantaged in access and claims to resources.

In the Talensi patrilineal society, lineage heads own household lands and distribute the land to the male members of their society. All the land in the Talensi society is vested in lineages so that women cannot own land. In fact, only the chief, in consultation with the Tendanaa or

landlord, has the right to release land to the government for community projects such as the construction of schools and clinics.<sup>2</sup> Bukh clarifies the relationship between the form and organization of the members inside and outside the Ghanaian household (1979:68, cited in Ardayfio-Schandorf 1996:24). Bukh uses Ghanaian women's use of extension services and agriculture production to show the disadvantaged position of women in access to land, even for agricultural purposes. According to Bukh (1979), when considering alternative and improved methods of production in Ghana, women face a much more serious problem than their lack of education due to the very small risk margin of their operation. Bukh explains the risk margin as a situation whereby even small experiments can jeopardize the chances of women to obtain food for the household every day. Bukh argues that women's concern with providing food for their family is part of the reason women have difficulty putting into practice what extension officers suggest.

The assertion Bukh (1979) makes about the risk margin for women further illuminates the responsibility placed on women in Ghana to ensure that they feed the members of the family well, even though women do not own the household resources, such as land that would help them execute their maintenance responsibility. One major consequence of this role is that women must provide the basic needs for the household and have less time to devote attention to other roles. This responsibility reinforces gender roles in the household and may prevent women from accessing the support and resources they need to improve their lives.

---

<sup>2</sup> Chiefs and Tendanaas in the Talensi society are all men. Women cannot hold the highest offices in this patriarchal society

## **Interconnection between Social Work and Anthropology**

This dissertation research draws heavily on the interconnection between anthropology and social work. This interconnection can be fundamental for addressing many issues affecting women and providing useful evidence to inform intervention and policy. The practical orientations of the two disciplines facilitate the contributions of this research in enhancing the understanding of the relationship between gender roles, wages, and land and property claims in the Talensi small-scale gold mining industry. This research also provides an understanding of the strategic mechanisms of women (including the formation of welfare associations and *susu* or savings schemes as well as practices such as “stealing”) that take place in the mining organization in order to derive information to advance policies for women.

## **Social Work Research, Practice, and Policy**

The six core values of the social work profession provided in the NASW (2008) Code of Ethics are service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence. Some of these core values and the principles that flow from them guide this research, which identifies the complexity of and the context for the experiences of women engaged in mining activities in the Talensi district. According to the code of ethics, social workers should promote social justice and social change for their clients who comprise individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. This research highlights some of the injustices that emerge as men and women work together in the Talensi gold mining industry, identifying women’s challenges and responses to the inequities they face.

The inequities in work practices create challenges that women have to deal with as they participate in their jobs. Exploring women’s benefits and challenges in small-scale gold mining is an important social justice issue that requires a focus on the fundamental transformations in

women's lives, especially within their communities. The NASW Code of Ethics shows that the principles of social justice set forth the ideals for social workers to identify social injustices in the contexts in which they work and pursue social change, particularly on behalf of the people who are experiencing the injustices. The expectation that women engage only in two of the least lucrative roles in the small-scale gold mining industry in Ghana; the links between decisions about land and mining pit ownership; and negotiation arrangements are critical social justice issues.

The integrated approach that emerges from the micro-level (individual women) to reinforce the mezzo level (family) and macro-level (policy and institutions such as households) research is useful in addressing the challenges of women in the mining industry (see Corcoran 2008). Austin et al. (2016) argue that despite the marginalization of the macro-level practice in social work, much attention has not been paid to building the link between micro and macro perspectives for any effective intervention. This research project uses macro-level approaches to provide an understanding of the situation of individual women in the mining industry, but it addresses the experiences of Talensi women in the gold mining industry at all three levels. The micro-level deals with the lives of individual female miners and their social contexts; the mezzo-level shifts the focus to the family and suggests policy interventions to support families who work in the Talensi mining industry; and macro-level concerns policies and institutional changes, viewing the problems that confront people as institutional (Becker and Bryman 2004). Talensi lineages function in ways that systematically maintain social inequities along lines of gender.

The emphasis on the redistribution of resources is also significant for Talensi women because it addresses the need to develop an environment that could increase the capacity of women to enjoy the resources they work hard to accrue. Building the capacity of women requires

first the identification of issues of injustice and gaps in resources. The collective advocacy of the women would secure the resources they lack. While this process might require a facilitator, the emphasis should be a collaborative effort that engages the women to solve community problems.

### **Conceptual Approaches to Anthropology**

This research makes fundamental contributions to conceptual approaches in the anthropological literature including gender roles, child fosterage, decision-making processes, crime, and access to resources including land claims and property rights. The concepts help explain gender roles and the challenges and responses of the women working in the mining environment. The complexity of the mining industry can be seen in the meanings and practices the miners give to tasks that take place underground versus those that take place above ground.

Talensi ideologies and values for male dominance influences gender roles and put mining jobs in a hierarchy constructed along gender lines. The hegemonic roles reserved for men reinforce male power and produce the hierarchy of the tasks. The significance of this hierarchy is that men and women in the workforce have differential wages. Women's participation in lower paying jobs and their limited job opportunities in and out of the mining communities mean women tend to be poorer than men.

Whether women can or cannot work in underground pits also depends on complex interrelationship of factors. The inhibitions based on women's physical make up, reinforced by psychological notions of their fear of entering into the pits, lead men to prevent women from working in deep mining pits. Since wages are higher in deep pit jobs, men earn more for the work they do. In spite of the lower wages for women, those with kinship relationships with mineworkers receive a little more in wages than those without.

The call for anthropologists to reconsider “kinship” or “relatedness” in a locally meaningful way through imagining and creating relatedness through everyday practices is path breaking (Carsten 2000). Contemporary kinship studies focus on the practical ways in which every day interactions and the realities of life create bonds of relationships. Talensi women’s ability to construct and maintain kinship relationships provides a framework for the understanding of the shifting definitions of kin and relatedness in the mining communities. This is particularly important when we consider who the women’s employers are and who assumes leadership roles. Women’s conceptions of family, in which they use the words “brothers” and “sisters” to indicate any form of relationship through which they can gain some advantage, illustrate the new forms of kinship and relatedness in the mining industry. Brothers and sisters in the mining industry can be people who live in the same community or even in nearby communities, even though in their home villages neighbors do not necessarily regard each other as family.

In addition, this dissertation uses the concepts of state, law, criminal justice, and cultural justice to explain what constitutes criminal and noncriminal acts in the industry by looking at the practice of “stealing.” This research illuminates the anthropological understanding of the everyday responses to crime while emphasizing the motivation for criminal activities and providing contextual cases that highlight the distinction between trivial crime and the apocalyptic view of crime. Schneider and Schneider (2008:366) explain the apocalyptic view as the perception that every form of crime is dangerous, regardless of the people who commit the crime or the circumstances under which the crime takes place.

Criminal activities also show the kind of social relationship that exists between people. Practices that lead to criminalization can illuminate how people perceive and symbolize

differences and similarities (Nader 2003). Nader (2003) argues that the similarities and differences become contexts that reveal crime's power and its linkages to social and cultural processes. The similarities and differences between the workers is evident in the Talensi mining communities, because when shankers steal they express their identity as employees denied the full benefits of the industry, such as their inability to work in deep mining pits or own land.

Small-scale mining lands are registered, and the bureaucratic process involved in getting a license to mine is not female-friendly—it is expensive, there is a lengthy wait time, and requires securing not only licenses but also permits, approvals, and other documentations for the state. The miners obtain the licenses and permits from several government agencies including the District Assembly, Minerals Commission, and the Environmental Protection Agency, to mention but a few. Although men without licenses negotiate with concessionaires to dig their own pits, women cannot dig their own pits because they cannot own land. Women who grew crops on land currently used for mining have to leave. Most of the farmers, especially women, struggle to find other places to farm, dealing with competition for land, conflict, and poor soil. There are tensions between women who work in mining and women who have lost their farmland to mining.<sup>3</sup>

### **Interdisciplinary Approaches Explored**

In exploring the interdisciplinary connections between social work and anthropology, this research has kept to the themes of gender, access to resources such as mining pits, and social

---

<sup>3</sup> Throughout Africa, land disputes are common (Richards 2005). Whereas minor disputes have occurred in many places on the continent, in other places land claims have resulted in major conflicts. Richards has done extensive work on how conflicts about land influenced the civil wars that occurred in Liberia and Sierra Leone (Richards 2005). Richards also recognized the conflicts that arise about land within marriages, which brought a new understanding about access to land, showing that land is not only the importance of land among spouses, tribes, and nations, but it also emphasizes the point that most societies deprive a sizeable number of people access to land at all levels.

justice throughout the analysis. The research has incorporated the factors, practices, and principles that create gender differences, inequities, and their influence on gender roles and women's access and claims to resources in the gold mining industry.

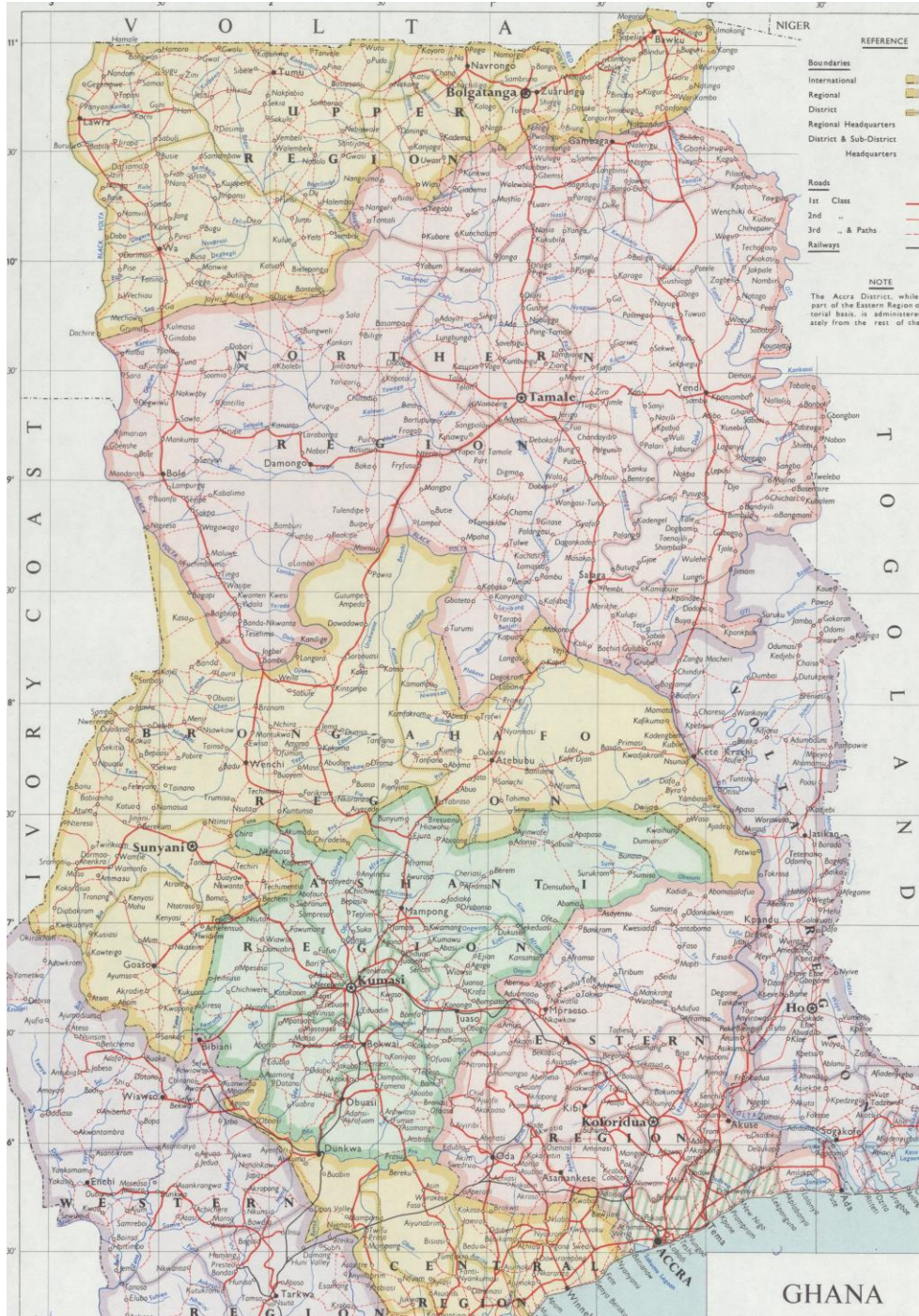
This research focuses on restrictions on women's roles and claims to resources and their participation in lower-paying jobs and provides evidence for policy. Becker and Bryman (2004) devised five models to show the relationship between research and policy: problem-solving, interactive, political, enlightenment, and knowledge-driven. The problem-solving model assumes that research informs policy and that the issues raised in the policy shape the priorities of the research. The knowledge-driven model emphasizes that research can serve as evidence to inform policy and the emphasis is useful for this project. Becker and Bryman (2004) assert that evidence-based research is a better-informed and more plausible approach to policy formation. Throughout this dissertation, I analyze gender roles, women's access to resources such as mining pits, land claims and property ownership, ambiguous practices, and survival strategies using an anthropological lens. Using anthropological evidence to inform policy provides details that are necessary to improve the lives of women who are disadvantaged in the mining activities (Becker and Bryman 2004).

Finally, using anthropological methods such as ethnography to gather information on marginalized populations has long been recognized by social work. The popularity of ethnography lies in the fact that it is a style of research rather than a single method (Becker and Bryan 2004). Collectively, Becker and Bryan (2004) argue that ethnographic methods capture the social meanings and ordinary activities of research participants through the close involvement of the ethnographer in the field. Ethnography is distinctive because of its emphasis on people's meanings, providing detailed and rich information that makes ethnographic research



findings useful as part of a body of knowledge drawn on to inform interventions and policy (Becker and Bryan 2004). This research intends to inform interventions and policy by basing the research on the worldview and social meanings of women's life in the Talensi gold mining industry.

Figure 2: Map of Ghana

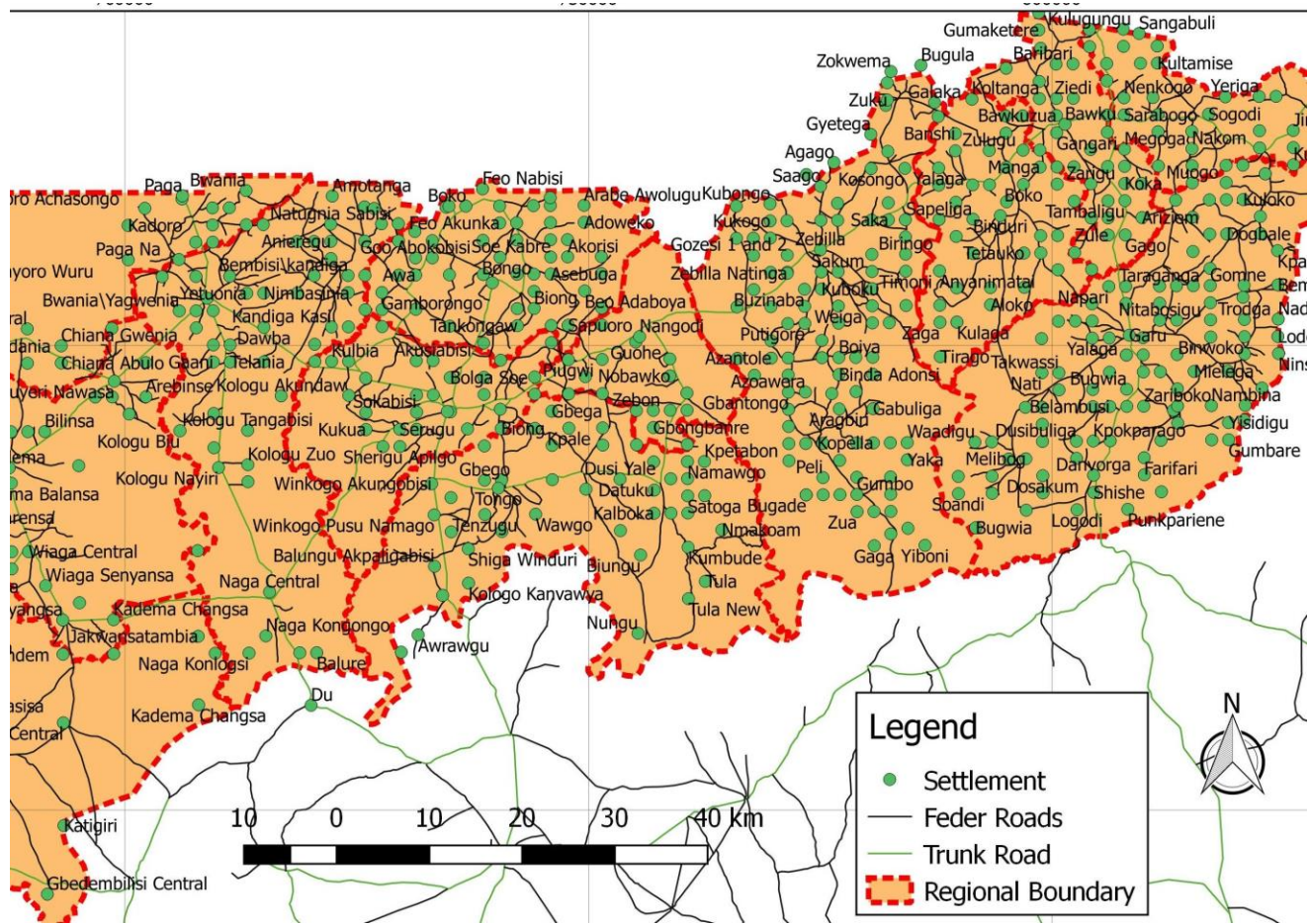


Source: Clark Library, University of Michigan

## Methodology and Research Site

I conducted this research in the Talensi district of the Upper East region in Ghana. The Upper East region is one of the ten administrative regions in Ghana. Talensi is one of the districts of the Upper East region. The capital of the Upper East region is Bolgatanga, commonly referred to as Bolga. On the other hand, Tongo is the district capital of the Talensi district.

**Figure 3: Map of the Upper East Region of Ghana**



Source: Talensi District Assembly, Ghana

## **The Upper East Region of Ghana**

The Upper East region is located in the northeastern corner of Ghana. The region was formerly part of the Upper region (Figure 2). From 1902, the Upper East section of Ghana (then Gold Coast) was part of the Northern Territory of the British Protectorate. The Northern territory of the British protectorate comprised of the present day Northern, Upper East, and Upper West regions.<sup>4</sup> According to Akapule (2017), the Upper region was carved out of the Northern Territory in 1960. In 1983, the Upper region was divided into two: the eastern section was called the Upper East region and the western part called the Upper West region. Bolga served as the regional capital for both former Upper region and present day Upper East region. The Upper East region covers a total land area of 8,842 square kilometers and it is the second smallest region, comprising about 2.7 percent of the total land area of Ghana (Akapule 2017). The geography is primarily savanna grassland and the climate is dry.

The 2010 Ghana Population Census shows the population of the Upper East region as 1,046,545 out of a total population of about 25 million in Ghana (GSS 2012). The population of the region comprises of 540,140 females and 506,405 males. The region is divided into thirteen districts, including the Talensi district. Generally, the people located in the central part of the region is referred to as Frafra, an umbrella term that comprises Talensi, Gurune, Boone, and Nabdram speaking groups; each ethnic group understands the language of the three other groups. However, Twi is an Akan language spoken in most parts of the region and especially in Bolga.

Agriculture is the main economic activity of the Upper East region. Most of the inhabitants grow crops such as millet and others rear animals such as cattle and guinea fowls.

---

<sup>4</sup> In Ghana, the country is divided into the Northern and Southern sectors, while others use the climatic distinction of the Coastal belt, Middle belt, and Northern belt.

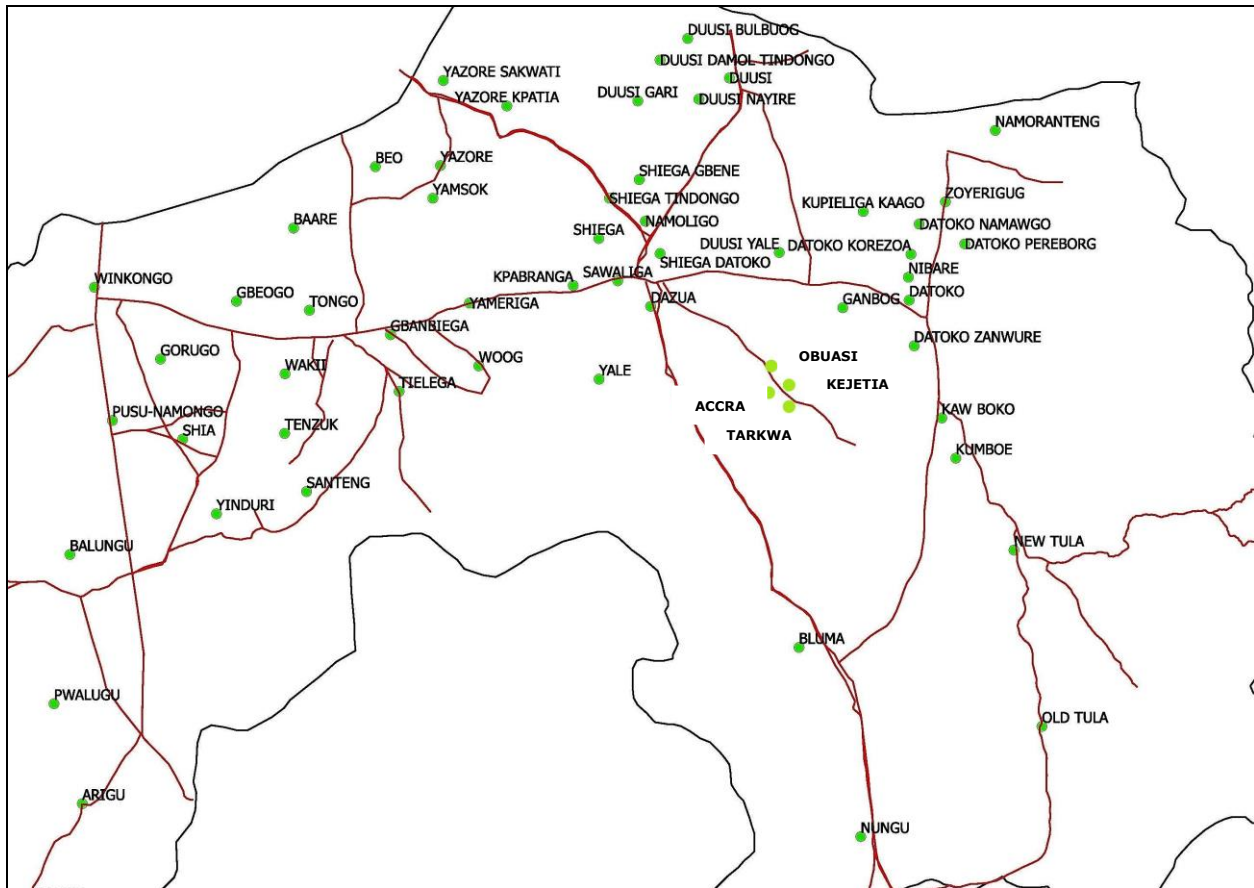
The Upper East region is known for its handiwork. In the study abroad programs to the region, artisans are found all over the region weaving the traditional smock or making baskets. Market days in Bolga are important for the sale of baskets by women and smock by men. The region is also notable for making *pito*, a locally brewed beer.

The main administrative structure of the Upper East region, like the other nine regions in Ghana, is the Regional Coordinating Council (RCC), headed by the Regional Minister. Other members of the RCC are the heads of the decentralized departments of the regional administration and a representative of the Upper East regional House of Chiefs.

In the late 1900s, the Upper East region used to be one of the industrial regions of Ghana, with industrial activities, including the meat factory at Zuarungu, tomato-canning factory at Pwalugu and cotton ginnery at Pusu-Namongo. Unfortunately, none of the industries is currently functioning. The region currently depends on the two main extractive industries—stone quarrying and gold mining. The region is also promoting tourism to boost its revenue. Gold was mined during the Colonial Administration around Nangodi, about 24 kilometers from Bolga (Renne 2015). Nangodi is the district capital of the Nabdam district, a district that was carved out of the Talensi-Nabdam district in 2012. According to Renne (2015), the deep shaft industrial gold mine established in 1935 in Nangodi, relied on Ghanaian men, formerly from the northeastern part of Ghana, to return from mining occupations in the south to work in the industry. She also points out the involvement of expatriate in the Nangodi mining industry. Renne indicates that, gold mining in Nangodi is distinctive because it had the only industrial open mine in Ghana. However, small-scale gold mining began in the Nangodi area in mid-1980s (Renne 2015). It was also around the mid-1980s that gold mining began in the other parts of the region, including Talensi district. As was the case of small-scale gold mining in the Talensi

district, Renne (2015) indicates that an Ashanti man called Nat Adako introduced small-scale mining to the inhabitants of Nangodi when he came to buy gold. Renne also mentions that small-scale mining promoted the involvement of a large number of women into the industry.

**Figure 4: Map of the Talensi District**



Source: Talensi District Assembly, Ghana

### The Talensi District

The Talensi district covers a total land area of 838.4 square kilometers, with 81,194 inhabitants constituting about 7.8 percent of the total population of the Upper East region (GSS 2012). The district was formerly Talensi-Nabdam. The 2010 Population Census shows that Talensi district is resource-poor, with limited road network. Tongo, located to the west of the

Talensi small-scale mining communities, is the district capital (Figure 4). Furthermore, the census shows the topography of the district is characterized by scattered rock-outcrops and upland slopes. The soil is shallow, with low fertility, and predominantly coarse. Rain fed crop farming, animal rearing, and hunting are the main sources of employment and account for 90 percent of the local GDP. Trees that bring in income, such as Shea nuts and Dawadawa fruits, are extensively distributed in the wild. Women dominate the harvesting and processing of the Shea nuts and Dawadawa fruits. The only industrial activities in the district are two extractive industries, small-scale gold mining and a stone quarry. The quarry produces cut rocks for export and has a small workforce (GSS 2012).

### ***History of Talensi District***

The history of the Talensi society is closely linked to its religious belief system and geographic location (Allman and Parker 2005). According to Allman and Parker (2005:24), the limited information on the precolonial history of the Talensi society was based on the perceived “isolation” of the Talensi area and the people. Allman and Parker identify three main issues concerning the external perception of the Talensi. Talensi and their gods were regarded as “timeless and traditional,” and outside the realm of history (Allman and Parker 2005:24). In addition, the society was elevated to the status of an archetypical stateless society, with its attendant implication that such societies are outside the realm of history because the Talensi society was located in the remote, savanna parts of Ghana. The location of the society contributed to the perceptions of outsiders (Allman and Parker 2005).

Prior to 1937, according to Fortes (1949), the Talensi society did not have a centralized authority that was typical of many of the groups in other parts of Ghana. Fortes shows that the

Talensi society comprised of two main groups—the Tale first-comers or the original inhabitants and the migrant Namoo group that trace their origin to the Mamprugu society across the White Volta. According to Allman and Parker (2005), the Tale group provided the Tendanaas, who maintained the ritual custody of the society and managed the earth shrines and ancestor shrines as well as the cycle of festivals. The Tendanaas were also responsible for the purification of the land and division of the land for lineage farms (Rattray 1932). The Tale group also controlled access to the ancestor deity, Tongnaab, whose fame in spiritual powers extends into the whole of Ghana and beyond. The division of functions between the Tale and Namoo groups is based on migration and the social functions of the groups. According to Allman and Parker (2005), the functions in the social organization of the Talensi society translates to the distinction between landlords and migrants defined not by genealogy as in the southern part of Ghana, but rather by territory as well as the powerful shrines such as the Tongnaab.

The non-centralized Talensi system continued until the colonial period. The colonial administration's formation of centralized Native Authority built up on federal principles integrated the different groups in Ghana for a centralized political administration (Fortes 1949). The British government instituted indirect rule, a system of government in which the British administrators ruled through chiefs and other forms of local authority in Ghana as well as in many other parts of Africa. The implementation of indirect rule in and around Tong Hills led to the consolidation of power in the Golibdanaa Tengol, a wealthy ritual entrepreneur and through expanded pilgrim trade (Allman and Parker 2005).

The pivotal figure of Meyer Fortes, a British anthropologist, who spent two years conducting anthropological research at Tongo from 1934-1937, authored the colonial control of the Talensi society and drew attention to the organization of the society, including the prominent



role of Tongnaab, the earth priest. Fortes and Tongnaab became implicated in the colonial history of the Talensi society (Allman and Parker 2005). According to Allman and Parker (2005), even though Meyer Fortes is well known for his account of the intricate clanship and web of kinship of the social organization of the Talensi society, his writings also projected the dynamism of the Tongnaab. Fortes' ethnographic accounts of the Talensi showed Tongnaab as a prominent leader who constructed history and carefully organized ritual commerce that reached far beyond the boundaries of the Talensi area (Allman and Parker 2005).

The Talensi society continues to have male office holders, including Tendanaas or landlords and Tongnaab or the earth priest for the shrine in Tengzug, unlike the neighboring Nandom society who have both female and male Tendanaas or landlords. Tengnaab also continues to possess great spiritual influence over the whole of Ghana and its neighboring countries. Allan and Parker (2005) cited examples of other shrine priests, such as *okomfo* Aframea, a famous shrine priest of Kukurantumi in the Eastern region of Ghana, as regular visitors to Tongnaab for consultations. Other shrine priests come to visit Tongnaab for collaboration. During the 2010 study abroad program from the University of Michigan, the shrine priest for Tongnaab indicated that, in recent times, more visitors to the shrine come from neighboring countries of Ivory Coast in the West and Togo in the East of Ghana as well.

### **Talensi Small-scale Gold Mining Communities**

This research took place in four small-scale gold mining communities in the Talensi District of the Upper East region in Ghana: Kejetia, Obuasi, Accra, and Tarkwa (Figure 4). This cluster of mining communities is simply called Kejetia. Talensi mining communities are located to the east of the district, about ten kilometers from Tongo, the district capital. Together the four communities form the largest mining area in the district, with one main road running through

them. The four mining communities do not have clear boundaries; they cover a total area of about five square kilometers. Mining sites in the area are named after large towns, cities with large-scale mines, or large institutions. The first gold discovery in the area took place in Tarkwa in Talensi district. Kejetia is the most vibrant in commercial life because it is centrally located between Tarkwa and Obuasi, and only a little farther away from Accra site in Talensi district. Kejetia takes its name after a suburb of Kumasi, the second largest city in Ghana, which has one of the largest markets in West Africa. The section of the Talensi mining land with the richest deposit of gold ore is Obuasi, which takes its name from the town with the largest gold mine in Ghana. Finally, Accra is the capital of Ghana; the Accra site in the Talensi district has the largest land area. The close proximity of the four mining communities facilitates the movement of male workers between them so that when work in one site slows down, the male workers move into another site to work.

The formation of the mining communities began in the early 1970s when the government of Ghana demarcated 72 square kilometers of land in the Talensi area for small-scale gold mining. However, community building began in the mid-1980s. With the discovery of gold, natives of Talensi who worked in southern Ghana mines, mostly men, returned to their district to work. In 2000, at the peak of the gold rush, Kejetia had an estimated population of 15,000 people (Renne et al. 2011). The population of small-scale mining communities fluctuates rapidly because miners move between mining communities in and out of the Talensi district in search of active production work.

The gold mining communities in the Talensi area are referred to as mining sites. Locally, Talensi people call the mining communities *laperiga* (meaning rush to obtain), an expression linked to the gold rush. However, the commonly used name for the area is “bush” because prior

to gold mining the area had relatively fertile soil and served as reserve farmland. When the production of gold began, the government stopped the farmers from growing crops on the land and demarcated the land for mining, although a few people still farm on the fringes of the demarcated land.

### **Anthropological Dissertation Fieldwork in the Talensi Small-scale Mining Communities**

Before my fieldwork began, I had made three short visits to Kejetia on study abroad programs during the summer 2010, 2011, and 2012. These visits were interdisciplinary, organized by faculty from the Department of Anthropology and the School of Public Health in the University of Michigan. The visits include introducing undergraduates to research in the mining communities. I have had the privilege to work on several research projects, supervise undergraduate students' projects, identify my dissertation research community, and make initial contacts for this project during these visits.

For my dissertation fieldwork, I spent 12 months in Kejetia, from September 2014 to September 2015. At Kejetia a woman who later became a friend, whom I refer to as Nica in this dissertation, hosted me. I shared my host's one-bedroom house with her. I also rented a one-bedroom house in Tongo, the Talensi district capital, where I spent some of the evenings and weekends to write my reports because the mining towns have no basic amenities such as running water and electricity.

I began my research by accompanying shankers around the community during the day. Since I had made a few contacts already, I integrated into the shanking teams easily. In the morning, I would walk to one of the four rock-grinding machines the miners call crushers, along with the shankers. We waited at the crusher until someone came to crush his rocks. On several occasions when there was no one crushing rocks and therefore no shanking, we sat under a tree

close to the crusher to chat. These conversations interspersed with my questions were some of the ways I collected my data. During this time, I conducted 40 interviews with the shankers. I also interviewed six men and had regular conversations with others. Apart from the mineworkers, I also interviewed the Regional Director of the Minerals Commission and the Talensi District Planner. Each interview ran for over one hour and I recorded them on a voice recorder using an interview guide.

Within a few weeks after I began my fieldwork, the women were very willing to share their experiences with me. They even gave me permission to record their information in my notebook. Every day was a busy one for the women except when there was no shanking to do. When there was shanking, after crushing we all followed the shanking leader to the employer's house. The leaders would select carriers to carry the chipping or load while the other women followed.<sup>3</sup> When we reached the employer's home, the leader would authorize those she wanted to shank to wait around the load or chipping until she gave the shankers permission to proceed. The leader designated shankers, but everyone could shank provided there was space around the chipping or load. I observed shanking most of the time. The dust from the crushed rocks is so thick that the women avoided being in close proximity to the shanking area except those selected to shank. I participated in shanking on a few occasions to observe closely the work organization. The wait time during shanking became another opportunity for me to either arrange interviews or just sit and listen to the women's conversations and ask questions. We all spoke Twi, a widely spoken Akan language in Ghana, sharing ideas and holding discussions about the work.

In the afternoons when the sun was too hot (temperatures rise to over 90°F most days in the year), the above ground workers stopped working, and the underground miners came out of the hot pits. The workers sit under shade trees or drink *akpeteshie* (local gin) or *pito* (local beer)

in bars scattered all over the communities. Most of the workers visit Maggie's *akpeteshie* (local gin) bar and praise her for selling good drinks. I had conversations with the mixed group of women and men who converged at the bars during which I asked questions to confirm the information I had previously collected.

I also collected data on the *salmabalga* (shallow pits mining) workers. *Salmabalga* sites are usually located on the outskirts of the main communities. *Salmabalga* is the only job in which men and women work together. However, even in this non-gendered work environment, men work on a different section of the land, use different tools and equipment, and use different extraction methods. Women dig and collect the gravel, blow the dust away, wash the gravel, and look through the gravel to identify gold nuggets. Men carry the gravel in sacks back home, crush the gravel, and use the washing and amalgamation process to extract the gold.<sup>5</sup> Again, the heat prevents working all day in *salmabalga* sites. The workers take many breaks. The women sit under the big trees to chat. I joined the women to converse with them and to conduct my interviews. Unlike the shankers, most of the *salmabalga* workers do not live in the mining community, but come daily to work from surrounding communities.

Another type of data I collected was the wages of workers, including four shankers, one water vendor, and two chiselers. My host Nica and friend Maggie introduced some of the workers to me. Initially, I selected ten shankers, three water vendors, and three chiselers. I included the water vendors and chiselers for the purpose of comparison. I collected the data for six months. In the gold production sector, employers pay their workers with the work product. For example, shankers receive their wages in chipping or load and chiselers receive their wages

---

<sup>5</sup> Salmabalga women do not have money to pay for the cost of the crushing

in load or the rocks they chisel out when working underground. Seven shankers moved out of the mining community by the end of the third month and only one of the water vendors worked continuously for three months. Two of the chiselers left the community, although one of them returned four months later. The workers constantly move in and out of the mining community throughout the year for many reasons including slowed down production activities, lack of jobs, tiredness, illness, accidents, and family issues. Two months after I began my fieldwork, a major cave-in that claimed four lives occurred in one of the non-demarcated portions of the land. Gold had “proved” (meaning a gold deposit had been found) on the fringes of Obuasi, and male and female miners had moved there to mine. Following the cave-in, the police banned mining there. During the period of the cave-in, mining activities slowed down, which affected data collection for this dissertation. Most of the shankers traveled to other mining sites to work. Consequently, I had to suspend some parts of the data collection, especially with the women I had originally contacted to measure their wages for one year; instead of one year, I was only able to collect the data for six months—three months in the dry season and another three months in the rainy season. As mentioned previously, seven of the ten shankers originally selected to participate had left by the time I started recording the women’s wages in January. Three of the women returned after leaving Kejetia for about seven months, but I was able to collect the data for only three of the shankers.

To collect data on women’s wages, I arranged to visit the three *shankers* every evening to measure the chipping they received as daily wage. After four weeks, the *shankers* agreed to measure the chipping at the end of each workday using *appiah dankwa* (a small plastic bowl that weighs six kilos when filled with chipping), a standard measure for chipping in the mining communities. To participate in the data collection exercise, the shankers marked the number of

*appiah-dankwa* wages on their mud walls with charcoal. One stroke represented one *appiah-dankwa* of chipping; fractions were also recorded. After a couple of days, I visited the houses to tally the strokes; it was sometimes difficult to determine the exact number of payments represented in charcoal on the wall. However, in this way, I was able to collect data on women's daily wages with their involvement.

The water vendor told me the number of bowls of water she sold each day. For a more accurate measure, she informed Nica (my host) or me, the number of bowls of water she sold in the morning, and then did the same in the evening. In the dry season when a large section of the riverbed dried up, the water would collect downstream. During this time, a bowl of water costs GH¢1.50, while in the rainy season it costs GH¢1.00. The chiseler informed me when he would process his load of rock ore, which usually takes the whole day. It begins with shanking and ends when the gold is extracted (Figure 1). I followed the chiseler throughout the process. The chiseler processed his gold once or twice a month.

After 12 months of fieldwork, I left Kejetia for Kumasi and then on to the United States. To avoid being accused of leaving the community unannounced, I had periodically reminded the women that my project in the communities would end in a year and the number of months I had left. According to Patrick Twumasi, in order to gain appropriate entry into and exit from rural communities during social science research, researchers should clearly inform the participants and leaders of the communities about the aim and period of their research in order to avoid suspicion as an "intruder" (2001: 30). The women would seek clarification every now and then. Two days before I left Kejetia, I distributed the personal items I did not need any longer. I had stored many of their phone numbers and promised to call them in Kumasi from the United States. I plan to stay in contact with the good women of Kejetia.

## **Social and Demographic Characteristics of the Talensi Women Miners**

This research provides a brief demographic background on the women. During the interviews, I asked questions about the women's age, marital status, educational level, the number of children they have, ethnic background, whether they have a savings account, and group affiliation; after the interview, I recorded demographic data for the women. The demographic characteristic of the women was very similar. Because of the small number of women involved, I will not provide detailed analysis in this research; rather, I will refer to the data throughout this research. Moreover, it was not possible to get some of the information. For instance, out of the 40 women interviewed, only three knew their age. The demographic information allows for a better understanding of the meanings and practices of their experiences. The background information could help in the design of a future survey to inform policy and interventions for the female miners. According to the World Bank Report (2003), comprehensive data on small-scale mining communities in Ghana is lacking, and few concise figures exist. The report argues that district centers in Ghana keep tabulations of regional activities, but statistical tabulations of these activities are not disclosed to the public.

## **Chapter Overview**

The dissertation chapters provide the socio-economic, cultural, and historical contexts to help understand the challenges of women's participation in small-scale gold mining activities, as well as show some of the modest benefits and strategic practices. The chapters illuminate the numerous interconnections between gender roles, access to resources, and strategic practices and mechanisms.

Chapter 1 provides an understanding of how customary views of gender relationships pattern the gender roles and productive capacity of the Talensi small-scale gold mining



industry. The chapter shows the work organization of the industry, providing the underlying basis for differential gender roles through the work patterns and practices and the persistent inequities in work patterns and the use of work tools and equipment, a process I operationalize as gender reproduction. The chapter argues that gender reproduction will persist in the industry unless major changes occur that allow women to work in jobs they find beneficial and use the tools and equipment that will facilitate their work. Women are expected to perform their work based on gendered norms in order to gain recognition as “women.” Conforming to the norms of the society authenticates women and gives them the opportunity by which the society would regard them as feminine, passive, and subordinate in order to gain alleged credibility (Pullen and Knights 2007). A Talensi woman working in the mine must show who she is; that is, of her identity as a woman and the tasks she performs. The tools Talensi women use including a pan, scarf, basher, and *appiah-dankwa* identify them. The women use these items for their work and every worker carries these items throughout the day in anticipation for work, even when they are not working.

Chapter 2 provides an account of the transformations taking place in Talensi household relationships in view of women doing mining work. The changes in Talensi family relationships move the mining situation into the broader Ghanaian context. This chapter relies on information from the GDHS, household surveys conducted periodically by the Ghana government, with funding from the government and donor agencies to provide national household information. The survey measures issues that affect Ghanaian households to indicate the transformations that are taking place, including marital relationships, child fosterage, and household decision-making.

Additionally, the chapter shows that changes are taking place in household relationships as women take up mining jobs. The changes take place between wives, husbands, and children

and include changes in marital relationships and new trends in decision-making and child fosterage. The transformations produced from the activities of the mining industry are significant because they have implications for redefining Talensi household relationships. The chapter shares the stories of Yigba, Abena, Tenee, Sanpan and other women as examples of the experiences of Talensi women in the mining industry. The experiences of the four women and others are informative because they show the changing relationships between husbands and wives as well as parents and children. The summary of the stories the women shared about their lives indicates that marriages are taking on new forms in the Talensi area within the small-scale gold mining communities. Women are selecting partners of choice and are not under pressure to marry these partners; they engage in the type of unions they find suitable. When women work in the mines, they avoid the stigma of divorce and increase their autonomy, which allows them to make their own decisions about issues that affect their lives, including family planning practices. The situations of the female miners contrast with the challenges they face in their villages.

In addition to the changes in marriage, child fosterage is becoming more pervasive among Talensi miners. Elisha Renne (2003) argues that child fosterage may be detrimental to the education and moral development of the child. In another study, Afua Imoh (2012) explored the attitude and perceptions on child fosterage and parental roles in Accra. She pointed out that younger people who had had some education and had or expected to have children claimed that, “barring death or divorce, there is no one who will raise their children better than they can themselves,” indicating a strong awareness of the importance of parental childrearing and reinforcing problems of child fosterage (2012:356). Talensi miners’ involvement in the care of their children using foster kin may help to improve the wellbeing of the children. There are different results that I will explain later in the chapter. This chapter also describes a new trend in

decision-making. Talensi female miners are increasingly making family decisions, a major step toward women's autonomy. They make decisions that benefit them and their children. By making individual and family decisions, Talensi women are changing traditional household norms of authority. The GDHS (2008) showed that only 29 percent of the married women surveyed in Ghana made individual decisions on daily household purchases; this percentage increased to 44 in 2014. However, the educated, wealthy, and urban women are more likely to benefit from this percentage increase than women in rural communities who have little or no education (GDHS 2014).

In Chapter 3, I explore the relationship between gender roles and wages in Talensi in order to understand the social and economic conditions for women in the mining industry. The chapter examines two main issues. First, I apply the theory of gender hegemony from Sherry Ortner's (1996) work as a tool to identify how gender roles are constructed, represented, and contested. Scholars such as Ortner (1996) debunked arguments and counterarguments for the universality of male dominance and instead proposed a theory of gender hegemony. In support of Ortner, Sinnott (2004) reiterates a call for engaging in debates on universal gender practices, concerning the constructed and contested meanings produced by society to create relationships and communities. According to Delcore (2007), the overarching principle of Sherry Ortner's discussion of gender hegemonies is that her theory considers cultural particularities that not only affect specific systems of beliefs and ideas, but also actively shapes the entire lived social process. Delcore (2007) argues that the theory encourages the identification of some of the issues that these meanings and values place importance on, while highlighting the conflicts and tensions in debates on universal male dominance. For instance, in the Talensi mining industry, using gender hegemony theory provides an understanding of the meanings associated with male

dominance by providing the context for assessing men and women's access to resources including wages, land, and property.

Hegemonic views influence gender roles and wages as men's roles continue to assume more importance and value than women's roles. The interplay between socio-cultural factors such as beliefs and ideologies and wages determines women's conditions. In the Talensi situation, cultural factors such as beliefs and ideologies play an important role in determining tasks of men and women and in limiting women to tasks that attract lower wages.

Secondly, in Chapter 3, I analyze Talensi women's wages by measuring the quantities of chipping, load, or crushed rock women receive as wages to determine the principles that affect women's wages in the industry and the actual wages of some of the women. The analysis shows how wages is closely tied to women's roles and how that compares to the wages of men and non-mine female workers. Chapter 3 demonstrates the close relationship between gender roles and wages, showing that several factors account for differential roles and wages in the mining industry. The strong ideological views about what women can and cannot do, male hegemonic roles, and identifiable root causes that limit women's capacity to negotiate with their male employers, described in this chapter, are issues that must be addressed if women are to improve their wages (Meagher 2010; Ortner 1996). Even though, the general workforce is "trapped" in poverty, the dynamics of this trap differ for men and women (Hilson 2012). Any attempt to support the workforce of the small-scale mining industry should consider ideological views and values.

Chapter 4 reflects on how the workers in the Talensi mining industry perceive "stealing," and how they talk about what constitutes criminal and noncriminal acts. The miners view

stealing differently depending on when, where, and from whom. Sometimes, employers accuse “thieves” as criminals when they steal chippings and sometimes the “thieves” get away with it. Employers may not show any form of resentment even when they notice that a shanker is stealing chipping. The chapter proposes that “stealing” in the Talensi mines can be viewed alongside Scott’s (1985) work on weapons of the weak in Malaysia. He identified “Foot dragging, arson, pilfering, sabotage, and many other forms of everyday acts of insubordination” as ordinary weapons of “powerless” groups (1985:29).

In addition, Chapter 4 shows that the ambiguity in whether stealing is a crime or not, in the Talensi mines, is closely linked to the ideological system of the society. Peter Geschiere (2006) argues that the relevance of understanding the ambiguity of crimes is that it shows the blurry borders between the processes through which cultural practices embed into the everyday lives of the people. These studies about crime from the anthropological viewpoint indicate legal code and local custom can act upon each other in supple, surprising ways (Comaroff and Comaroff 2006; Schneider and Schneider 2008).

While it is important to focus on stealing from employers, like foot dragging and sabotage, as an everyday act of insubordination, there is also a need to consider how the practice helps the Talensi women to identify as one group and form a stronger collective group for community building. Kabeer et al. (2013) argue that individual women interact with broader struggles for gender justice within groups and communities. More broadly, the chapter argues that a detailed examination and interpretation of crime would prevent the apocalyptic view of crime that perceives every form of crime as dangerous, regardless of who commits the crime or the circumstances under which the crime took place (Schneider and Schneider 2008). The analysis of crime in the small-scale gold mining industry calls on societies to reclassify crime. It

is important for societies to reclassify crime in order to distinguish between dangerous and less dangerous crimes.

Previous chapters culminate in the findings of Chapter 5, where I investigated the interconnection between the transformations, challenges, contestations, negotiations, and beneficiaries of the Talensi small-scale gold mining industry within the framework of the society's land access, transfer, ownership, control, and benefits as well as property distribution. Chapter 5 also explores women's claims and rights to land and property in the local communities where mining activities are taking place, focusing on the diversity of local women's claims and rights to resources such as mining pits and farmland.

One major challenge women have to deal with is that some have lost their farmland for crop production to mining when the government of Ghana demarcated farmland and converted the land to gold production. Due to the mining activities, farmland closer to the local communities has become scarce and most of the younger farmers are leaving their local communities to take up mining jobs. Farmers face issues of land fragmentation, poor soil, denial of the use of land, and the consequences of these situations (Mortimore and Harris 2005). The Talensi district falls within the Guinea Savannah zone with infrequent rainfall (Benneh et al. 1990), which worsens the situation of the female farmers because the mines are located on the stretch of land that has a stream running through it, one of the best places for farming prior to mining.

Chapter 5 also examines the historical attempts by the government of Ghana to make land accessible to everyone. The colonial government proposed land titling to ensure land security for individuals, including the poor, since it was believed that the pre-colonial land tenure system denied land from the poor. However, some scholars have debunked land titling as an

evolutionary concept and argued that it does not necessarily guarantee land security and equal access (Atwood 1990; Lund 2002; Peters 2009; Platteau 1996). According to Lastaria-Cornhiel and Garcia-Frias (2005), control of resources means the command an individual or group has over that resource and the benefits derived from the resource. Women tend to be the least benefited by the small-scale mining industry because women do not work in deep mining pits and cannot own land. Women also do not have any control over mining land, and cannot participate in negotiations or decisions concerning land. In order for women to benefit from lineage lands, they should have access, control as well as make decisions about land (Ubink 2008; Wanyeki 2003; Whitehead and Tsikata 2003). Women's lack of access to land also accounts for their lack of capital, access to credit, extension services, and other forms of support (Bukh 1979; Whitehead and Tsikata 2003).

In the conclusion, I summarize the findings, contributions, and limitations of the work and explore its applicability to a broader context of gender roles and access to resources. I also examine the contribution of African women conducting research in Africa. I bring together the insights provided in this empirical evidence to make recommendations for interventions and policy that will help improve small-scale mining and promote the wellbeing of women in the industry. Finally, I argue for comparative studies for women in small-scale mining activities.

## CHAPTER ONE

### **GENDER REPRODUCTION: WORK PATTERNS AND SOCIAL MECHANISMS OF TALENSI WOMEN IN SMALL-SCALE GOLD MINING IN GHANA**

Although there have been global discussions regarding the creation of an equal gender balance in all sectors of the society, less attention has been paid to gender reproduction. In this chapter, I operationalize gender reproduction as the unequal practices embedded in everyday labor force activities, creating persistent inequities between women and men, including those in the small-scale gold mining industry. The recent rise in mining activities in sub-Saharan Africa, including the establishment of the small-scale gold mining industry in the Talensi district in Ghana, has attracted men and women into mining jobs. Banchirigah (2008) has pointed out the numerous income-earning activities the small-scale mining industry provides, making the mining industry a vibrant employer. Women participate in high rates in the mining industry, about 50 percent (Banchirigah 2008). Talensi women work either directly (e.g. shankers, *salmabalga* workers) or indirectly (e.g., food vendors, retail shop owners, and domestic service providers) in gold production (Banchirigah 2008). Working indirectly in food vending, retail, and domestic sectors may be more lucrative for women than working directly in the gold production.

In the mining industry, 20 percent of the workers directly involved in gold production are women (Hinton et al. 2003). Women working in the mining industry experience disproportionate access to resources compared to men (Hinton et al. 2003). The general perception is that the mining industry is male-dominated. Consequently, most research and policies concentrate on men's jobs, while the contribution of women to the industry has been "marginalized" and often



completely overlooked (Hilson 2003; Hinton et al. 2003: 185). Previous research by Hinton et al. (2003) suggests that unless the principles and practices of gender differences are identified and resolved, the hard-working Talensi women will not be able to fully experience all the potential benefits that the small-scale gold mining industry affords.

The goal of this chapter is to illustrate how the Talensi small-scale gold mining industry produces and perpetuates gendered practices. The chapter further highlights some of the main strategic mechanisms women use to challenge gender differences that influence their lives. Women form welfare associations that bring them together to promote female leaders, provide a platform for making decisions and sharing their experiences, and raise money for investments through rotating credit and savings schemes known as *susu*. I provide insights into the formation of these associations, the challenges the women encounter in operating them and the benefits women derive from the associations. I argue that gender reproduction will persist in the mining industry unless major changes occur in work patterns, allowing women to work in jobs they find beneficial, use the tools as well as equipment that can facilitate their work, and strengthen the associations they form. Specifically, this chapter focuses on exploring how the small-scale gold mining activities produce gendered work patterns and practices as well as women miners' restricted use of work tools and equipment.

To understand the organization of work patterns, use of work tools and equipment, and the formation of associations in the mining industry, I use the theories of "doing gender" (West and Zimmerman 1987) and "undoing gender" (Butler 2004). I apply the concept of doing gender in examining work practices in the gold mining industry and undoing gender when examining how gender processes have been challenged in the Talensi mines. Previous works have provided an empirical application of these theories (Kelan 2010; Pullen and Knight 2007). Kelan (2010),

for example, argues that gender can be done and undone in a work organization. According to Lindstead and Pullen (2006:1287), the practical application of the theories of “doing” and “undoing” gender moves discussion out of the context of a female-male dichotomy of unity and difference, emphasizing gender as a social process and providing other views to reconceptualize gender in terms of creativity and productivity. Practical application of the theory of doing and undoing gender also brings major concepts such as authenticity and autonomy into the details, as I will highlight in this chapter.

I organize this chapter into three main sections. The first section presents stories of individual women whose everyday experiences are typical of most women in Talensi mining communities. I next discuss how mining jobs are patterned and the tools and equipment used. The last section shows some of the activities women use to deal with their situation, especially Talensi women’s associations. Pullen and Knight (2007) suggest that women’s participation in associations may make women less dependent upon male kin. The different types of associations have blurry boundaries and functions, providing many benefits for women. For example, the associations provide the social and economic spaces as well as the values women lack as workers in the industry. The associations further provide opportunities for financial support, social activities, and social interactions. Even though the gender organization of the mining industry may reduce women’s productivity, their own efforts to engage in support programs may produce social and economic support.

### **Operationalization of Gender Reproduction**

Feminist scholars developed the perspective of gender reproduction from the sociological concept of social reproduction, which emerged from Marxist ideology. The historical approach to social reproduction was based on the effort required to maintain life on a daily and

intergenerational basis (Laslett and Brenner 1989). Maintaining life involved providing food, clothing, and shelter for immediate consumption, in addition to socializing children and caring for elders in order to keep the cycle of life moving (Laslett and Brenner 1989).

The emphasis Marxist theorists placed on class distinctions led some feminist scholars to challenge the idea of social reproduction. According to Laslett and Brenner (1989), feminist scholars argue that social reproduction involves not only class, but also gender distinctions. Other scholars using a feminist viewpoint argue that gender is a social process that is fluid and dynamic (Bruni et al. 2004; Linstead and Pullen 2006; Poggio 2006). The Talensi place importance on social reproduction for the care of the young and old generations, and gender has a large influence on social relationships. Among the Talensi, gendered differences appear in every aspect of their social life. Gender roles are important for the organization of the households and their work, corporate organization, and life cycles. In these social contexts, the dynamics of gender may take on different forms. In the mining industry, gender is one of the factors that defines work practices and accounts for which tools and equipment the miners can use.

My approach to drawing attention to issues of gender in the mining industry involves analyzing “doing gender,” a theory proposed by Candace West and Don Zimmerman (1987), and “undoing gender,” a theory proposed by Judith Butler (2004). The two theories are intricately related and they serve as a useful way for understanding the Talensi women’s conditions. Judith Butler (2004) argues that the theory of “undoing” gender can best be understood by examining “doing” gender. In applying the work of Broch-Due et al. (1993) to Talensi women working in small-scale gold mining, doing gender is based on the gendered practices and the use of symbols, such as tools and equipment that signify them (Broch-Due et al. 1993). West and Zimmerman (1987) explain the theory of doing gender as an approach that produces a gender binary, an

unquestioned system that maps gender differently for men and women. In an organization, according to Elizabeth Kelan (2010), the gender binary system has an important and lasting effect on work. As gender binary practices continue, Kelan argues, the society's ideas about gender become stable and establish a new norm. Scholars recognize that the normalization of gender is closely linked to how people enact and exhibit doing gender practices in everyday situations (Linstead and Pullen 2006; Nentwich and Kelan 2007). Once embedded in the norms of an organization, doing gender becomes everyday practice and is not questioned (Linstead and Pullen 2006).

Among the Talensi, "doing gender" by way of gendered practices and the use of tools has been normalized. The normalized gendered work patterns as well as the distinctions of use of tools and equipment between men and women lead to gender reproduction. In the everyday situation of the mining industry, gender reproduction constitutes the persistent unequal practices in the everyday labor force. However, Butler (2004) argues that gender practices may be undone in many ways, which in the context of the mining industry usually occurs in the formation of women associations.

Talensi women share the experiences of their everyday practices and values in stories, but they do not envisage how they could eliminate or even reduce the gender differences in work patterns or the practice whereby women cannot use certain tools. The stories they shared with me describe their experiences before they came in the Talensi mines, what they do in the mining communities and their futures when they leave the mines. I present Azuma's story in detail to show how doing gender unfolds in the work organization.

### *Azuma's Story*

I met Azuma one evening at Tongo, the Talensi district capital, where I rented a room during my fieldwork. She is a middle-aged woman originally from Tongo (her late husband's hometown), where her children still live there, but she has lived in Kejetia since gold "hit" or "proved," terms that are used interchangeably to refer to a gold find.<sup>4</sup> She first worked as a *salmabalga* (shallow pit miner) worker and later as a shanker (women who sift crushed rock). I spent some of my evenings at Tongo writing reports and reading over my field notes because the mining communities do not have electricity. Since this was the time of *dumsor* in Ghana, where electricity was on in some areas while it was off in others, I came to Tongo any time there was electricity. Azuma had come to Tongo to visit her children and collect payment from two market women who bought corn from her. Although Azuma worked as a shanker in Kejetia, she diversified her income. She also bought and sold corn in jute bags in Tongo. When she collected the money from her debtors, she transferred it to her mother to buy more corn for her. She continued sending money for more purchases until there were enough bags of corn to bring from the farm to Tongo to sell. After our brief meeting at Tongo, we arranged for an interview in Kejetia.

During the interview with Azuma, one of her friends joined us. Azuma explained how men translate ideas about "men's work" and "women's work" in the mining communities to determine tasks, giving women the less attractive tasks that pay less. Before coming to Kejetia, Azuma worked as a *salmabalga* miner at Nenkrumah in the Sandema District, about sixty kilometers from the Talensi District. Her husband initially discouraged her from going, but when she insisted, he not only agreed to let her go to work at Nenkrumah, but also decided to go with her to look for work himself.

The day after Azuma arrived at Nenkrumah, she joined other women to carry load or rock ore while her husband stayed at home because he had no job. One of the security guards for a *ghetto* or a team that works in a mining pit tried to sell her “sample” (rock ore with high content of gold) he had stolen from his *ghetto* or pit owner; which he was unaware was rich in gold.<sup>5</sup> The security guard would not have offered the sample to a man because male buyers might report him to the *ghetto* (business or pit) owner; he trusted a woman to keep such transactions secret. Azuma, with her previous short visits to the Talensi mine to sell corn, knew the sample contained gold and contacted a buyer for a loan to buy it.

When miners find sample or high quality gold rock on any part of the land, it indicates the land is rich in gold deposit. Azuma stopped carrying load and began to dig her own pit. In less than two weeks, she had gathered enough samples to process for gold. She processed her gold in a different part of the village so that her husband and the other workers would not know how much gold she had extracted. She sold it to the buyer who had previously loaned her money; the buyer deducted the loan and gave the remaining money to her.

News reached the male workers that Azuma was making money from *salmabalga*. One day, while she was digging her pit, two men came to ask her to give the pit to them, but she refused. They offered to buy it from her, but she demanded a higher price than they offered to scare them away. The men decided to take the pit from her by force, and she fought with them with the tools—shovel, hammer, and chisel—she was using to dig.<sup>6</sup> The men summoned her to meet with male community leaders, also responsible for mining activities in the community, who told her to hand over the pit to the men and take up a woman’s job. By this time, Azuma had dug a very deep pit, and the leaders reminded her that women are not supposed to work in deep mining pits and they are not allowed to use certain tools. Azuma agreed to leave the pit, but she

negotiated with the leaders to finish collecting the sample she had already dug. When the leaders agreed to give her extra time, she collected her sample, left the waste or rock ore with a low quantity of gold, and went back to work as a carrier. Three months later, there was a fire in Nenkrumah, which was thought that a miner caused it. The chief of the village asked all the miners to leave, so Azuma and her husband returned to Tongo.

A few months later, gold “proved” in Obuasi in the Talensi district. Azuma went to Kejetia, and she started digging her pit the day she arrived. Less than one year after Azuma began to work at Kejetia, there was a cave-in, and the government banned mining work in the area. She started working as a shanker. She believed that, had there not been a cave-in, the men would have taken away her pit again. Before the cave-in, she had dug to a depth twice her height (Azuma is about 5’4” tall) and was getting close to the first layer of the gold rock.

Azuma’s story exemplifies the local realities of gender reproduction. Many other women shared similar stories of losing their pits to men. Even though Nenkrumah is not a part of Talensi district, Azuma indicated this practice was also typical in all the mining communities in the Upper East region, including Talensi district. For example, Tenee told how men had stopped women in Talensi from digging deeper pits or taken their pits from them. Baale stated that, “three of my attempts to sink my own pits failed.”

In fact, women are not allowed to own mining pits. The inability for women to work in deep mining pits is linked to the Talensi social organization, which prevents women from owning land. Women are denied ownership of assets, including land and property, and this principle defines the activities of the small-scale gold mining industry as well. Despite Azuma’s desire to own and work in her pit, she stated, “the men would not allow me.” Azuma’s strong

resistance to the take-over of her pit did not win her back the pit, because when she resisted, the men reported her to the community leaders who encouraged her to leave the pit for the men.

Azuma's story illuminates the issue of gendered authenticity, which Pullen and Knights (2007) define as the practice by which work is based on gendered norms in order for workers to be recognized as feminine or masculine beings. They argue that individuals authenticate their gender when they conform to the conventional norms of the society. In conforming to the norms, authentic women must be feminine, passive, and subordinate, while authentic men must be masculine and aggressive, and possess an excess of confidence (Pullen and Knights 2007: 508). For example, by engaging in women's job, Azuma and the other women accomplish their gender authenticity, but if they engage in men's labor, they deny their gendered authenticity, as I will explain below.

Many women use direct confrontations like Azuma. Tenee, Elizabeth, Aggie, Baale and many other women who lost their pits to men have confronted the men before the take-over. Fortunately, only a few of these confrontations have ended up with serious physical harm. According to Tenee, "our initial attempt is to resist, but when the confrontations increases in intensity, we give up and allow the men to take over. We cannot fight them." Talensi women also use measures that are not confrontational, including reporting the men for abuse to leaders of the community and demanding compensation. The women sometimes ask their relatives to negotiate on their behalf. For example, Abena had an influential uncle, Rob, who negotiated for her when certain men asked her to leave her pit. Despite the efforts of men and women, however, ideas about gendered authenticity lead to gender-specific tasks that continue to deny women the opportunity to work in deep mining pits.



## **Theoretical Approaches to Gendered Jobs in Talensi Small-scale Gold Mines**

West and Zimmerman (1987) argue that the complex, socially guided activities that express masculine and feminine natures can be revealed in scholarly methods such as ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism. West and Zimmerman (1987) indicate that the major argument of the doing gender theory presumes that social interactions and interpretations make social realities. Furthermore, social actors construct these realities and the realities later become accepted and are not questioned. According to West and Zimmerman (1987), the concept of doing gender shifts gender from the essentialist view of male and female as ascribed traits to viewing gender as a social process that is constantly redefined and negotiated in everyday interactions, a viewpoint shared by other scholars (Bruni et al. 2004; Linstead and Pullen 2006; Poggio 2006). In the 1990s, Gherandi (1994) applied the concept of doing gender to social interactions and interpretations in an organization. Scholars also apply the concept of doing gender to the behavioral practices emerging during interactions with an organization that generate normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for the female-male categorization (Butler 2004; Martin 2003).

As the arguments for doing gender theory became more intense, different approaches for doing gender were identified, including gendered practices and those that use symbols to signify the practices. Kelan (2010), drawing on Foucault's work (Foucault 1976, cited in Kelan 2010: 176), argued that within an organization binary ideas (male vs. female) of gender continue until they have an important and lasting effect on work. Gender roles, then stabilize and become a pervasive system that guides behavior (Kelan 2010) of the people in an organization that enacts and exhibits "doing gender" practices in everyday situations until they become a part of the

normative practice (Foucault 1976, cited in Kelan 2010: 176; Linstead and Pullen 2006; Nentwich and Kelan 2007).

On the other hand, the concept of undoing gender bases its arguments on perspectives from the theory of doing gender. For example, Butler (2004) argues that gender can be undone by ignoring the gender binary “male-female” assumptions underlying the theory of doing gender or by destabilizing it. Returning to Pullen and Knights’ (2007) argument, when individuals resist the norms or fail to appear credible, they deny their gendered authenticity. For example, women in the mining industry who exhibit masculine or aggressive behaviors find themselves in a double bind because they correspond with women who deny their gendered authenticity. Women miners, who attempt to shift into other jobs, negate their gender authenticity or undo their gender. Azuma and most of the other women fight with men who come to take their pits away from them. Azuma was aggressive, assertive, and excessively confident when she initially refused to hand over her deep mining pit to her male attackers. She also made sure she collected the entire sample (rock ore with gold) and left the waste (rock ore with less gold content) for the men. Based on Pullen and Knight’s views, Azuma’s attitude and behavior can be perceived as undoing gender. As Talensi women perform the same type of manual labor and physically strenuous work as men, they undermine the customary ideologies that create gender role differentiation. Even though men are the only workers allowed to work in deep mining pits, most *salmabalga* women dig their pits until they get to the level where they find it difficult to continue digging alone. Sometimes, the *salmabalga* workers hand over the pits to men voluntarily so that they become future shanking leaders.

Stemming from Euro-American perspectives, the theories of doing and undoing gender emphasize corporeal practices that concern the body and sexuality and recognize the embodied

nature of human activity, whether it is said or done (Poggio 2006). Because Butler's exploration of doing gender addresses gendered positions more prevalent in the Euro-American societies, Nolwazi Mkhwanazi (2014) used her work on teenage girls in South Africa to explore gender reproduction in Africa. Mkhwanazi (2014) argued there is a close link between gendered practices and the ideals and values in most African societies. Furthermore, according to Mkhwanazi, most African societies make efforts to uphold the values and ideals of their society, and in the process, these societies contribute to the persistent influence of these ideals and values on everyday practices, including gender roles. Any values and ideals that become acceptable weave their way into the larger system and influence all the practices of the different sectors of the society (Mkhwanazi 2014). Mkhwanazi's study is especially relevant to the mining community where everyday gendered practices and understandings have become the accepted way of organizing the industry without questioning.

Mkhwanazi (2014) uses the notion of doing gender to address the problems of teenage girls in South Africa. She first uncovered gender reproduction in African society by applying the sociological views of social reproduction to an African context. Mkhwanazi's study showed that the persistence of teenage pregnancy in South African society, for example, is the result of the way in which teenage pregnancy and the care of children is managed. Mkhwanazi used case examples in Nyanga East and Khayelitha societies of South Africa to illustrate. The study emphasized how the ideals and values of these societies for younger persons to respect older persons led to the avoidance of intergenerational discussions about sex, and in the process deprived the young women the knowledge needed to avoid teenage pregnancy. The deprivation leads to persistent increases in unwanted teenage pregnancies and perpetuation of very young families in the Nyanga East and Khayelitha societies. More importantly, Mkhwanazi's (2014)

study shifted an explanation of doing gender from focusing on the social understanding of male-female relations to focusing on the cultural values and ideals within the African context.

Similarly, Mkhwanazi's (2014) study illuminates how Talensi small-scale miners construct patriarchal values and ideals from the society's ideals. The patrilineal values of the Talensi social system influence the work organization in the mining industry and produce gender-specific work patterns. What makes the Talensi situation of concern is that the work patterns fundamentally remain unchallenged. The persistence of gender-specific work has led to the normalization of the activities of men and women. The normalization of these gender specific jobs, tools, and equipment in the mining industry, I argue, leads to gender reproduction and the perpetuation of imbalances between men and women. Previous works suggest that gendered practices are integrated daily into the norms of the work organization (Linstead and Pullen 2006; Nentwich and Kelan 2007). The Talensi miners enact and exhibit "doing" gender in their everyday activities. As part of the everyday practice of the mining industry, as suggested in a previous work (Linstead and Pullen 2006), the processes that constitute doing gender avoid being questioned. Among the Talensi, the normalization of the gendered work patterns leads to the unchallenged differences that constitute gender reproduction.

Mkhwanazi (2014) found that in the African context, there is a tendency for ideals and values to become the basis to explain the practices that advantage some groups more than others. Once the practices become the norm, according to Mkhwanazi, they are deemed acceptable by all the members of the society and supported by the values and ideals of the society. Mkhwanazi's study illustrates the extent of the influence of societal norms on people's lives. It also shows how these ideals operate in South African society make it difficult for young girls to

learn anything about sex from the older generation, which is in keeping with the ideal of respect for the elderly.

In the Talensi mining industry, the influence of the ideals of the society is one of the major reasons making it possible for men to take pits away from women. For example, although Azuma's initial reaction was to resist the take-over of her pit, when the leaders reminded her of the norms of the industry, Azuma agreed to leave the pit, although she negotiated for extra time. The miners have recognized and preserved gendered work practices through the ideals and values of the society.

The values and ideals of most African groups are guided by intergenerational dynamics as well (Laslett and Brenner 1989; Mkhwanazi 2014). To illustrate, Azuma left her pit after the leaders of the community, who in most cases are older adult men, asked her to leave. When confronted with difficulties, the members of the mining communities rely on their leaders for solutions to most of the problems they encounter in the communities. For example, the leaders serve as arbitrators, settling all manner of conflicts between friends, husband and wife, children and parents, and any other conflicts that may arise. There have been several cases of the committee leaders in the Talensi mines intervening on behalf of members of the community, even in lineage misunderstandings. For example, when Monica wanted a piece of land to build her house from her paternal uncle, she brought a male, Lopo, with her to talk to her uncle before he released the land. Monica says, "Men are responsible for deliberating on land issues so Lopo stepped in to talk to my uncle for me." Due to the social and cultural significance of these leaders, women in the mining communities would not refuse to seek and respect their advice.

Even though feminist scholars consider gender a social process and a socially constructed phenomenon, they continue to see a mutual dependence between nature and nurture, such that biological fact is transformed into meaningful categories and defined by their relationship to, and interaction with, other types of society (Hastrup 1993; Moore 1988; Ortner 1974). Feminist scholars point out that the interdependence of nature and nurture affects the spheres of reality and draws attention to issues of gender relationships; society identifies the inherent biological properties or natural endowment of women (Ardener 1993). Shirley Ardener's (1993) work suggests the perceptions of the Talensi workers as women affect the categories of work assigned to them, which in turn reflects back upon and reinforces the perceptions of the nature of these women as a continuing process. The perceptions determine what the women can do and how they should do it. The work the women directly involved in mining do is based on the assumptions about: 1) the nature of women, 2) the cultural ideals and values, and 3) the social environment of the industry.

One of the issues that has occupied discussions of gender is the fragmentation of the category "woman." The convenient and colonizing "we" invoked with reference to woman has been seriously shaken and challenged (Broch-Due et al. 1993:3). In view of this argument, Broch-Due et al. (1993) posit that challenging the use of "we" for women does not reflect the differences within "woman" as a category and subject. The issue of gender differences in the mining industry calls into view the need to deconstruct the dualism of man/woman into one that allows for the cultural construction of gender. This has brought into focus the understanding of gender relationships in symbolic and social processes (Broch-Due et al. 1993). In this section, I examine women's work as shankers and as *salmabalga* workers and their work tools to show how gender relations are constructed and reproduced through both symbolism and social

processes. In examining the practices of shankers and *salmabalga* workers, I show the similarities as well as the differences between the situations of the two groups of women. In an organization with low benefits, any pronounced differences in the status and roles of women may be problematic and are particularly important for the development of policies to support them.

### **Gendered Practices and Symbolic Representations in Talensi Small-scale Gold Mines**

At the mines, Talensi values and ideologies, normative practices, and women's tasks are linked. These linkages show up in two ways. First, the two main tasks for women, shanking and *salmabalga*, are connected to the major roles women play in Talensi households. In the household, women are responsible for preparing meals, washing clothes, taking care of children, and ensuring that the surroundings are clean. The Talensi people regard most of the domestic tasks as not difficult. It was very common for the miners to refer to tasks that involve carrying, sifting, and collecting as not difficult to accomplish, which makes them more suitable for women. Secondly, Talensi values and beliefs do not permit women to work in deep mining pits. Shanking and *salmabalga* are the two main mining activities that take place outside the pit and are thought to be more suitable for women.

According to Kelan (2010), when everyday practices become woven into the social expectations of a society, they become stabilized and unquestioned. In Talensi mines, I observed that the social expectations for women to engage in certain tasks are stabilized and unquestioned in various ways. During my preliminary dissertation field research in 2012, a woman who came to live in Kejetia with her husband from the southern part of Ghana, generally called the South, told me that when women question work practices, both men and women get angry.<sup>7</sup> When a woman attempts to challenge practices in the industry, her female colleagues advise her not to ask questions so she can work and earn income. She explained that the workers used Talensi

values and ideals to justify the daily activities of the industry. I juxtapose these ideals and practices with ethnographic data regarding the two main tasks for women to show how the ideals and values of Talensi society determine women's task, link the tasks to the tools and equipment women use, and account for the persistence of limitations in women's labor. I also show how women undermine these ideals and values, challenge the larger social system that determines their tasks, and work toward better lives.

### ***Talensi Values and Ideologies***

Every society has its own values by which it calculates its norms. To understand individuals, it is important to know the formal norms of the society. The lives of women in Talensi mines depend on the norms of the social structure. Talensi describe their society as structured on patrilineal lines, which according to Fortes (1949) influences the underlying ideals and values of the Talensi social organization by promoting men as holders and inheritors of household property and giving them the authority to control economic life and social organization. Fortes argued that women invest their labor in either their husband's family or their own patrilineal family and that "women's labor is owned or is controlled by their husband or brothers" (1949:101). Even though Fortes' classical assertions on Talensi women's labor, ownership, and control have been challenged (Worsley 1956), Talensi values and ideals continue to influence and account for differential gender roles. As women in the Talensi society move into small-scale gold mining jobs, the ideals and values of Talensi patrilineality compel them to perform roles deemed appropriate for women. Men believe that women cannot perform certain tasks. Women agree to perform the roles considered suitable for them, and men ensure there is limited boundary crossing.



Talensi women, however, believe they can perform male tasks given the opportunity. Azuma's friend, who accompanied her for the interview, emphasized, "Azuma is capable of digging deeper pits than some of the men." Azuma's friend who accompanied her for the interview about her life in Nenkumah admitted that some of the tasks for men require specialized skills, but she also pointed out that women can learn these skills. She went on to say, "the two main tasks for women, shanking and *salmabalga*, are more difficult than some of the tasks assigned to men." In spite of the difficulty, women perform their jobs with keen interest.

### **Demographic Characteristics of Talensi Women in Gold Production**

The absence of comprehensive demographic research on mining populations has received attention for a long time (Godoy 1985; World Bank Report 2003). The World Bank Report (2003) argued that in Ghana the absence of data could be the result of the unwillingness of Regional and District centers responsible for the industry to release information. Hinton et al. (2003) recognized the significance of the small-scale mining industry for women. Hilson's (2002) work did not focus on women, but the lack of any attention to their presence in the industry led him to call for research that would promote the wellbeing of the women in the mines. Ricardo Godoy noted the absence of demographic research on mining populations and his concern about that lack (1985:211). Unfortunately, this study cannot adequately cover the demographic background of women due to resource constraints; however, it provides a fundamental understanding of the background of women in the industry.

During my fieldwork, I collected data on 40 women involved in gold production. Women in the mines found it difficult to give basic information such as their age; in fact, only three knew their precise date of birth. Though most of the women do not know their age, the difficulty of the tasks in the mining industry requires energetic women; the age range may be from young adults

to women in their mid-fifties. Only three of the women interviewed had a high school education and none had education past high school. Women who graduated from high school often come to the mining community to work, but may go back if they are admitted into a pre-college or college. Tharma, a young woman with a high school education told me she came to the mines after being invited by her aunt who supported her throughout high school. Tharma had already applied to a college for training nurses, and she was waiting to schedule an interview with the college. She told me she has enough savings to pay her tuition for the first year and hopes to come back to work in the mines during school breaks in order to continue her education.

In a district where the major industrial jobs are in the extractive industries of stone quarrying and small-scale mining, small-scale mining jobs are a lucrative activity for the rural population. In the Talensi industry, many married and single women participate in the gold production activities, and eight of the women interviewed had separated from their husbands. The large proportion of married and separated women means the livelihood of many households, including children, depends on this industry. The Talensi regard women separated from their husbands as married until their husbands return the bridewealth. Only four of the women interviewed have never married, but even the unmarried women carry a huge financial responsibility to their family.

### ***The Daily Life of Women in the Talensi Mining Communities***

Women in Talensi small-scale mining communities wake up early in the morning, about 6 a.m. The streets of Kejetia are busy early in the morning. Food sellers put out their food on small tables placed on both sides of the main road. Most of the food they sell is locally prepared, ranging from *waakye* (rice boiled with beans) to *tuo zaafi* or *tz* (corn meal cooked to a thick consistency in water). After eating, most of the women wait at the local restaurants, chatting with

each other until they hear the sound of a crushing machine, then they all move in that direction.<sup>8</sup> Shankers who do not have work appointments with employers sit around crushers to wait for work. As soon as a shanking leader completes crushing for an employer, they follow their colleagues to the employers' homes to assist them with shanking.

*Salmabalga* women begin their work digging at dawn. Since temperatures rise throughout the day, reaching maximum intensity late in the afternoon, most of the tasks are done very early in the day. Shanking, however, is done late morning so that gold extraction takes place when the temperature is still quite high. The mining employers believe that the heat facilitates the separation of the gold from the rocks in the amalgamation process, which requires adding mercury to separate the gold. The shankers usually work in groups of three to five, chatting as they work. Their busy schedule during the day prevents them from cooking dinner, usually a job reserved for women in Ghanaian households. They take short breaks from their work to eat and drink local gin called *akpeteshie*.

The main street in Kejetia is very busy at night as well, with vibrant commercial activities including the sale of food and alcoholic drinks. Maggie sells more *akpeteshie* at night than during the day, as does Monica, my host in Kejetia. The male miners who work underground mostly work at night when the pits cool down, but come out of the pits early in the morning when the pits are too cold. The miners move between the three closest mining communities; many of them sleep in open spaces and under trees because of the heat during the day.

All of the women who work in gold production have household responsibilities with high dependency ratio. Women work hard to earn income to support themselves and their dependents, most of whom are children. Even the unmarried women have responsibilities; for example, Vida came to work in the mines to support her younger siblings. With low education and dependents

counting on them, the mining industry is a significant way for the women to earn income. Next, I provide specific information about the tasks women perform to make earning income possible.

**Figure 5: Talensi Women Before and During Shanking**



### ***Women as Shankers***

As evident in Figure 5, all shankers are women. Shanking is by far the most common form of work for women. Women crush the rocks using grinding machines known as crushers supervised by shanking leaders. After crushing, the women sift finely ground stone (referred to as *kun ziom* in Talon) that contains traces of gold in preparation for the amalgamation process; this process is known as shanking. According to the miners, shanking is necessary so that when mixed with water, the gold easily combines with liquid mercury. During shanking, two women sit on bashers or plastic buckets facing each other with a metal bowl or a pan separating them. A third woman uses *appiah-dankwa* or a round plastic bowl to fetch the crushed rocks, commonly called chipping, and pour them into the scarves used by the two women for shanking. The more

experienced women sift the chipping (shank) while the less experienced women fetch crushed rocks.

**Figure 6: Women as Salmabalga Workers**



### ***Women in Salmabalga Work***

*Salmabalga* work involves digging to collect broken pieces of rocks or stones; blowing the dust away in a metal bowl; washing the rocks or stones with water; and searching through the stones or pieces of rocks to find gold nuggets (Figure 2.2). *Salma* is the Talensi word for gold and *balga* means stirring and is a part of the preparation of *saabo* (stirred corn meal), the main staple meal for the Talensi. The name *salmabalga* is used to refer to workers who use the same stirring process employed in the preparation of *saabo*.

*Salmabalga* is done on riverbeds or on dry land and is the first stage of the gold production process. When a farmer, a builder, or a miner finds an unusual piece of rock and

informs the miners, by the next day that land is full of people. Each team of workers, referred to as a *ghetto* or a “gang,” locates a section of the land and starts digging. At the early stage of the production process, the *salmabalga* stage, both men and women are involved in digging their pits. Each worker digs in a different spot until one of the diggers identifies gold-bearing rock. Experienced miners can identify gold-bearing rocks by sight, but some miners use manual testers or long metal rods with magnetic ends that vibrate in the presence of gold. When the miners discover the gold rock underground, they drive the women away, telling them they are not supposed to work in deep mining pits. The women leave the pits like Azuma did, move to another section of land, and start over. Gold buyers come to the *salmabalga* site to buy the gold at the end of each day.

**Figure 7: Blue and Yellow Appiah-Dankwa Containing Chipping/Load**



Note: Sitting in the background of the photo is a pan (metal bowl), basher (black bucket) and a shanking net (blue scarf)

## Tools and Equipment for Shanking and Salmabalga

The round plastic bowl used commonly by shankers to measure their payments is called *appiah-dankwa* (Figure 7). Shankers use *appiah-dankwa* to collect chippings from metal bowls into the scarf during shanking. Appiah-Dankwa is an Ashanti male name. Dubu, a chiseler, explained that during the early years of mining in Ghana, most workers from the Talensi area and other parts of Northern Ghana migrated to the mining centers in Southern Ghana to work as manual laborers. Talensi miners returned to work in mining communities in their area when the government of Ghana demarcated the land for mining. Some of the miners returned with their friends from the South with expertise in gold mining. One of these Talensi miners brought two men named Appiah and Dankwa, who would usually make payments with chipping, using a small, round plastic bowl. As mining flourished and attracted more workers, the bowl became a standard measure so people would tell others to bring Appiah-Dankwa's measure, thus, the bowl became known as *appiah-dankwa* and has become a standard measure serving multiple purposes.

Another measuring bowl commonly used by the miners is the basher, which originated in Southern Ghana. Basher comes from the English verb to bash. Bashers are of two sizes: Six bowls of *appiah-dankwa* of chipping are equivalent to one small basher; and twelve *appiah-dankwa* of chipping makes one large basher. During shanking, women sit on their basher. Basher is also used to measure chipping for grinding. During my fieldwork, grinding a large basher of chipping or load cost GH¢10 (about USD3.00).<sup>9</sup>

The round metal bowl used for carrying chipping or load during shanking and *salmabalga* work is called a pan or *lariga* in Talon (Figure 7). The bowl comes in three different sizes—large, medium, and small; each woman owns more than one pan, which she loans to her employer. The woman with more pans is more likely to work for more employers. In some

situations, they work as shanking leaders. When the miners do not complete the gold production process in one day, women leave the load, chipping, or smooth in their pan until the next day and then continue. The whitish blue substance the women are working with in the *appiah-dankwa* in Figure 7 is known as chipping or load. The women worked for one of the employers, received their wages, and showed me how much chipping they received. Shankers receive the little quantities of chipping, accumulate it over a period of about three months, mill the chipping and extract the gold.

Thus, the four main tools for shanking and *salmabalga* work are a pan, a basher, shanking net, and *appiah-dankwa*. Two of the shankers in Figure 7 are showing their blue and yellow *appiah-dankwa* or round plastic bowls containing chipping or load. There is a pan on the ground. Inside the pan is a black basher. The basher contains chipping received as wages. In order to prevent other people from seeing how much chipping they received, shankers cover the chipping in their basher from the prying eyes of their colleagues with their scarf or shanking net.

The description of the work the women do and the tools and equipment they use are important to understanding the women's world in gold production. Shanking and *salmabalga* are characterized by sitting, shaking, sifting, and stirring. The Regional Director of the Minerals Commission confirmed that in Ghana the ideology that women are responsible for most of the household chores promotes differences in gender roles. The Director was of the view that the very acts of shaking, sifting, and stirring, involved in shanking and *salmabalga* is what put them into the feminine domain since these acts are also part of household activities. The tools and equipment the miners use serve as symbols to determine gender role differences and contribute to doing gender.

Besides women's action, previous research suggests that another way in which values



and meanings perpetuate in the mining organization is by use of symbolism (Solheim and Borchgrevink 1993). Among Talensi miners, the tools and equipment the women use are objects that reveal the symbolic meanings given to their work. Just as women's actions of sitting, sifting, and carrying are indicative of the roles they are expected to perform; the tools and equipment the women use also influence their work roles. The scarf, pan, and bucket are objects linked to the world of rural women. Drawing on Solheim and Borchgrevink's (1993) study, I term the women miners' actions, role performance, and tools that women use as meaning making, and the practice of doing gender that defines rural women's world while at the same time reinforcing the meanings they give to femaleness and maleness. Once the meanings become part of the norms of the mining industry, these norms influence women's lives in the industry. This observation is consistent with the view that while men must perform tasks associated with breaking and digging in deep pits and use tools such as pickaxes, shovels, and chisels, women should work above ground using pans, scarves, and bowls. Because of the restrictions, women cannot work in deep mining pits where, in the small-scale mining industry, most of the lucrative activities take place.

It is also important to come back to the use of the term "we" for women. Broch-Due et al. (1993) argue that the challenge to the use of "we" is not reflective of "woman" as a category and subject. The two groups of women in the mining industry, shanker and *salmabalga* workers encounter different situations. Although shankers do not receive enough money to live on (see Table 3.1), in general they are hopeful. Shankers blame their lower wages on the lack of regular jobs. Once there is enough work to do, Aggie argues that, "we would be better off." She cites the period just before the cave-in in 2014, remarking, "I worked from morning until late nights and I was not in financial difficulty." Once shankers have work, they are able to earn money and have

access to loans from the buyers. In serious situations beyond their control, the welfare association may also support shankers. The *salmabalga* workers are not so fortunate.

In contrast to shankers, *salmabalga* workers may work for months without finding a single gold nugget. Sarah, whose baby was diagnosed with a brain tumor, is a *salmabalga* worker and had some nuggets to sell to pay for the initial diagnoses. However, when I met her, she had returned to the *salmabalga* site to continue her work to raise income for her baby's treatment, but she had been working for six weeks without finding any gold. She told me she was not hopeful about being able to pay for the cost of surgery for her baby. She was in tears when she was narrating how the size of her baby's head was increasing without any hope of getting gold to sell. Her friend, who stood by her and comforted her added, "I haven't also been lucky. I planned to give Sarah any nugget I find to support the cost of surgery for her baby. I have worked a little longer and found nothing." Sarah and her friend would not change jobs. To become shankers, the *salmabalga* workers would have to build relationships with both the shankers and the employers, live in the mining communities, and accumulate chippings over a long time. With the sick child to care for and no support from her family, *salmabalga* seemed the only hope for Sarah. I asked her to contact the Catholic Relief Services for emergency funding for the surgery. The Service turned her down on her first visit, but when I contacted the Regional Manager on her behalf, she was informed an International Medical team would arrive in Ghana in a few weeks to treat medical emergencies. Even though I ended the fieldwork before the arrival of the medical team, at the time of my departure, Sarah was hopeful she would get help for her baby.

Broch-Due et al. (1993) have expressed the need to move beyond male-female dualism to a cultural construction of gender. The dualistic view does not adequately address the differences

between the categories of the women in the mining industry for improved lives. The circumstances of the shankers seemed better than that of the *salmabalga* workers. In addition, Sandborg (1993) posits that working tools express the ideologies and norms of society. In the world of Talensi women miners, when a shanker or a *salmabalga* worker picks up the tools of her day's work—her pan balance on her head and her basher containing her shanking net in her hand—swinging her hands and chatting with other women, she has an image of herself as a small-scale mine worker. This image shows who she is, that is, her identity as a woman and the tasks she performs as a woman. Sandborg's (1993) research suggests that the Talensi woman's perceived identity may give meaning and value to the work women do, which translates into roles and wages.

Kwasi, a *moyerman* (rock driller), shared the meaning he gives to women's work. Kwasi mentioned that although women can dig pits, they are encouraged to shank and do *salmabalga* because “you can't imagine seeing me (pointing to himself) carrying a pan with chipping and walking from a crusher to my house. Women should carry pans and shank,” he concluded. When this *moyerman* discusses what women are responsible for doing, he does not think of them as colleagues; he sees the women as the persons responsible for fetching water from a stream, a well or a borehole (a well fixed with a small pump) with a pan or persons stirring with sieves. Shanking and *salmabalga* constitute the lowest-paying jobs in the mining industry.

In addition to performing the lowest jobs on the tier, women lack representation on the mining committees. Women do not have representatives on any of the mining committees—the District, Regional, and National Associations of Miners—the highest decision-making bodies in the mining industry. Many miners believe that the decisions to improve the sector should begin with men's activities and the benefits would trickle down to the women. In fact, even the

Minerals Commission believes that once the programs they are trying to introduce for the men achieve successes, the women will automatically benefit. On the contrary, I suggest that while programs such as the introduction of retorts for the extraction of the gold may benefit some women, they may not benefit from other programs such as microcredits from the government of Ghana or from donor agencies. I argue that any program to enhance the lives of mining workers should involve men and women from the beginning; in the case of the Talensi small-scale mining industry, I propose that the program should begin with women's representation on the committees at all levels.

### **Doing Gender and Social Exclusion**

In an organization where the work does not require specialized skills and where the skills needed to carry out tasks can be learned on the job, the workers should have the flexibility to engage in the tasks they desire. The restriction placed on Talensi women that require them to work solely in shanking and *salmabalga* excludes them from having full access to job opportunities. In the mining organization, there are tasks that are more important than others are, and all the workers should have the opportunity to navigate the tasks they would like to engage in. Once women cannot perform all the different tasks, they are excluded from participating in certain positions as well, including representation on the mining committee. The exclusion of women from participating in the mining organization has negative consequences for Talensi women. For example, Talensi women do not have the opportunity to fully integrate into the social and economic life of small-scale mining industry and in the process become what Butler referred to as "gendered minorities" (2004:21). Butler (2004) used the term "gendered minorities" to show how a society classifies women in its broadest sense through doing gender. Butler believes that the category "gender" tends to reinforce normative aspirations. Applying the

term, “gendered minorities” to Talensi women’s mining activities, these women carry pans with chipping and walk from a crusher to Dubu, the *moyerman*’s house, reinforcing the normative aspirations of the mining industry. The persistence and survival process of excluding women is the main concern of Butler’s (2004) ideas regarding doing gender to produce gendered minorities. In the mining industry, preventing women from doing certain types of jobs, from using certain tools and equipment, and from participating in the processes of leadership and authority produce the persistence and survival processes, which reproduce gender. Even in large-scale mines where women have penetrated into “traditional” male spaces, the workers engender relationships and practices. Rolston (2013) argues that, in the Colorado mines, workers engender practices when female workers who drive trucks make mistakes while driving. Rolston (2013) argues that the outcome of women’s activities is attributed to their gender. In the Colorado mine, a female truck driver causes an accident because she is a woman.

However, in the mining industry, women are able to devise mechanisms to deal with their situation both individually and collectively. Azuma, the *salmabalga* woman whose pit was taken from her by male workers so that she had to go back to carrying load, negotiated with the leaders to be allowed to collect the rocks she had already dug. While sharing her experience, she remarked, “I didn’t stop digging. I continued until I reached the rock, dug the entire sample, and collected everything before leaving the pit.” Many women play their roles quite well according to the ideals and values of the society. Sandborg’s (1993) research shows how women may deliberately not internalize feelings about being female, and their outward social behavior is not necessarily formative of their feelings, ideas, goals, and sense of self. This process is reminiscent of what Strathern (1981:177) characterizes as the distance between women’s social roles and their “true self.” According to Strathern, women’s true selves are not always apparent in their

roles. Women may be practicing certain social roles the society requires of them, but they set their own goals and aspirations they work hard to achieve.

Sarah McDermott (2017) in a magazine of the BBC World Service wrote about an interview with a woman who had to disguise herself as a man in order to work in a mine in Tanzania, the only place in the world where mining for a rare, blue-violet gemstone takes place. According to McDermott (2017), Pili Hussein, the interviewee, moved into the Tanzanian mining community in search of work. Since women deep not work in deep mining pits, uncle Hussien, as the miners knew her, remarks:

Women were not allowed in the mining area, so I entered bravely like a man, like a strong person. You take big trousers, you cut them into shorts and you appear like a man. That is what I did. I acted like a gorilla. I could fight, my language was bad, I could carry a big knife like a Maasai (warrior). Nobody knew I was a woman because everything I was doing was like a man

Pili Hussein shows the tension between her aspirations to work to earn wages and the cultural inhibitions of the area. According to Pili Hussein, “working in the deep mining pits enabled me to earn income for an investment, to pay for the education of my children, nieces, nephews, and grandchildren.” Several years later, in an unrelated incident, the police discovered the “uncle” Hussein was a woman and when the news reached the male miners, “uncle” stopped working in deep pits. However, Pili Hussein indicated that she owns mining pits and has male employees who work in the deep pits and female employees who offer services such as cooking for the male workers.

Talensi women show their goals and aspirations in the mining industry by belonging to welfare and savings associations, which I discuss in the next section. Drawing on previous work of Strathern (1981) and other scholars, the next section analyzes the relationship between women’s social roles and their true self by discussing what women do in view of the challenges

they encounter to enable them to continue to live and work in the mining communities. The Talensi women engage in activities that provide alternative avenues for improved lives, illustrating the dynamic and fluid approaches women use in their everyday lived experiences to undo gender.

### **Talensi Savings/Credit Schemes and Welfare Associations**

In the Talensi mining communities, women form three types of associations: The rotating credit scheme, known locally as *susu*, is the most common and allows women to save money from their income; the welfare scheme provides welfare services to members; and the last type functions as both a savings and welfare scheme. These three types of associations are very similar in structure, but differ in functions.

#### ***Voluntary Association: Susu or Rotating Credit Scheme***

The most predominant voluntary association in the Talensi mine is known locally as *susu*, a rotating credit scheme in which a group of women regularly contributes equal amounts of money to their leader and collect their contributions in turns. The basic principle is the same everywhere: “a lump sum fund composed of fixed contributions from each member of the association” is divided at fixed intervals and as a whole to each member of the association in turn (see Geertz 1962:243). There are no restrictions for joining *susu* associations in the mine, and women can join more than one group. They do not hold formal meetings and the associations are formed and terminated through membership initiatives, but some *susu* groups persist for a long period of time.

One of the *susu* groups I studied in Kejetia is made up of 14 members. Each member contributes GH¢20 per week. There are two leaders responsible for collecting membership

contributions and keeping the money in their homes. There are no recorded theft cases in the mining communities except those linked to gold. The two *susu* leaders go around the communities every Thursday and Friday evening to collect the contributions from members, and beneficiaries receive payments on Friday or Saturday. Members can also send their contributions to the leaders when their money is ready or have a neighbor take it. When one recipient leader receives a member's contribution, she must inform the other leader. Passing payment information on to others serves as a form of records keeping since the leaders and participants do not write down the contributions because most of them cannot read or write. Thus, the two leaders watch each other. Both of the leaders of the *susu* group I studied were food vendors who sell along the main street so they can easily be located to receive contributions or make payouts. The two women took the leadership positions because they introduced the idea of *susu* to their friends and started the group. Their friends invited other women to join, because the more participants in the scheme the greater the amount the individual receives. Members decide when they want to collect their benefits, and this is done monthly. This means that it takes fourteen months to cover all 14 members, at which point the cycle begins again. Each beneficiary receives GH¢1160 when it is her turn.

There are various categories of *susu* groups and each group's style depends on the work of the members. In some of the groups, all the members engage in the same jobs such as traders or shankers. In the group of traders, for example, since they have regular incomes, the members contribute to the fund daily. *Susu* associations provide members with opportunities for acquiring capital to start up a business, money to keep as savings, or for investment. For some of these *susu* groups, the association becomes a means of achieving economic success. According to Yigba, one of the association's members who participated in three different cycles of *susu*, the



benefits she received have enabled her to raise enough income to construct a two-bedroom mud house in her hometown. She also used part of her benefits to expand her non-alcoholic night business. Yigba refers to her membership in the *susu* groups as a part of her economic success, which has also enhanced her prestige.

Talensi women gain autonomy through their savings from *susu* associations. Very rarely do women join *susu* without thinking about how they want to spend their money. The benefits from *susu* associations help relieve women of their financial burden, enable them to make decisions to improve their well-being, and encourages them to work harder so that they can meet their obligations to the associations. *Susu* brings the Talensi women to account for the autonomy they desire for improved well-being. Yigba explained that raising GH¢20 every week for a *susu* contribution in just one group required hard work, but every member of a *susu* group is overjoyed when her turn is up to receive her benefits. Yigba concluded that, in part because of *susu*, life in the mining community is better than life in the village.

### ***Voluntary Association: Welfare***

The second form of association for women is the welfare group. Welfare associations differ in many ways from the *susu* groups. They have a large membership; do not include savings activities; extend their services to all the members of the community; and provide the welfare services that women may lack because of their relocation to the mining communities. The Kejetia welfare association is the largest with 50 members. There were originally 55 members, but three of the members moved out of the community and two sisters quit because they wanted to collect their benefits at a time not stipulated by the rules. The membership comprised of women engaged in all kinds of activities, including shanking and *salmabalga*. There are three leaders for the welfare association at Kejetia. Like in the *susu* or the rotating

savings groups, the women became leaders because they initiated the welfare group in Kejetia in early 2014. These leaders do not have specific roles, but one of them acts as a chairperson for meetings. Unlike *susu*, the welfare association keeps records because of its large size and the length of time they operate. One leader is the only member who can write records of membership contributions in a notebook; when she is unable to attend a meeting, the son of one of the other members attends the meetings to record contributions. This young man also takes women's money to deposit into their bank accounts in Bolga because he owns a motorbike, is able to read and write, commutes to Bolga regularly, and does not charge them for the service. The association was less than one-year-old at the time of my fieldwork, but the leaders indicated that three members have already received funeral donations.

The welfare association at the Talensi mine has a strong sense of solidarity. The members chat about their work, finances, and families. I perceived that the non-financial benefits were very significant to the group. They share jokes and gossip during their meetings. Every member participates in the discussions, which are usually very short. No one feels intimidated even though some of the members talk more than others do. They do not record their minutes, but they recap the discussions of the previous meeting and determine whether the actions they planned to take were successful or not before they begin the business for the day. Even though I did not have the opportunity to witness the association make donations to any of its members, I joined six of the members at the funeral of a sponsor's (an investor) father because the sponsor was a resident of the community. Given that the welfare group is the only organized group in the community for women, its members attended the funeral to represent women. At the funeral, they presented the sponsor with drinks as a gesture of community solidarity. One woman mentioned how the sponsor was overjoyed to have them there. The sponsor gave the women

drinks (both alcoholic and non-alcoholic) and food at the funeral as it is customary, and almost all of his local community welcomed them.

In a few cases, the welfare group gives money to support members who face difficulties, such as a sudden death of a child, although this is not part of its mandate. The women loan some of the dues they accumulate to support their members. The recipient decides when to pay back, but it must be within six months; if at the end of the six-month period the recipient has not been able to repay the loan, the group calculates a fee for the late return of the money. At this point, the members of the association ask their rural bank to collect the money with minimum charges and fees and for the bank to ensure that the members pay back the money. The association had not enforced any of the punitive measures because according to one of the leaders of the association “our main aim is to support our members and not to compound the difficulties they encounter. In the situation where a member defaults, we work out a flexible repayment schedule for her.” Voluntary Association: Mixed Functioning Group (*susu* and welfare)

The third association has a mixed function—*susu* and welfare. Membership in this organization is community-based, comprising all the women who come from Yameriga (a community about five kilometers from the mining communities) including shankers and *salmabalga* workers. The group allows non-mining women from Yameriga to join the group. This mixed-functioning group has one leader who serves as the chair and financial secretary because she is the only member of the group who can write. Contributions are of two kinds—welfare contributions to support social events such as funerals and childbirth and *susu* contributions. While *susu* contributions vary, dues for welfare are fixed. The members make monthly contributions between GH¢2.00 and GH¢10.00 toward *susu* and 80p per member per month as welfare dues.

One of the local banks (Builsa Rural Bank) donated a safe to keep the association's money. The safe is in the house of one of the members, but she does not have the key. There are three keys to the safe kept by three members of the group. All the key holders have to be present to open the safe, which is opened during their weekly meetings, held every Sunday afternoon. The bank's representative occasionally attends the group's meetings to discuss investment projects. The banker also educates them on topics such as the importance of solidarity, management, and book and records keeping. The group plans to keep the money in the safe for one year, after which all of the members will receive their contributions from *susu*. The banker will assist members in opening bank accounts with their savings and opening an account for the welfare contributions. Members of the association can access loans from the welfare contributions at a rate of ten percent interest. Non-group members from Yameriga can also access loans from the group at a higher interest rate of 15 percent if a group member who ensures the loan will be repaid. When she defaults, the member will forfeit her contributions.

### **Voluntary Associations: Socio-Economic Networks of Support**

Voluntary associations play prominent roles in the lives of disadvantaged groups such as women (Mader 2015). The voluntary associations in the Talensi mines serve multiple functions of mutual support. Like other associations, the Talensi associations provide opportunities for women to come together to cooperate in activities (Adams et al. 2002). According to Moore (1988), most welfare groups that form outside local communities stand in for some of the associations in local communities, such as the association of wives of lineage members that is an important political organization to take action against men when they mistreat their wives. The associations in the Talensi mining industry do not engage in political action against the men, but as networks of support for women. When comparing the situation of the shankers with the

*salmabalga* workers, the associations' help may even out the differences. According to Purkayastha and Subramaniam (2004), voluntary associations may be horizontal, lateral, vertical, or a combination, linking individuals and groups. They explain horizontal linkages as an association that involves only members of the local communities and associations that have linkages outside the local communities as lateral or vertical. In using examples from Ghana and Senegal in West Africa, Purkayastha and Subramaniam (2004) argue that informal networks in the two countries may establish connections with formal organizations. However, the welfare group and the *susu* or rotating credit groups in Talensi do not have any connections to formal organizations. The lateral and vertical connections of informal organizations create opportunities for women to negotiate change.

The voluntary associations in the Talensi mining communities do not have hierarchical tendencies; they are homogenous and relatively egalitarian. They consist of women who engage in the same kinds of social and economic activities, and there is very little differentiation among members. The Talensi associations usually form to provide some of the basic needs for women. In most cases, members of the association provide the support that kin members would otherwise have provided. In addition to the support from the association to its members, individual members also support each other. Yigba asked a colleague from the welfare association to accompany her to bargain for a good price with her landowners. When I asked her why she did not go with Boger, her fiancé, to bargain, she replied:

I did not want Boger to go with me. He is jealous that I have bought a plot in Bolga (the regional capital) when he does not own a plot in the village. He depends on his father's land. And why not? After all, he is the oldest son and can access his father's entire estate. I am a woman and I have to work hard to own my personal property.

Kinship, religion, and territory are no longer the primary means for the organization of social groups in West Africa, even though these factors continue to influence the organization of

voluntary associations. According to Anheier and Salmon (2006), voluntary associations are now tied to specific needs, self-interest, and greater individual choice. In Ghana, many associations are formed as alumni and neighborhood groups. In the mining communities, the women organize voluntary associations for welfare and microcredit purposes.

Scholars have alleged that voluntary associations provide adaptive mechanisms for women when they move into new environments such as an urban center (Little 1973, cited in Moore 1988:228). Women needed adaptive mechanisms because of the different social, economic, cultural, and technological situations (Little 1973, cited in Moore 1988). Talensi women have used their welfare and *susu* associations in the form of microcredit programs to promote savings and provide social welfare support. Limiting the function of associations to adaptive or coping mechanisms tends to maintain the image of women as victims and to view the associations as only a short-term defense for economic purposes (Moore 1988).

The formation of these associations depends on bonds of empathy, obligation, or a probably conscious need to present a united front for women in the society. The main reason for the formation of the Kejetia welfare association was to fill the void in support the women will miss when they leave their villages. Previous research suggests the association is also important for generating resources for the people involved in them to garner their ability to act in the collective interest and promote the participation of women in the community's activities (Purkayastha and Subramaniam 2004). When women from the welfare group in the Talensi mines attended the funeral of a male sponsor whose father passed, they explained that their action would help convince men to support women in difficult times.

The changes voluntary associations bring into the community may challenge stereotypical roles and norms or create more egalitarian gender norms (Purkayastha and

Subramaniam 2004). In the Talensi mines, women respect their leaders in the same way they respect male mining committee leaders. The mining committee conveys messages to the women through the leaders of the women's associations. The leaders of the associations also mobilize the women for community activities. Voluntary associations are successful because they are regarded as women representing themselves (Purkayastha and Subramaniam 2004). On many occasions, Kwasi, a moyerman or a driller of the gold bearing rock to loosen it before blasting, would ask me on Saturday evenings whether I was going to the women's meeting. If I responded in the affirmative, he would jokingly add, "Women are representing themselves." These associations allow women to define what is good for them rather than being told what to do. They do not write an agenda for the meetings, but various topics for discussion emerge during the meetings. They discuss domestic issues, advise members on childcare practices, advocate for members who have problems with their husbands, and encourage members to save and invest. The members socialize during the meetings and report on members who are out of town. When any of the members of the association are absent, they delegate members to check on them after the meeting to find out how they are doing. Women's representation of women may cause men to listen to them (Purkayastha and Subramaniam 2004). In fact, the associations can be the medium to tailor community projects. When I attended the meetings, the self-confidence the women exhibited was very impressive. Even the quiet women in the community contributed to the discussions of this relatively egalitarian group.

### **Microcredit**

Microcredit programs received a boost after the successful Grameen Bank (GB) model in Bangladesh in the 1970s. Before the GB model, several types of credit schemes existed in many countries, including Ghana. The GB model promoted national and international interests in how

women in Bangladesh improved their lives when they had access to credit, and successful microcredit schemes emerged in other places to support women. In view of the benefits from microcredit, there is a call for international organizations to step in to ensure that microcredit loans do not bear high interest rates. This call identifies donor agencies as organizations that can provide subsidies for the microcredit schemes (Gueyie et al. 2013). According to Mohammed Jashim Uddin (2015), microcredit programs should have three main aims: alleviate poverty, empower women, and promote social capital.

In Ghana, *susu* or the rotating savings scheme is by far the most common of the microcredit associations. *Susu* schemes are different from commercial microcredit programs because *susu* programs are run by the members themselves, and they have no fear or penalties from commercial sponsors. Almost everyone in the mining community belongs to a *susu* association; most belong to more than one. Each of the Talensi *susu* association comprises friends or people who do the same or similar types of jobs. The homogeneity among the members creates flexibility in arranging for the order in which the members take their benefits. Members are able to ask questions, especially when one of the members is posing problems with irregular payments. Jashim Uddin (2015) refuted the claims that women use their income from these savings programs to support their extended families and men take women's money from microcredit. Baale responded when I asked whether her husband takes her money from her that "this is a thing of the past." Yigba and other women have used their *susu* savings for meeting their personal needs; Yigba and Abena constructed houses; Sanpan and others mentioned they would use their savings as start-up business capital; while Gifty and others have opened savings accounts in a rural bank in Bolga, the regional capital.



Consistent with Jashim Uddin's (2015) research, *susu* groups in the mining industry build social capital by promoting the formation of self-selected homogeneous groups that create cohesiveness and interdependence among members for purposive and quality support. According to Jashim Uddin (2015), in building social capital within the association, members take responsibility for or help to resolve repayment problems by defaulters. Talensi women operate a flexible repayment system for defaulters. When a member defaults in the Talensi group, the leader deducts the amount not paid from the contributor's benefits. In most cases, the punishment for a defaulting member is to disallow her from joining the group in the next round. The operation of the *susu* groups in the Talensi mines confirms how these homogenous groups with the purpose of helping their members to save their income are able to maintain the quality of networking that makes them cohesive and sustainable. The members maintain an illusion of kinship bonds, even though there is usually no kinship relationship among the members of the *susu* groups. The women rely on their sense of homogeneity to build stronger groups. All the members share their ideas about who will be the first and last recipient. Many discussions focus on how order of recipients. Some of the issues they consider are immediate needs and those who are more likely to default payment.

Jashim Uddin (2015) points out that microcredit serves as a means for the poor to access credit and that proponents of microcredits assert that women become empowered by reconstructing gender relations and improving women's economic position within families. In the Talensi mine, such an assertion may be misleading. Talensi women who participate in *susu* programs are able to negotiate the order for receiving benefits, payments of contributions, defaulting arrangements, and collection of payments. Talensi women are empowered through how they reconstruct gender relations through microcredits is not adequate. Women improve

their financial status through microcredits; an assertion previous research suggests shows how women bring into the programs a lot of organizing capabilities, mostly realized in the self-formed microcredit associations such as the *susu* groups (Jashim Uddin 2015).

Problems with microcredits show up mostly in governmental and non-governmental institutions that have emerged out of the Grameen Bank (GB) model (Jashim Uddin 2015). Rather than microcredits alleviating poverty, the institutionalized programs have become a way of “financializing” poverty (Mader 2015). Relying on conceptions of poverty, Phillip Mader described microfinancing as a process that involved unequal relations between those who do not meet the society’s expectations and norms. To meet these expectations, “the poor” should use financial intermediaries that help but control them (Mader 2015: 78). In the Talensi mining communities, women operate *susu* without institutional intermediaries and there is no government interference; yet, these *susu* groups have met a lot of successes.

In view of the role of institutions, Mader’s study (2015) supports the assertion that institutions that operate microcredits issue disciplinary measures to their beneficiaries in a kind of “governmentality” approach (Foucault 1976, cited in Jashim Uddin 2015:183). Without government interference, microcredit schemes are useful to women, especially those in rural communities (Gueyie et al. 2013). Women’s interactions support their activities, provide a sense of belonging, and provide a sense of collectivity for social action. Women’s associations provide space to share ideas and learn from each other. The savings and credit schemes run by associations enable women to save part of their income for investment in businesses, in some cases acquire personal property, and thereby undermine Talensi ideals and values that allow only men to own and inherit property.

Although the welfare association in the Talensi mine was a relatively new group at the time of my fieldwork, the association had instilled some level of confidence in its members and gained the respect of the men as well. One notable benefit of the welfare association is that before its formation, contributions were used to support funerals. When a member of the community is bereaved, a few men who are friends with the person spontaneously come together to collect donations, which were optional. Since they did not keep records, the collectors did not provide any accountability to the community. In addition, most of the beneficiaries of the community donations were men who died through mine accidents. With the formation of the association, when any member of the community dies, the association donates to the community for its members. The association supports its members as well. With a welfare association in place, the members are assured of the proper use of their contributions to the community and have accountability for the money they pay to the leaders. Moreover, unlike the community donations, each member of the association receives equal amounts. The members have expanded benefits to cover the death of parents and children. Even though there is no institutional support for the Talensi associations, the women have been able to come together to form a strong association.

The use of the voluntary associations to improve women's well-being is critical for the Talensi women who lack any form of social welfare programs. In rural places in Ghana, the provision of welfare is not a priority area for the government. The only welfare programs the women know are the local associations they form. In other West African countries such as Mali, Bamanan women in network organizations have used their associations to introduce contraceptives, offering opportunities for social learning and innovation with implications for the degree to which women control their fertility and reproductive health (Adams et al. 2004). In

view of the importance of associations to ensure successful community programs, government and nongovernmental agencies should utilize locally organized welfare associations to promote the social goals and policy innovations needed to promote the wellbeing of women (Adams et al. 2004).

### **Conclusion: Doing and Undoing Gender and Social Mechanisms**

This chapter contributes to gender studies by providing an empirical view of the link between the theories of doing and undoing gender and women's productivity. I borrow from the practical application of the theories of doing and undoing gender to explain the situation of the female shankers and *salmabalga* workers in the Talensi small-scale mining industry, the two main wage-earning jobs for women directly involved in gold production. Men take away the pits of women who make the effort to sink deep pits.

Even though the practice of doing and undoing gender in an organization has been studied before, this chapter contributes to the theoretical framework by linking the theory of doing gender to undoing gender in the same context, that is, in the small-scale gold mining industry. It is only in applying the two theories together in the work organization have I been able to show how the cultural values and ideals that restrict women from performing certain tasks and using certain tools and equipment influence women's productivity. The contextual framework is analyzed by situating the theory of doing and undoing gender into the small-scale mining industry and engaging the theory in a lived, more practical way (Nentwich and Kelan 2007).

In the Talensi small-scale gold mining industry, the processes of doing gender reveal the expectations for women's work. Among the many factors that determine the jobs of men and women are the kinds of tools and equipment women are allowed to use to perform their tasks.

The expectation that women may only work as shankers or as *salmabalga* workers and the restrictions placed on women in performing other jobs, especially jobs that take place in deep mining pits, limits their capacity as producers. Even though women like Azuma show the determination and energy to work in deep mining pits, she points out that, “men do not allow us to do so.” The chapter has also shown that in the Talensi mining industry any attempt to understand gender outside the social and cultural ideals and values of the society would limit the understanding on the lives of women. Cultural ideals and values emphasized in Nolwazi Mkhwanazi’s (2014) study exploring the gender reproduction in an African society are significant in understanding Talensi women’s conformation to the gendered practices.

In undoing gender, Judith Butler (2004) emphasizes that one measure is to challenge the status-quo and another is to gain autonomy. She suggests the need to consider autonomy as one dimension for women’s normative aspirations. Women are sometimes confrontational when they have to hand over their deep pits to men in the mining industry. Confrontations can be a way for women to undo gendered practices in the mining industry, but normative ideas and values that reinforce the gendered practices have become limiting factors in women’s capacity to confront others.

Collectively, Talensi women aspire to gain autonomy for their lives through the formation of women’s associations. The various associations—*susu*, welfare, and *susu-welfare* (mixed function)—provide women with not only the space, but also the opportunity to take collective action. Through these associations, women miners receive social welfare services and enjoy a sense of belonging. These associations help women adjust to the changing environment not as victims of their situation, but as women seeking better lives (Moore 1988). Through their

membership in the associations, they strengthen their relationships with other women and link their membership in the households and lineage in the village to their life in their new jobs.

Voluntary associations managed by institutions may not meet the needs of the beneficiaries and have shown forms of “governmentality” strategies to control people’s behavior and their beliefs when the institutions spread the values of entrepreneurship as a solution to poor people’s problems (Jashim Uddin 2015; Mader 2015:91). Even though voluntary associations managed by institutions from outside the communities may impose their programs on local groups, the aim of the outside organizations is similar to the self-organized associations--to provide women with financial opportunities.

In addition, the social relations that emerge between the institutions and the beneficiaries usually promote an attachment that tends to be unbalanced (Mader 2015). *Susu* and welfare associations initiated by women in the Talensi mining communities, in which women assume leadership roles, manage daily operations, and disburse loans and other benefits, offer the kind of support women need to improve their lives. Even though voluntary associations managed by institutions are imposed on the local people by outsiders rather than the locally organized *susu* or rotating credit associations, the beneficiaries of the two types of programs are usually local women. The formation of these associations requires more investigation to determine how the associations may become more viable and able to meet the needs of women (Mader 2015). Most banks in the Talensi area will not provide loans to women who engage in uncertain jobs in the mining industry or whose incomes are very low. *Susu* and welfare associations fill the void that banks and other institutions create.

This chapter has identified practical applications of the theories of doing and undoing gender specifically in the Ghanaian context, and West Africa in general and has set the stage for

moving forward the theories into contexts that would help researchers understand the tensions maintaining the status quo, so women can become more autonomous. In providing empirical data, this chapter contributes to studies that emphasize the need to look beyond the debates about unifying ideologies of binary perspectives or about the differences that have long occupied the study of gender (Ortner 1974; Broch-Due et al. 1993; Linstead and Pullen 2006). The chapter establishes a foundation for the rest of this dissertation because transforming wages, land claims, and property rights are predicated on the transformation of gendered practice.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **WOMEN'S STORIES: THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN TALENSI HOUSEHOLDS AND SMALL-SCALE GOLD MINING INDUSTRY**

This chapter addresses relational transformations among Talensi women when they become miners. The emergence of small-scale gold mining among the Talensi is producing transformations in Talensi relationships, including those between husband and wife and between mother and child. The changes in family relationships brought about by the mining industry contribute to major changes in Talensi social organization, where household relationships are a major component of social organization.

This chapter situates changes in the lives of women in the mining communities in the larger Ghanaian situation to explore how the Talensi mining industry is producing household transformations, looking at changes in household patterns and women's participation in the society's decision-making processes. It examines transformations in Talensi marriage, divorce, and child fosterage due to women's participation in the mining industry. Conceptually, the chapter identifies some of the changes taking place in Talensi concepts of marriage, divorce, and child fosterage as well as in relationships between those concepts. It uses information from the Ghana Demographic and Health Surveys, which are national surveys that measure changes that take place in Ghanaian households, to provide a bigger picture regarding such changes and a better understanding of the Talensi situation.

Organizationally, this chapter uses the stories the women share to understand how working in the mines influence their relationships. It begins with a story from one of the women



in the mining industry, known in this chapter as Yigba. The chapter uses Yigba's story to illustrate a typical situation in women's everyday lives in the industry. The rest of the chapter discusses the household concepts, identifying the changes that are taking place.

### ***Yigba's Story***

To provide an understanding of the transformations that are taking place in relationship building among Talensi women miners, I begin with a story about Yigba, who is about 40 years old and has lived in Kejetia for over 20 years. She has five children from four marriages. Yigba has two sons with her first husband, one son with her second husband, another son with her third husband, and a daughter with her fourth husband. Currently, Yigba lives alone in Kejetia. Yigba and her mother and siblings returned to Gorigo, her hometown, following the death of Yigba's father, who lived in Tamale. When Yigba was about 13 years old, her younger "father," or her paternal uncle, arranged for Yigba's marriage to a man in Accra. Yigba relocated to Accra to live with her husband and they had two sons.

According to Yigba, when she married for the first time, she was too young to work. To overcome her loneliness while her husband went to work, she visited friends in Frafra town, a suburb of Accra, where she would hang out with girls who were similar in age. After the birth of her first child, Yigba continued to visit her friends in Frafra town. At such a young age, Yigba was often so engaged in activities with her companions that she did not pay attention to the care of her son. Frafra town is located on the way to the 37 Military Hospital, a hospital managed by the Ghana Army in Accra. One day, a soldier who had seen Yigba neglect her son on several occasions, and thought the boy was someone else's child, took Yigba's son to the army barracks. The soldier thought Yigba was a domestic servant and that the baby belonged to her employer. Yigba followed the soldier, claiming the baby as her own. Not believing Yigba's story because

of her young age, the soldier told her to bring her husband to collect the baby. In the evening, Yigba's husband came to the barracks and confirmed that the baby was theirs. The soldier then released the boy to them. When handing the baby over to her, Yigba said the soldier jokingly exclaimed "Ei! akolaa a wawo akolaa," in the Akan language, which means "a child has given birth to a child." According to Yigba, this phrase became her nickname for a long time.

A few years later, Yigba separated from her husband due to irreconcilable differences and interference from her husband's family. For example, Yigba mentioned that her husband's cousin would visit them unannounced and issue threats to throw her out of her home because Yigba was unemployed. In addition, Yigba stated that her in-laws interfered in their marriage, accusing her of being the reason her husband did not pay attention to their household. Yigba believed that her two sons could also be one of the factors in the accusation from her in-laws. According to Yigba, her in-laws became jealous of her because her sons would inherit from their father and their grandparents as well. When Yigba could not bear the interference any longer, she left her children with her husband in Accra and returned to her mother in Gorigo, a village that borders Tongo. In Talensi patrilineal society, fathers are responsible for caring for their sons. During a divorce, younger daughters may reside with their mothers while older daughters choose which of the two parents to live with, but most husbands choose to have their sons live with them.

Back in the village, Yigba married a man from Tongo. Yigba's younger father (her father's younger brother) introduced her second husband to her. Yigba's second husband was a teacher and he was able to pay the bridewealth back to her former husband, as was the custom, before he married her. Yigba went to live with her husband in Walewale, a town about 60 kilometers from Gorigo and had another son with her second husband, but they separated a few

years later due to a misunderstanding between Yigba and her co-wife. When she returned to Gorigo for the second time, Yigba's friend invited her to work in Kejetia as hairdresser (braiding hair), a trade she learned in Accra.

In Kejetia, Yigba began *shanking* part time and later switched to *shanking* full time after her hairdressing business declined. She explained that the business eventually collapsed because fewer women had their hair braided in Kejetia. Most of the women traveled to urban places such as Bolgatanga to get their hair braided instead of having it braided in the mining communities because it costs less and they could get newer styles and nicer braids. In 2014, during my fieldwork, Yigba had switched jobs again and had become a food vendor selling beverages to mine workers who worked late at night. She mentioned that she would shank for her former employers, who were generous in giving her more chipping as wages during the day.

Yigba decided to have more children in Kejetia. She had two children—a son who is eight years old and a daughter who is four years old. The father of Yigba's son, who was born at the mine, experienced an accident in mine collapse that left him crippled. Following this accident, the family of Yigba's fiancée came and took him to seek traditional medical care. The family of Yigba's fiancé did not consider the marriage legal, and took him to seek medical care without informing her. The father of Yigba's only daughter also died in a mine accident. She now has a fiancé whom she hopes to marry after she gets pregnant. She plans to have one or two more children with or without a husband. According to Yigba, "I consider Kejetia my new hometown because I am able to get a life here." Yigba's plan to have more children without marrying in the mining community is a practice that is unacceptable in the local villages.

Even though Yigba's life is a success story, the lives of other women have not met the same level of success.<sup>6</sup> Bisa, who is a bit older than most of her colleague shankers, was initially a food seller, preparing rice and stew. She currently works as a shanker. She came to the mining communities to sell food but became a shanker when her business collapsed. According to Bisa, many people bought food and promised to pay when they got money. Most of her creditors never paid, and some left the mining communities. She switched to shanking, but always complained that because of her age, she was not as strong as the other shankers. She complained about bodily pains, especially in her knees. When I asked her whether she planned to leave the mining community, she responded, "I do not have any money to leave. Every year, I plan to leave, but I do not leave because I do not have any money or personal possessions and my situation deteriorates." Bisa continued to live in the mining community not because she was earning more. Rather, she did not want to leave "empty handed," as she described her life. Many other women, such as Akos and Maa Lizzie, who I will discuss later, could not make it and did not see any improvements, but they continue to live in the mining communities.

Yigba's story represents an example of Talensi women's lives in the mining communities and the changing patterns of their households. I selected her case because it provides a holistic view of marriage, divorce, and childcare. It is also representative of the situation of many of the women, providing insight into how small-scale gold mining activities are influencing women's lives and the decisions women are able to make in the industry.

Yigba's story does not only tell her experiences about her early marriage, divorce, entry into mining community, but also the decisions she makes that bring about transformations into her life. The mining industry provides her an opportunity that is different from what was

---

<sup>6</sup> I term Yigba's life a success story because she made family decisions and as I will later show, she owns a house.

available in her hometown. In the mining community, Yigba chooses her partner, decides on the number of children she wants to have, and decides when to marry. During conversations and interviews, most women living in Kejetia share similar experiences about individual choices and family decisions.

Instead of studying migration into small-scale gold mines as a movement, this chapter explores Talensi women's participation in gold mining as a social process. It examines the social changes taking place in Talensi social relationships and how women's lives and experiences are linked to the kinds of social relationships that emerge with women's work in the mines. Little (1973) studied Nigerian women who left the rural communities into towns as a social process. However, Little (1973) was interested in women's sex roles when they lived in towns. Women engage in mining work as wives, mothers, in-laws, and friends. Meanwhile, men are husbands, fathers, fathers-in-law, and friends. Mining takes men and women away from their villages, and this movement causes changes in relations among the men and women as well as their children.

Men may not experience dramatic changes when they work in the mining, unlike women, who have to make arrangements for the care of their dependents. In the mining communities, men may retain their leadership positions and continue to make decisions about their families, including wives and children. Women, on the other hand, may experience major shifts, indicating changes as shown in Yigba's story. This study looks at new experiences of attachment or separation between women and members of their households. It shows how Talensi women describe attachments or separation in the mining communities, looking at emerging husband-wife relationships and mother-child relationships, decisions women make about their families such as family size, and their relationships with intimate partners in the mining communities.

Through these social processes, this chapter highlights the transformations the relationships produce.

### **Husband-Wife Relationships**

When examining family relationships among Talensi women in the mining industry, I begin with marriage since it is the basic form of union between a man and a woman for the purposes of beginning a family in Ghana. In the studies conducted by Meyer Fortes (1949) on household relationships among the Talensi, Fortes highlighted the significance of marriage to the Talensi lineage organization. Fortes pointed out that Talensi attached so much importance to marriage that it was inconceivable for anyone to refrain from marriage voluntarily.

Marriage is a significant institution not only among the Talensi, but also in the whole of Ghana. Ghanaians perceive marriage as the main source of procreation for the continuity of the lineage and kinship (Benneh et al. 1990). In studies of Ghanaian family, Benneh et al. (1990) pointed out that marriage in the Ghanaian household remains prevalent in spite of the fact that family roles and family building are changing. Benneh et al. (1990) show that the family is a significant institution in Ghana that is experiencing ongoing transformations at all levels including marriage, child rearing, family structure and composition, and propose the need for continuing studies to highlight the changes. Among the Talensi, marriage is regarded a household concern. Talensi households influence the marriage processes of their members. Abena, a young mother who came to live in Kejetia when she married a miner, tells her story about family influences in her marriages in an interview I conducted with her:

EK: How did you get married?

Abena: My mother introduced my husband to me.

EK: Where did you meet him?

Abena: I came to visit my family in Wechigah during a festival. I lived in Kumasi and worked as a street vendor. After the festival, my mother (Abena uses the word “mother” in the social sense to refer to one of her father’s wives and not her biological mother) invited me to the mines. You know, she is the only surviving wife of my late father so she continues to live with us. I came with my mother when she returned to Kejetia and spent about one month working as a shanker before I went back to Kumasi. I made a lot of money working as a shanker so I planned to return to the mine but I also liked to live in an urban community so I didn’t come back to the mine as planned.

EK: How did you return to Kejetia?

Abena: Several months after I went back to Kumasi, my mother sent me a message that one of the miners wanted to marry me. I had a son from my previous marriage so I didn’t want to be in another relationship unless it would end up in marriage. I did not respond to my mother’s message immediately, but when she kept sending messages upon messages, I decided to come back and meet the person. The man proposed to me and I agreed. We now have two sons.

EK: How old were you when you first married?

Abena: (laughing). Eh! I don't know my age but I was very young. When I married my first husband, I did not have any knowledge about marriage. However, my mother supported me. I divorced a few years after the marriage and went to live in Kumasi.

While Yigba’s marriage dissolved because of family interference, in Abena’s case, her mother introduced her second husband to her. Similarly, before marriage, Sanpan was living with her uncle in another village. Sanpan’s father brought her to his village and took her to Yameriga to marry someone she had not previously encountered. Her uncle asked her to visit her parents and when she did, the parents announced the impending marriage. They told her a man had asked for her hand in marriage and all the arrangements were complete. Family influence as well as the young age of girls before marriage limits the girls from making decisions about their spouses. Most of the girls in the Talensi district marry at an age when their family still cares for them. The young girls probably view the decision to marry as one of the many decisions the family makes for them.

Talensi households play an important role in the proposal, selection, and consummation of marriage for young girls. According to the women in the mining communities, one’s lineage is

responsible for marriage negotiation and for the payment of the bride wealth. This lineage involvement in the marriage processes of a couple is not peculiar to the Talensi; every ethnic group in Ghana requires the prospective husband to pay bride wealth to the lineage of the prospective wife. Horne et al. (2013) confirm the prevalence of bride wealth all over Africa and point out that the practice has far-reaching effects on marriage relationships in rural communities. According to Horne et al. (2013), men who want to marry may need their family to support them financially and the family is responsible for the marriage negotiation; thus, the practice creates dependence relations among men. The exchange of the bride wealth during which the community usually serves as a witness activates a community norm of reacting negatively to someone who fails to meet their exchange obligations (Horne et al. 2013). Yigba explained, “Anytime I had a misunderstanding with my husband, he reported the problem to his sister who also lived in Accra. My sister-in-law represented their mother during the marriage ceremony. Due to the role she played, my sister-in-law meddled in our marriage and created uncomfortable conditions for me until I returned to my village.”

Classical anthropological accounts such as Evans-Pritchard’s (1965) highlight the exchange of wealth through the giving of the bride wealth and argue that the exchange of bride wealth between two households is a major cause for household involvement in a couple’s marriage. While interactions between couples and households among the Talensi require attention, this dissertation shows that the problem of early marriage has an important connection with marriage instability as shown in the stories the women share. Several years after Yigba’s divorce from her first husband, Yigba feels that:

I was too young to take important decisions for my marriage and that was the main reason for my divorce to my first husband. My husband took good care of me financially, but we could not resolve our misunderstanding so my husband had to consult with his



sister to come talk to me. Unfortunately, my sister-in-law, knowing I was young, treated me unfairly. When I could not take it any longer, I returned to my mother in the village.

In a conversation, Yigba insisted that if she had been a little older at the time of the first marriage, she probably would not have returned to her mother in the village. She supported her earlier assertion that her first marriage dissolved because she had no prior experience with marriage.

### **Kinship Ties and Early Marriages among the Talensi**

As explained in this dissertation, kinship has a strong tie with early marriage. Early marriage, also referred to as child marriage is a notable marriage practice among the Talensi. As one moves through the mining communities, it is common to see many young girls who may be in their teenage years either pregnant or backing their babies, that is, carrying their babies on their back with a piece of cloth tied around them. Although a few of these young girls were made pregnant by miners who do not claim responsibility for the pregnancy, their families married many off to older men in their villages.

Within sub-Saharan Africa, the rate of early marriage is comparatively high, with 49 percent of girls under 19 in unions (Walker 2012). About 14 percent of women age 15 to 19 have begun bearing children. Out of this percentage, 11 percent have had a live birth (GDHS 2014). Walker (2012) argues that while economic factors may account for early marriages, sociocultural factors such as culture and religion are underpinned by customary practices to justify marrying off girls before puberty. Among the Talensi, religion may not be the major reason for marrying girls off. Rather, culture is critical for influencing the practice of marrying girls off at a young age. Girls like Yigba married before age 15. Walker (2012) explains that the average age of girls at first marriage in Ghana is 18 years. However, Walker indicates that the practice of early marriage is reducing in some sub-Saharan African countries such as Ghana, but increasing in

other places such as Chad, where new risk factors from civil wars and other forms of insecurity add to the old barriers to create the dynamics that perpetuate early marriage.

Although there is a general trend toward later marriage, the age of first marriage for women continues to be relatively lower. The GDHS survey of 2008 shows that a higher percentage of women marry earlier in rural than in urban communities in Ghana. At the age range 25-49, about 23 percent of women had married, compared to about 18 percent in urban areas (GDHS 2008). However, in the age range 45-49 in the same period, as many women in rural as in urban areas have married once. Comparably, only 13 percent of men between the age range 25-49 were married (GDHS 2008). The GDHS also shows that by age 22, about two-thirds (67 percent) of women age 25-49 were married and by age 25, the proportion married in that age group had increased to 80 percent (2008:115).

The view that women have the right to choose when to marry is inconsistent with norms that allow kin to marry girls off (Amin 2011). Amin's (2011) study found that child marriage may be used as a route to strengthen family ties, clan and tribal connections, or political alliances, and, sometimes, acted as a mechanism to settle obligations. Moreover, social pressure is said to operate in communities with high prevalence of early marriage where failure to conform can result in disapproval or shame for the family (Bayisenge 2010). In fact, social pressure is so high in the Talensi local communities that very few girls marry late. Yigba says most of the girls she grew up with were married in the same way she was, even though some of them married a bit later than she did. The practice of late marriage among the Talensi is uncommon so that young girls grow up with the view that women have to marry early. In the Talensi mines, women also indicated that early marriages contributed to large family size, a

situation the women believe is important to expanding their own families as well as their lineages.

Contrary to the assumption that early marriage causes dropping out of school (Delprato et al. 2015), at the time of Yigba's marriage, she had already dropped out of school so her marriage did not conflict with her education. Other women such as Abena share similar experiences. Most of the women in the mining communities have no education. These women share similar cases whereby they dropped out of school before marriage or did not start school at all. Rather than explaining early marriage as the cause of dropping out, this chapter confirms that the strong negative association of non-literate girls with early marriages lies in the fact that girls who marry early are found in the least educated segment of the population (Westoff 2003) as shown in Yigba's and other women's situation. Westoff (2003) argues that with no education, girls do not resist early marriage contracts. The prevalence of low or no education means that Yigba and the other women who married at a young age had no basis for refusing the marriage contracts.

Sometimes Talensi girls do not consider early marriage detrimental. In some situations, households may fail to view early marriage as a problem, a situation that accounts for the persistence of early marriage. In addition to some of the benefits child marriage brings to strengthen family ties as well as clan and tribal connections, Walker (2014) gives examples of some of the alleged advantages of early marriage as the perception that the bridewealth payments the parents receive would help support the family. However, Yigba contradicts her previous experience when she highlights the success of her early marriage. She believes that even though her marriage dissolved because of her early age, her husband was very kind to her and she left the village to live in Accra. These contradictory and inconsistent experiences the women share create challenges to understanding their real feelings about their experiences. Yigba's first

husband lived in Accra, so she considered herself fortunate to relocate to her husband's home. She once had an argument with her current fiancé and told him, "You live in the village and consider yourself a village boss. I lived in Accra, so I am more knowledgeable." As the argument grew more intense, she told me about the opportunity she had to visit places like the airport in Accra. Her description was accurate so when she turned to ask me "Isn't it true that I visited the airport?" I nodded to show my confirmation and the argument continued for a very long time. In fact, when she went to live with her husband in Accra, two of her younger brothers joined her. One of Yigba's brothers learned to drive *trotro*, or cars used for commercial purposes, a training that was sponsored by Yigba's husband. Yigba's brother returned to the village when his friend bought a car for him for work and pay, which is to use the car and pay for it in installments. Another brother continues to live in Accra with his family after Yigba invited him. According to Walker (2014), poverty, unemployment, culture, and a general concern of parents who need to find an alternative means to care for large numbers of children are the major causes of early marriage. This dissertation confirms Walker's (2014) argument that the persistence of child marriage may be due to households failing to see the problems of early marriage while seeing the benefits and encouraging the practice.

However, Yigba admitted that at such an early age she could not possibly have been a mature wife and mother. Yigba narrated her experience with the birth of her first child:

I went through pregnancy without understanding the outcome, so that when I was in labor with my first pregnancy, I ran away to hide under a bed. My husband had to make all of the decisions for the household. The relationship between my husband and me was similar to that of a father and a child. I lived in a home I was expected to manage as a stranger

In a similar conversation, Baale, when asked about her first pregnancy remarked, "Even though I was legally married, I was too shy to go out of my home, but I lived with the co-wives

of my husband's brothers in the same household so they supported me throughout my pregnancy." According to Baale, "The whole household ate from one pot so I was responsible for running errands, rather than managing a family."

### **Small-Scale Mining: An Opportunity for Providing Jobs for Women**

Several studies have examined marriage and divorce within sub-Saharan African families as separate topics to understand the unique social organizations and the transformations that are occurring within the institution of marriage (Bledsoe 1990; Lesthaeghe 2014; Lloyd and Gage-Brandon 1993; Meekers 1992). However, these studies fail to establish the relationship between the different types of marriage and divorce. Notable among them is the realization that both external and internal forces impact African marriages (Lesthaeghe 2014). The findings from these studies point out some of the transformations that occur in marriages and what accounts for stability and instability in African marriages.

In particular, Manuh (1997) and Mikell (1997) have reported on the negative impact of the imposed IMF/World Bank's Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) on marriage, following decades of economic malaise, which have created and exacerbated tensions in family relations in Ghana. The authors argue that external factors have influenced marriage relationships as economic hardships have caused both married men and married women to leave their partners for travel to other places to work, although they are often unable to regularly remit a share of their earnings or visit the families they left behind.

Other authors such as Takyi and Dodoo (2005) have noted that the emphasis on external factors in the literature ignores the potential influence of internal and institutional structures such as family or kin ties on marital decisions and outcomes in the region. They argue that influence

of family or kin ties on marital decisions particularly occurs in settings where there are strong kinship ties that confer differential benefits, rights, and obligations outside the conjugal unit.

According to Takyi and Gyimah (2007), Africa's internal institutional structures, such as extended kinship ties, and the strong bonds that exist within these institutions, may be important to understanding the dynamics of marital processes in the region, and particularly the factors that contribute to divorce. In examining the impact of internal forces on marriage among the Talensi, for example, it is important to include the everyday experiences of women like Yigba, who married young, but divorced a few years later. Although research on Africa largely ignores the issue of marital disruption in families, studies conducted on this topic suggest that marriages in the region are becoming increasingly unstable. To prove the rapid divorce rate, scholars have shown that the estimation of rapid breakdown in marriages shows that by age 50 about half of all African women have had their marriages dissolved (Mbugua 1992, cited in Takyi and Gyimah 2007:683).

During the 1960s and 1970s, more studies focused on the cultural dimensions of kinship ties and their impact on the family structure. Gage-Brandon and Njogu (1994) found the proportion of women aged 40 to 49 whose first marriages had dissolved by the end of their reproductive years was quite high, with the divorce rates in Ghana twice as high as those reported in Kenya did. Comparatively, classical anthropological work indicates that marriages are more stable among patrilineal than matrilineal groups because of the highly dependent position of women in patrilineal societies (Gluckman 1965:248). However, few comparative studies have been conducted to further these arguments. In the case of the Talensi gold mines, many of the women had divorced from one or more marriages even though Talensi is a patrilineal society. This research points out the need for more research that investigates the

transformations that are taking place in marriages in Ghanaian households as well as in other African households.

Due to the awareness of the high incidence of marital instability, further studies have sought to understand family processes in sub Saharan Africa by drawing attention to the role of cultural practices and ethos as important to understanding marital outcomes in the region within matrilineal kin groups and their non-matrilineal counterparts (Takyi and Gyimah 2007). Takyi and Gyimah's (2007) studies made it evident that kinship affiliation, with its divergent goals and expectations among married couples, undermines the marital bond, thereby creating the conditions necessary for marital disruption. Several years after Yigba was married, for example, the families on both sides continued to influence her marriage. Yigba explains jealousy also as the main reason why her first marriage dissolved:

They (her husband's family) were jealous when I bore two sons for my husband, a situation that was the first in that family. The wives of my husband's two brothers (co-wives) bore daughters. My children had the right to inherit the household property. My husband also took good care of me and provided everything I needed. He supported my career as a hairdresser as well as my brothers. This behavior of my husband escalated the jealousy. When the relationship between my in-laws and me worsened, I returned to my mother.

Talensi describe separation and divorce as a different phenomenon. They use the word *oyime* in Talon or *aware pue* in Akan, which means, "The woman has gone out of the home," to indicate separation between a husband and a wife. A woman can separate from her husband for the rest of her life, yet, she will be considered "married" to her husband and can come back any time she finds it necessary. Talensi society does not perceive a woman as divorced until another man marries her and repays the cows used as bridewealth to the former husband. During the period of *oyime*, the society considers any children the woman gives birth to as belonging to her former husband. The woman "who has gone out of the home" is considered to bring back valuable things when she brings home children by another man or worthless things when she

falls ill or engages in prostitution. Few men in the village are willing to marry women who have separated from their husbands or had children with them. After all, the men will lose the children that are born from this relationship if they are unable to repay the former husband's bridewealth in the form of cows. Moreover, the woman would commit adultery because she is still "married" to her husband. In the event that a woman dies during *oyime*, her former husband has the right to bring the woman's children by another man to his home and raise them as his children. In addition, her former husband incurs the burial and other funeral costs at her death.

On the other hand, *mboboreya*, or divorce, indicates that a woman has married another husband, who has repaid the cows representing the bridewealth to the woman's former husband. The repayment seals the divorce and the woman may remarry and have children with another man. Any children she gives birth to belong to her new husband. The woman severs her relationship with her former husband and he cannot claim any children born after the divorce.

At the mining site, women can and do engage in intimate relationships and the men do not care whether the women are single, separated, or divorced, a situation which is not permissible in the villages. The mining community serves as a useful locale for women who have separated or divorced from their marriages to engage in other intimate relationships without fear of intimidation. Akos, a middle-aged woman, shares her story about her married life in Ivory Coast and subsequent relocation to Kejetia:

I lived with my husband in Ivory Coast. My husband has another wife and we both worked with him on his farm. During the Ivorian crisis, that is, the civil war that took place in Ivory Coast, there was famine in the village where we lived. My husband refused to take good care of us, which led to misunderstanding between us. He sent me packing back to my hometown and my brother invited me to visit him in Kejetia. I came here with my two children who are both in school and did not return to my hometown.

It is common for people in rural communities to relocate to other places in order to avoid some of the cultural norms that do not favor them. For example, the Mundu people of Jharkhand



in India often leave their villages for seasonal work in the brick kilns. They engage in very hard labor and receive low wages in the kiln industry. The women choose to work in the low-paying jobs to escape strict controls over their behavior in the villages. The men are able to escape with the women to prevent marriage restrictions such as arranged marriages and control by their elders (Shah 2010:150). Similarly, in the mining industry, a twenty-two-year-old woman, known as Shanga, came to live in Kejetia from Nalerigu, a neighboring community in the West Mamprusi District. She told me, “I run away with my friend from the village to come here because I suffered maltreatment from my brother when I became stubborn and dropped out of school. He refused to allow me to go out at nights and he physically abused me when he saw me with male friends.”

In contrast to the village norms, in the mining communities, social restrictions on marriage are nonexistent. Miners have intimate relationships that are not supposed to end up in marriage. Some of the women miners engage in intimate relationships for companionship. Others may engage in these relationships for the sake of bearing children. These kinds of relationships are not encouraged in local communities with strict norms on marriage. One shanker who had two children by a miner, but remained unmarried, mentioned that she did not care about marriage so long as she had two children. In her village, it would be a disgrace to the whole lineage for her to have children without a husband. When I further inquired about how she was going to care for the children, she told me:

I sent the older girl to my grandmother as soon as she turned two. A few months after I came back to the mine, the same boy who made me pregnant the first time came to apologize and promised to support me take care of the child. He abandoned me when I became pregnant with my second child. I will take her to my grandmother when she is older. When my mother died, my grandmother took care of me and she is happy I am having great-grandchildren for her. I don't want to have any more children. I want to work hard to take care of my two children.

Grandparents support their children and children by caring for their grandchildren, especially when the children are working for wages. Yigba takes care of her two youngest children alone. Even without child support from their biological fathers, Yigba is happy to care for them, using her wages from trading in the mines. She plans to educate the children so that they will become responsible adults. Talensi mining communities provide the spaces to navigate other forms of relationships than marriage, thereby transforming the norms.

For some of the married women, mining serves as an alternative source of income to farming. By mining, they avoid having to work on the household farms. Tenee believed refusing to work on the household farm during the farming season in 2015 would cause her husband to appreciate her contribution to the family's income, when he weeded and planted by himself. She explained, "I'm not going to help my husband to farm this year so that when he does the work alone, he will value my contribution to the family. After all, I will be able to remit money for the children from the income I make here."

On a few occasions, Tenee asked me to take money to her husband in Tongo for the care of her children. She said she only visited her family when she missed them, especially her youngest child, who was three years old. She received news about them from people coming from the village and she visited them as soon as there was news that any of her children was sick. She also made regular phone calls to her husband to inquire about the children's wellbeing. Tenee's husband could not join her in the mine and lived with their children while Tenee worked there. Tenee explained:

I don't want my husband to come and live with me here. We have three young children. If we both come to work at the mines, who would take care of the children for us? We work to take care of our children so why do we have to leave them with someone else. You know, most people do not want to bring their young children to the mine because we work throughout the day and cannot effectively take care of younger children. For older children, the mining community is not a conducive place to raise them. They may drop out of school.

Moreover, it is easier for women to get jobs immediately they enter the mining community than men. All a woman needs to do is to get a few tools and equipment. I started work the very day I arrived at Kejetia. On the other hand, it is not that easy for men, who have to be invited by a *ghetto* or a work team, also known as a “gang” and who might work a couple of months or sometimes years to reach a gold-bearing rock, before realizing income.

Consequently, some men are taking care of the children when women engage in mining work. This practice challenges the Talensi cultural norm in which women are regarded as homemakers and are responsible for the care of children. The practice of mothers working and fathers staying at home has become more acceptable as women become the main contributors to family income.

Talensi women are gaining control over their lives with their participation in economic activities. In the case of Tenee and some of the women in small-scale gold mining, they are taking control over their lives, regardless of the challenges they face. Some of the women, like Yigba, extend their control to affect the lives of their children, providing the children with the opportunities to make the family attachments they prefer when they become adults. Yigba lives without fear of intimidation from her local community, even though she continues to have strong kinship and community ties to family members at home. The women miners use the support of their parents, grandparents, husbands, and co-wives for the care of their children.

### *Co-Wives and Childcare*

As previously mentioned in the case of Sanpan, one of the shankers who leaves her son with her co-wife before coming to the mines, co-wives are one of the categories of people who take care of children to allow their mothers to engage in mining. Fortes (1949) mentioned the roles co-wives played in supporting the rearing of children in the household. His account of co-wives was that of relatively peaceful co-existence. Fortes indicated that one of the most common causes of tension among co-wives was the accusation of witchcraft. During my fieldwork, many

songs were composed during the Goree festival celebrated in many part of the Talensi district late March to early April every year for co-wives who are accused of witchcraft. The songs publicly named witches who had killed children. Most of the accusers were co-wives in the households and they are women.

The women miners mentioned that their co-wives were jealous of what they made at the mines. Paradoxically, some women left their children with co-wives. Leaving their children with co-wives enabled them to work, but also as Sanpan asserts, to “prevent the co-wives from hurting the children.” Paradoxically, Sanpan explained that once her son lived with her co-wife, her co-wife would be blamed for any calamity to Sanpan’s son. Her co-wife was careful not to hurt her son, even if she was a witch.

The idea of co-wives accused of witchcraft is common in Ghana. Community members accuse co-wives for most calamities, including illnesses and deaths, especially with adult women. Yigba talked about her co-wife as the cause of the break up in her second marriage. She also attributed her swollen leg to her co-wife. She showed me a photo of her leg and expressed her feelings about how she was badly hurt and told me her leg healed only after she separated from her husband and returned to her mother. In spite of the blame co-wives receive, Talensi communities readily accept polygyny or the practice whereby men marry more wives.

Fortes (1949) and other earlier anthropologists have mentioned the economic benefits, respect, and prestige men attain when they marry multiple wives. These earlier voices influenced later writers like Nukunya (1969), who indicated in his studies of marriage among the patrilineal Anlo people of Ghana that due to the benefits of polygyny, the practice was acceptable to women. However, the women in Talensi small-scale mines argued differently. The relationship between Sanpan and her co-wife can be perceived as cordial. Apart from caring for her son,

when her co-wife was in labor with her sixth child, Sanpan asked me to bring a taxi from Tongo to pick her up from Yameriga to the Tongo hospital, because there were no taxis in Yameriga and her co-wife said she could not walk the distance. No matter how Sanpan's relationship with her co-wife may seem publicly, she later told me that her co-wife was only interested in having more children and the co-wife did not care how she would educate them. She complained to me that her co-wife had not bothered to ask the cost of the taxi I brought to pick her up. She told me her co-wife was lazy and expected money from her to take care of Sanpan's son, but she did not give her money. In fact, I perceived that her resentment of her co-wife was intense; yet, publicly, her behavior toward her co-wife was cordial.

### **Mother-Child Relationships**

In addition to the marital transformations that occur with women's participation in mining, childrearing is also transforming. Both social workers and anthropologists have done extensive work on childcare. Whereas most of the work done by social workers has been geared toward formally, institutionalized care in foster homes and mostly with foster families in Western countries, some anthropologists concentrate on childcare in non-Western countries. Foster care in most African countries does not involve formal arrangements and children usually live with kin, rather than with "strangers," a term used by Elaine Farmer (2009) to refer to foster parents who do not have kinship relations with the foster children and are not known to the children prior to living with them. According to Alan Pence and Bame Nsamenang, childcare in Africa is considered a communal responsibility, shared within the extended family system expressed in the form of "shared management, caretaking, and socially distributed support" (2008:25). Pence and Nsamenang (2008:25) argue that the statement confirms the popular saying that "while one woman may bring forth a child, it takes a community to raise that child, since the

community is the sole agent of socialization.” Even though the perception that the community in Africa is responsible for the socialization of children indicates the concerns of the community, in reality, families and lineages directly care for the children in the Talensi district. The next section of this chapter examines foster care among the Talensi, especially the ways that the practice is increasing rapidly and taking on a new form.

### **Child Fosterage: Benefits and Harm to Children**

The practice of sending children away to live with people other than their parents has been reported in many parts of the world (Isuigo-Abenihe 1985). According to Isuigo-Abenihe (1985), West African child fosterage is highly institutionalized. In West Africa, child fosterage is a valued practice, based on local conceptions and norms with respect to proper behavior of children and proper relations between children and parents (Imoh 2012). Fostering practices are viewed as beneficial to both children and parents. Afua Imoh (2012) reiterates the benefits of fosterage by indicating that parents believe when children grow up with people who are not their biological parents; it does not harm their development. Imoh’s (2012) argument confirms the underlying assumptions of the Talensi women’s belief about the relationship between the concept of fosterage and the proper behavior of children. One of the core elements of the growing interest of Talensi women in child fosterage is the belief that when children live with foster parents in large towns, they are likely to complete their education because they believe the schools in the large towns perform better academically than those in the villages. Talensi women working in the mining industry are becoming more aware of the importance of education. Some of the women, like Abena, would like to relocate to a large town when her children are school-going age. Abena reiterates, “I want to take the sole responsibility for the rearing of her children.” She discussed her experiences with foster children who suffered mistreatment with

foster families. Abena said she witnessed children who endured hardships under their foster parents when she worked in Kumasi, and she herself ran away from her foster parents to end the mistreatment she endured. However, Sarah Castle (1995) argues that fostering per se may not be harmful to the children, but rather the context within which fostering is carried out. Castle argues that the context determines the motivation of the foster family to invest in the child. According to Castle (1995), the motivation of the foster family ultimately determines the health and nutritional status of foster children.

The mining industry is providing opportunities for the women to earn income and have the desire to spend some of the money on their children's education. Many of the women jokingly told me that they would like me to foster their children when I return to Ghana so that I would help to educate the children. According to Castle, children under five years of age may be associated with "nurturant" fostering within kinship fosterage (1995:682). As the children grow older, girls are fostered out earlier than boys are (Castle 1995). Castle refers to the types of fostering that takes place within the household as informal fostering, while she referred to children fostered away from birth-household, sometimes in other villages, as formal fostering. However, even though Talensi women place their children under five years of age with foster parents to nurture them, the women also give children of school going age to foster parents for the main purpose of providing the children with good education. Castle also argues that educational fostering allows foster parents to provide formal education or Koranic school for foster children. Educational fostering is a more common practice of mothers in the mines. Nica, Sanpan and many other mothers have their sisters or grandparents foster out their children for educating their children in a better environment than in the mining communities.

In West Africa, the process of foster care involves biological parents giving their children to social parents to care for them. It is an important form of exchange and a vital expression of group belonging (Alber et al. 2010). According to Alber et al. (2010), this process follows a conception of parenthood as relatively more inclusive than one that focuses only on nuclear families. The inclusive idea involves the practice in which grandmothers may be feeding children, older ‘brothers’ and ‘sisters’ may be instilling cultural values, aunts may be introducing children to marketing skills, and wealthier relatives may be contributing to their school fees (Verhoff 2005). Verhoff argues that in this context, it is understandable why the practice of fostering children is rarely questioned

Child fostering in Ghana can be categorized into two types: customary and common-law fosterage (Asenso-Okyere et al. 2002). In Ghana, most ethnic groups practice customary fosterage. Asenso-Okyere et al. (2002) explain that among the matrilineal Akan groups, customary fosterage may take the form of uncles caring for their nephews, and the uncles have the moral obligation to provide for the upkeep of those nephews. Among patrilineal ethnic groups, on the other hand, Asenso-Okyere et al. (2002) argue that paternal aunts or uncles may care for their nephews and nieces, as a means to bridge the generation gap.

On the other hand, common law fosterage takes place under the legal code of Ghana. The similarity drawn between adoption in the West and common law practice is that, under the common law practice, any person above the age of twenty-one years, of high moral character and proven integrity qualifies to be a foster parent (Asenso-Okyere et al. 2002). The scholars go on to explain that children in need of protection and care can be fostered under the Children’s Act of Ghana. Persons seeking to become legal foster parents apply to the Department of Social Welfare through a probation officer or social welfare officer, or to the person in charge of an



approved residential home. A foster parent has the same responsibilities with respect to a child's maintenance as the parent of the child in her care (Asenso-Okyere et al. 2002).

It is notable that while parents in the Talensi district often know their responsibilities toward their children and the basic rights to which they are entitled, they are also very much aware that their economic situation may not always allow them to take care of their children the way they would ideally like. Afua Imoh (2011) identifies poverty and the lack of resources as having an impact on the ability of families to fulfill their responsibilities. However, Imoh (2011) admits that the issue goes beyond resources into other aspects of life, including parental irresponsibility and the mixed priorities of parents who leave their children's needs and rights not catered to, even when money is available.

Paradoxically, at the same time that parents are increasingly delegating or abandoning their responsibilities, members of the wider kin group are also retreating from their perceived caring role (Imoh 2011). Imoh sees a resulting gap created in the childrearing processes that causes some children to fall through the cracks, leaving an increasing number of inadequately parented children.

The practice of child fosterage has been described as cementing kinship or friendship bonds, reaffirming family ties and political relationships, and sometimes providing companionship or household help to a childless person or aged persons whose children have left home to live their lives elsewhere (Pence and Nsamenang 2008). However, in Esther Goody's (1982) study of the Gonja in Ghana, she did not find the establishment of any kind of social bond as a criterion for fosterage. Goody's (1982) findings contradicts the later findings of Pence and Nsamenang (2008) and shows that it is likely that parents are now identifying household relations for the fostering of their children. Other studies indicate that child fosterage helps to

redistribute the costs of raising children among the wider family and to serve as support for those who were not able to raise their children (Goody 1982). Thus, child fosterage provides useful resources for both biological and foster parents, as well as for foster children, particularly, but not exclusively, during times of family crisis. Esther Goody describes this pattern as “crisis fostering,” which takes place following dissolution of the conjugal family, in contrast to “voluntary fostering,” initiated while the parents’ marriage is intact (1982:42). One of the major resources identified with the two forms of child fostering is the provision of education for the child (Imoh 2011).

Regardless of the benefits of child fosterage, some vices have been identified with the practice. In her study of the southwestern Nigerian town of Itapa, Elisha Renne (2003) highlighted many of the contradictions involving benefits and counter benefits of child fosterage. Renne (2003) emphasized that in some cases, the people felt the practice is detrimental to the education and moral development of the child and that younger people who are subjected to the practice of fosterage tend to be exploited. Renne pointed out that many foster children claimed they are underfed and overworked and argued that overworking foster children hinders the children's access to education and hence, their future success. Imoh’s study on attitudes toward and perceptions of child fosterage and parental roles in Accra pointed out that even younger people who had had some education claimed that, “barring death or divorce, there is no one who will raise their children better than they can themselves” (2012:356), indicating a strong awareness of the importance of parental childrearing. However, despite the negative perceptions, some people felt that it was morally consistent to raise the children of their extended kin who were in need (Renne 2003:105). Because the benefits and counter benefits of child fosterage make it difficult to assess child fosterage, overall I see the Talensi practice of having the mothers

involved in the care of their child as a way of reducing the disadvantages identified by researchers and increasing the advantages of child fosterage.

### **Fosterage Patterns among Talensi in the Era of Small-scale Gold Mining**

In an early study of Talensi society, Fortes (1949) indicated that child fosterage was not a common practice. Fortes pointed out that only two percent of children were living with neither parent; all of these were orphans. In Talensi, the word *kpeebig* in Talon, or “orphan,” refers to a foster child. The Talensi miners believe that a child lives with *kpeebig mah* (foster mother) or *kpeebig bah* (foster father) only when both parents are deceased. This confirms Fortes’ findings that child fosterage was not a common practice among the Talensi, and that in cases where it existed, only orphans lived with non-parents. However, child fosterage is on the increase among the Talensi small-scale miners who allow their kin to foster their children and the practice requires more investigation.

With women’s participation in small-scale mining, the incidence of child fosterage is increasing. Most women miners I interviewed indicated that their children, especially older children, lived with kin members. Child fosterage is not only an emerging phenomenon among Talensi women miners, but it is also taking on a different form. The women miners feel that when they take part in the rearing of their children, it places them in a position to be able to strike a balance between parental care and child development. They continue to be involved in the rearing of their children in the local communities while working in the mining communities, in spite of their absence due to their busy schedule as miners. While Talensi women approve of the support of parents, parents-in-law, co-wives, and siblings in child rearing, they are also aware of the fact that the tedious jobs they do as miners provide better lives for them and their children, which can be achieved when parents continue to contribute to child rearing.

Yigba shares her involvement in her children's lives when she pointed out that, "I sent my two children I gave birth to in the mining community to their grandmother in Gorigo, my local village so that my mother will support me to care for them." Yigba's childcare arrangement falls under the voluntary fosterage practice explained by Goody (1982), in which she explained that parents make the choice and decision for their children to live with other adults. Yigba commutes between Gorigo and the mining communities regularly to visit her children on a motorbike she borrows from her friends. The closeness of the mining communities to the local villages makes these visits possible. Yigba also receives news about her children through other women commuters and regular phone calls. Sometimes Yigba makes a return trip, but she usually stays overnight or stays several days. Yigba is responsible for providing food for the family meals, feeding her children and their grandmother. Sanpan, on the other hand, left her son, an eight-year-old boy in class two (second grade) with her co-wife. Sanpan goes to her village to wash her son's clothes, bathes him, and prepares food for him on weekends, except when her schedule is too tight. Sanpan says her co-wife has six children of her own and she may not pay enough attention to her son.

One of the issues that came out of these discussions was that women take on additional responsibilities when they arrange with other people to care for children while they work in the mines. The women miners indicated that when they leave their children with foster parents, they incur financial burdens that cover the rearing of their own children, the children of the foster parents, and the foster parents. During the interviews, Sanpan mentioned that:

I have taken up the responsibility of caring for the whole household because I provide for the financial needs of all the members in the house. The members of my household include my son, my husband, his younger wife, and her six children. I visit my hometown every weekend to spend it with my son, unless work commitments do not permit it. Anytime I return to my hometown, I purchase the main ingredients for the evening meals – fish and corn. I provide money for milling the corn into flour for the meal. My

husband's younger wife does not provide any money for the meals anytime I return. My husband also shifts his responsibility of providing food for the household to me because my son lives in the house. I do not intend to bring my son to live with me at the mine because the mining community does not have a junior or senior high school.

Even though Sanpan recognizes the financial burden of leaving her son with her co-wife, she appreciates the fact that she is taking a major responsibility providing a good environment for her son. Her contributions to the household indicate the benefits she gains from the mine work and proves her desire to work. She added that the society regards women who work in the mines as hardworking because the women who do not work as miners are aware of the difficult tasks associated with working in the mines. Despite the money Sanpan spends to support her household, she indicates that she is able to save some of her wages to invest in her planned retail shop and contributes to the decisions of the household. Similarly, most of the other women in the mining communities indicated that they now play key roles in the decisions involving the care of their children.

### **Women's Roles in Household Decision-Making**

Women's participation in the mining industry is providing opportunities for them to contribute to household decisions. Over the years, there have been concerns about the lack of women's participation in decision-making processes in their households. Similarly, in the Talensi mining communities, it is evident that women do not participate in the decisions that affect the industry. For example, no woman serves on the mining committees; yet, women who work in the mines are taking household decisions, a situation that proves women's capacity to make decisions for their work.

In their studies on the relationship between changes in the American family structure and intra household decision making for acquiring consumer goods, Belch and Willis (2002) found that as the structure of the household changes, the roles of household members in making

decisions regarding consumption also changes. Even though the study of Belch and Willis concerns market-level decisions in Western societies, the findings apply to the role of gender in decision-making processes more generally. Similarly, in Ghanaian households, changes in the structure and composition influence household decisions (GDHS 2008).

Demographic and Health Surveys conducted in developing countries measure the extent of women's decision-making autonomy to show indicators for women's autonomy in decision-making processes. In Ghana, the indicators of the survey include respondents' own health care, making large household purchases, making household purchases for daily needs, and visiting family or relatives (GDHS 2003). From the Ghana survey, women participate in household decisions if they make decisions concerning the indicators alone or jointly with their husbands. In the Talensi mines, Yibga, Sanpan, and Abena are some of the women who participate in household decisions because their decisions cover, purchases and family visits.

Even though women's participation in household decision-making is highly recommended for positive outcomes, it is suggested that women should not make household decisions alone (Acharya et al. 2010). In most cases, Acharya et al. (2010) argue that the decision to change behavior had to be sanctioned by the husband in the household or by the community as a whole, including women.

Using the four indicators for decision-making based on the GHDS (2008) findings, seven percent of currently married women in Ghana do not participate in any of the four household decisions while 47 percent of the married women participate in all four household decisions. The GDHS (2003) showed that only 29 percent of the married women surveyed made individual decisions regarding daily household purchases. This percentage increased to 44 in 2008. In addition, joint decisions regarding visits to the wife's family or relatives increased from 38

percent in 2003 to 60 percent in the 2008. However, the increased percentages favor educated, wealthy, urban women more than women in rural communities (GDHS 2008).

Based on the surveys carried out in Ghana so far, the three main comprehensive strategies for achieving projected outcomes for women's full participation in household decisions are strategies that can equip women to access community resources, to challenge norms, and to access economic resources (Acharya et al. 2010). These strategies, if successfully adopted, would build the capacity of women to participate in household decisions (Acharya et al. 2010).

In the Talensi small-scale gold mining industry, women's participation in gold production has greatly improved their ability to shift some of the norms. For example, there is an increased tendency for Talensi women miners to make personal and household decisions. Some of the women make decisions about the number of children they want to have, as it is in the case of Yigba. In addition, women in the mining industry access community services. Many of them travel to the nearest health clinic for family planning services. On several occasions, Maggie, the *akpeteshie* (locally brewed gin) seller, pointed out some of the women who accessed family planning services. She enrolled into the program herself after she had her sixth child, a six-year old boy in primary one (first grade). This was the first time Maggie had participated in the program. She told me that although she had earlier heard about the program when she lived in Kumasi, she did not participate in it. However, in the mining communities, several women were participating in the program and she saw the benefits of the program to these women, so she decided to do the same.

Yigba said she wanted to have more children. She was participating in the family planning program until she made up her mind about when to have the children and who she wanted to father her children. Yigba explained in an interview:

EK: How many more children do you want to have?

Yigba: One or two more children.

EK: What do you think about your family size?

Yigba: (Smiling) Oh! Three of my five children are living with their fathers. I don't spend much money on them except when they request for money. The last time Joshua (her eldest son) asked me for money was more than two years ago and I provided him with the money and that was when I added some money to be given to Gilbert (her second son) also. As for the last two children, even though their fathers are deceased, I am able to take care of them alone. In fact, mommy (her daughter) is attending a private school. If I have another child, his/her father will support me to take care of him/her.

EK: What are you waiting for before having the children?

Yigba: My fiancé seems to have reproductive problems. My daughter just turned four years old. This is the appropriate time to have another child. If I don't become pregnant by him (her fiancé), I will look for another man.

Yigba and Maggie, like the other women, are making major decisions that affect their lives regarding family sizes, birth spacing, marriage partners, and fatherhood. These transformations are challenging the norms where men previously made these decisions for women. Abena, for example, believes that the two children she has by her second husband are enough because she has one son from her first marriage. She plans to relocate to Akwatia in Southern Ghana where her co-wife lives. Her husband has built a house for her at Akwatia and she is building another house by herself in the same town. If Abena continued to live at the mine when her children are older, she remarked, "I would not be able to offer them a good education." At Akwatia, she continued, "my children could enroll in the same school as the children of my co-wife. I am saving two bags of chipping (crushed rock ore). I will process the chipping later, sell the gold, and leave the mining community to relocate to Akwatia." Abena hopes to use her savings from the mines to start a business that would bring her enough profit to educate her sons, because "I do not want my children to suffer the way I am suffering," she declared. She wants to



improve her children's lives through education. This self-consciousness is driving some of the women to work hard in the difficult mining conditions to achieve improved lives for their children. These major decisions would transform Talensi ideas about women and children when encouraged.

### **Conclusion: The Social Impact of the Talensi Mining Activities**

The impact of the Talensi mining activities on the relationships of the women and their families is very complex. This chapter shows that many transformations are taking place in women's relationships with their husbands and children. The transformations include marriage, childcare, and decision-making. Although these transformations may not be viewed as significant, they have implications for redefining household relationships.

In the first place, marriage relationships are taking on new trends in the small-scale gold mining communities. Women are selecting partners of choice, are not delaying marriage, and eroding the stigma of divorce. They engage in the types of unions they find suitable. For example, women's work in the mines reduces the stress that comes with divorce, the stigma for not marrying, and the state of helplessness that causes other people to make decisions that affect women's lives.

These patterns of family relationships are significant to women's lives. Women's inability to contribute to family decisions appears to have caused marriages to dissolve as well as for responsible parents due to early marriage. Imoh (2012) pointed out that a sense of parental irresponsibility stems from illiteracy and poverty, but it could also be due to the sheer immaturity of young girls who become mothers. With the rapid increases in divorce cases in Ghana shown in the GDHS (2014) and among the Talensi, it is important that this interconnection between early marriage and divorce is given the attention it deserves. This chapter argues that, among the

Talensi miners, early marriage is one of the most common causes of marriage instability. The practice of marrying girls very early in life exposes them to situations they may not be able to handle. At relatively young age, these mothers face the challenge of caring for themselves and their children in an “akolaa a wawo akolaa” or children who give birth to children phenomenon.

Secondly, child fosterage is becoming more pervasive among Talensi miners. However, while extended kin may raise the children, women are still involved in the care of their children. Many studies have shown better outcomes for parental involvement with children placed in foster care with kinship involvement, but these studies examine Euro-American foster care practices (Huefner et al. 2015; Harden and Whittaker 2011; Farmer 2009). However, the studies emphasize the importance of family contact for the wellbeing of children. While Talensi, unlike other West African societies, did not practice fosterage in the past, it has become relatively common for Talensi women working in gold mining communities to leave their children to be fostered by their kin. The practice of co-parenting has helped with childcare in the mining communities.

One of the issues Farmer (2009) pointed out in her study that addresses the similarities and differences between kinship and non-kinship care is the stress foster parents experience. Talensi women’s provision of financial and social support for their children and foster parents would take care of and reduce the likelihood of stress among their kin who support the care of their children. The women remit money to their children’s care providers and pay regular visits. The women provide food, clothes, and education, ensuring that their children receive the kinds of support they need for proper development.

Regardless of the social problems of exploitation and mistreatment identified with childrearing by kin, intra-family support systems remain crucial (Renne 2003). The absence

of effective social services in rural communities, as well as weak social institutions in Ghana, make it imperative for Talensi miners and other Ghanaian workers to use the support of kin for the care of their children when they work in the mines (Therborn 2006).

Lastly, this chapter emphasizes new trends in decision-making processes in the small-scale mining communities. Talensi women miners are increasingly making family decisions, a major step toward women's autonomy. They make decisions that not only benefit them, but their children and households as well. By making individual and family decisions, Talensi women are changing household norms of authority. Women's capacity to make household decisions is likely to improve their decision-making capacity in the community as well. For instance, the ability to improve their decision-making capacity would give them the recognition they need and probably provide them with the confidence to manage parental sexual and reproductive choices.

This chapter shows that women's participation in the mining industry is producing a complexity of interactions that is important for understanding such practices as early marriage, child fosterage and decision-making. At the individual level, Talensi women, whether married, unmarried, or divorced are impacted by early marriage, divorce, child rearing, and decision-making. In small-scale gold mines, women have the ability to engage in gainful employment, enjoy social opportunities the mining spaces provide for them, such as avoiding the stigma of divorce, and improve their capacities such as decision-making.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **GENDER ROLES AND WOMEN'S WAGES**

This chapter explores the relationship between gender roles and wages in order to understand the social and economic conditions of women in the Talensi small-scale gold mining industry. Although most economies in Africa welcomed the small-scale mining industry, there have been concerns about whether it has been able to provide the socio-economic boost expected of it (Hilson 2012). At a World Bank roundtable discussion on how the small-scale mining industry is influencing poor communities, participants discussed how the cycle of poverty of the industry “traps” its workforce (Ellis et al. 2003; Adato et al. 2006). According to Gavin Hilson (2012), instead of lifting people out of poverty, the small-scale mining industry has created a cycle of poverty for miners who do not accumulate enough financial assets to raise their lives above subsistence level. Although Hilson’s (2012) main concern was for improving the conditions of male miners, the general understanding is that the small-scale mining industry has not adequately helped to improve the lives of the workforce as a whole.

As an informal economy, the small-scale mining industry may affect men and women differently. Kate Meagher (2007) draws attention to the inadequacy in research approaches regarding women’s empowerment in informal economies. Meagher (2007) expresses concerns about the assertion scholars make that women in urban informal economies face continuing difficulties by way of obstacles that prevent improvement in their lives. Some obstacles identified are lack of credit and skills training. However, Meagher (2007) asserts that removing the obstacles may not lead to improved lives for women.

This chapter examines two concepts—empowerment and poverty traps—to explain the lives of the Talensi women engaged in small-scale gold mining activities. Hilson (2012:180) proposed the concept “poverty trap” to explain the vicious cycle of poverty that traps the workforce into small-scale mining activities, while Meagher (2007:72) uses the term “empowerment trap” to refer to the need to rethink empowerment programs for informal economies. The concept of “poverty trap,” a term coined at a roundtable hosted by the World Bank, draws attention to the poor conditions of the workforce in the small-scale mining industry. In a study of how the small-scale mining industry is organized, Hilson (2012) used the term “poverty trap” to highlight how poverty causes workers to remain in the industry despite the dangers dust inhalation and mercury contamination pose to the health of the workforce and the environment.

While focusing on gender roles and wages of the workforce, especially women, I apply the theory of gender hegemony as proposed by Sherry Ortner (1990) as a valuable tool to identify how gender roles are constructed, represented, and contested in the Talensi small-scale gold mining industry. This chapter illuminates how factors such as beliefs, ideology, and kinship influence employment and wages. Fortin (2005) uses quantitative approach to determine how factors such as belief and ideology influence employment and wages and refers to the factors as “soft or fuzzy variables.” However, Merry (2016) argues that quantifying factors such as beliefs and ideologies to explain social phenomenon does not take account of the everyday practices that are important to understand the social phenomenon. In the Talensi mining industry, beliefs and ideologies are some of the factors that explain the influence of the construction and representation of gender roles. This research uses qualitative approaches to analyze the factors in order to provide the details of the influence of these factors in the everyday lives of the women.

According to Merry (2016), scholars should use qualitative approaches to explain social phenomenon in order to provide details to the social issues.

In addition, this chapter examines how the ideas about gender role differences emerge, by exploring the physical, social, and cultural factors that produce the gender roles. The chapter also analyzes Talensi women's wages in the mines, examining the quantities of chipping or crushed rock women receive as wages. The chapter begins with a story about Sanpan, one of the women in Kejetia who participated in data collection for estimating women's wages.

### *Sanpan's Story*

Sanpan is a middle-aged woman who works in the mining industry as a shanker. Late one evening, during my fieldwork in Kejetia, Sanpan visited Nica, my host, to chat with her. Sanpan joined her husband in Kejetia (the couple's three children do not live with them in the mining community) in 2011. Before she came to Kejetia, she was a retailer in Tongo market. One day, a fire burned her kiosk and all her goods for sale in the market.<sup>10</sup> Upon the outbreak of fire, Sanpan lost her main source of livelihood so she started mining in Kejetia. The night she visited Nica, I was fast asleep in Nica's single bedroom house, but as they continued to talk at the top of their voices, I woke up for a short time. While awake, I overheard a part of their friendly chat, which mostly centered on Sanpan's long working hours and wages. The next day, when I was going to one of the four crushers, or rock crushing machines, Sanpan called me from across the street. She was surprised I did not recognize her because when I kept tossing on my bed the previous night, she thought I was fully awake. My encounter with Sanpan on that day began a long-standing relationship that connected me to most of the other shankers. I participated in shanking with her almost every day.

On the first day of shanking with the women, I sat with Sanpan, listening to her conversation with the other women. Although some of the women recognized me, Sanpan introduced me to the group as Nica's friend and I joined in the conversation. We discussed their work organization, gender roles, wages, and family situations. About one hour into the conversation, the shanking leader arrived and invited some of the women to shank. All the women present, about fifteen of them, moved to a heap of load or chipping at the corner of the employer's courtyard. They struggled to find places to sit around the heap. In the end, Sanpan and eight other women found space. While Sanpan shanked with her team, the women who had not found space around the load moved away from the heap to avoid inhaling dust emitted during shanking. After shanking, the employer emerged from behind the building and instructed the work leader (who was the employer's fiancé) to give each of the women who participated in shanking one-half of an *appiah-dankwa* of chipping as wages. When the leader fetched the chipping with her *appiah-dankwa* and put it into a shanker's *appiah-dankwa*, most of the shankers tossed it, carefully looked at it for some time, poured it into a basher, and walked in the direction of the sound of another crusher.<sup>11</sup>

When all the nine participants had received their chipping, the six women who did not participate in shanking also stretched out their hands with their *appiah-dankwa*. This time, the leader used her hands to fetch some of the chipping into their *appiah-dankwa*. To my surprise, when I took Sanpan's *appiah-dankwa* to collect my share of the chipping, the leader gave me the same quantity as the other women who did not participate in shanking. I gave my chipping to Sanpan. Later, three other women emerged from behind the building and requested their share. They also received a handful of chipping each. When all the women had received some chipping,

three of the women who shanked with Sanpan carried the chipping in three pans or large bowls to the milling machine to regrind the residual particle.

Sanpan's story provides a snapshot of the interactions that take place between female employees and their male employers in the Talensi small-scale gold mining industry. The story shows how shankers work and receive wages in the industry. The story is significant because it shows the process of female labor recruitment, the categorization of women into work groups, and payment of women's wage in the Talensi gold mining industry, processes that are significant in understanding gender roles and practices as well as wages for women. Sanpan's story reveals a labor system with a peculiar organization for recruitment of female workers and distribution of wages. It shows how, in recruiting women for work, the three categories of women laborers—leaders, participating women shankers, and non-participating shankers—interact, and how they receive wages. Interestingly, the story shows that some of the women who got wages were not even present when shanking was taking place. Once they showed up before shanking was complete, they also received part of the chipping as wages. This event is one example that shows the complexity of relationship building, gender roles, and wages in the industry.

In previous chapters of this study, I have described how gender relationships show up practically and symbolically in meanings that are particular to the Talensi context, but simultaneously reflect broader meanings of gender relationships with policy implications. This chapter examines how the relationship between the workforce and gender roles produces the system that defines wage distribution in this informal economy.



## **The Complexity of Informal Economic Activities**

One of the most important determinants of the roles of women in the mining industry is the particular resource being mined. Hinton et al. (2003) argue that, in most cases, men take control in the extraction of high-value products. In lower-value mining industries, such as salt production in West Africa, the proportion of women who participate is higher (Hinton et al. 2003). In the Talensi mining industry, women play significant roles in gold production. One role that women have played in mining industries is in the development of sustainable communities (Hinton et al. 2003; Koomson 2011). For example, in the Talensi small-scale mining industry, the activities of many of the women who do not directly participate in gold production, including operating local restaurants, providing laundry services, brewing pito (local beer), and retailing goods, are sustainable activities for the communities. The women engaged in indirect activities provide the goods and the services the miners require, especially during peak periods when the miners in gold production have busy work schedules. There are food sellers like Yigba or drink sellers like Maggie, sells throughout the night. In addition, the women who engage in indirect activities are permanent inhabitants of the mining communities, whereas many of the shankers and other gold production workers leave the mining communities regularly.

Shankers point out the absence of significant barriers to entry, which makes it easy for them to participate in mining jobs. Unlike men who spend a longer period finding a *ghetto*, “gang,” or work team to join, women find jobs as soon as they arrive in the mining communities. There is also flexibility with respect to moving in and out of the industry. Women are able to move in and out of the mining communities either at short intervals or seasonally, a convenience pattern enabling them to switch between jobs, although job switching rarely occurs. Many women enter into mining jobs when the industry is booming but return to their local

communities when they cannot find jobs. This convenience pattern among Talensi women moving in and out of mining jobs and communities is a general characteristic of informal economies (Chen et al. 2006).

### **The Informal Economy: An Alternative to the Formal Economy**

The history of the informal economy began in the 1950s. During this time, governments in many developing countries were called upon to provide policies and resources to the non-regulated economy with a view to transforming the sector into a dynamic economy (Chen et al. 2006). According to Chen et al. (2006), the informal economy comprises the diversified set of economic activities, enterprises, jobs, and workers that governments do not regulate or protect, and serves as an alternative to the formal, government regulated, and taxable economy in many developing countries.

In a 1954 essay for which he received a Nobel Prize in Economics, W. Arthur Lewis proposed that economic development in the non-regulated sector would generate jobs to absorb surplus labor in developing countries. He argued that absorbing the surplus labor would lead to increased wages. Lewis proposed that the dualistic model—formal versus informal—would strengthen the labor economy. According to Chen et al. (2006), originally, the informal sector comprised self-employed enterprises, but it has been expanding to include wage labor. The informal economy has continued to receive attention within development circles because the sector has the ability to open employment opportunities for a large number of people in developing countries and to support nations during a global economic crisis (Chen et al. 2006)

Following Arthur Lewis' (1954) proposal, two decades later the anthropologist Keith Hart (1973:61) first used the term “informal” sector to refer to the complex economic activities

of the low-income labor force in Accra, Ghana. Hart (1973) argued that the workers who constituted the informal labor force were economically active participants of the urban economy. He identified the two main groups of workers of the informal economy as self-employed workers and wage laborers. Hart pointed out that in the informal sector, traders who constituted part of the self-employed workers often earned more than wage laborers. While Hart (1973) was concerned about labor supply and the inadequate income of the different categories of workers in the informal economy, he did not clearly distinguish between men's and women's wages and differential wages among the male and female traders and wage laborers he studied.

However, there is a significant intra-group wage difference across gender among the workers in the informal economy, a dynamic that has received little attention. In the Talensi mines, traders may earn more income than wage laborers, as Hart (1973) first demonstrated, but even among wage laborers, the incomes of the workforce vary significantly. Differential wages are not peculiar to the Talensi gold mining industry, but the limitations placed on women's roles in the industry significantly influence women's wages. Meagher (2007) became interested in the differential wages and indicated that the gendered division of labor in informal economies contributes to differential wages. This chapter examines the wages of men and women and their roles, highlighting the factors that account for differential wages between men and women, and among women.

### **Women and the Informal Economy in West Africa**

In West Africa, the market is the main form of the informal economy that attracts a large proportion of women workers. In most West African countries, large markets provide women with many forms of jobs, ranging from trading in big shops to small, retail shops (Clark 1994). Large markets bring people together to a central location to trade in many kinds of goods. Even

though most of these large markets have men involved in the trading activities, women play significant roles (Clark 2010). In some of the markets, women take leadership roles and organize the activities of the other traders. One outcome of this expansion was the emergence of larger rural markets and the growth of settlements closer to these markets (Clark 1994; Sudarkasa 1973). Clark (1994) argues that women have become key players in these markets, trading in all kinds of agricultural and other products that have compelled them to go beyond the confinement of the home-based work into activities outside the home. For instance, in Ghana, women played middle roles (these women are referred to as middlemen or market queens when they serve as market leaders), buying products from household farms and selling the farm produce in neighboring market centers. The women in turn bought goods such as cloth, salt, and cooking and household utensils from the marketing centers to sell in the village. The activities of self-owned enterprises were common features of the informal economy in these traditional economies (Clark 1994).

With the development of wage labor all over West Africa, women have become increasingly involved in wage work, diversifying their sources of income to contribute to the household economy (Clark 1994). The ascendancy of small-scale gold mining in West Africa and other parts of the developing world has led to interplay between women's desire to earn personal income and governments' need to increase foreign earnings from gold production, which has increased the number of women participating in small-scale mining across the region.

In Ghana, when the government opened up small-scale gold mining in the Talensi District in the 1970's, Talensi women grabbed the opportunity to move into the industry.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Demarcation of the land began in the 1970s, but the inhabitants started work in the mid-1980s

Women experience many advantages when they work in informal economies, though there are also some disadvantages. Notable among the advantages are low skill requirements and a sense of flexibility (Chen et al. 2006; Chant and Pedwell 2008). However, Chant and Pedwell (2008), mention disadvantages of informal economies, including lack of improvements in women's economic lives. Even though a majority of the workers in the informal sector is women, a large number of men also work in the sector in paid jobs. In organizations where men and women work together, there have been concerns about the possibility of women engaging in less valued and therefore lower paying tasks (Mills 2003). Understanding women's roles in informal work is significant because of the concerns about whether small-scale activities improve women's wellbeing. Most researchers are of the view that the activities in informal economies have not led to improved lives for women (Chen et al. 2006). In fact, some researchers have argued that participation in informal economies may impoverish women's lives, instead of improving them (Chant and Pedwell 2008; Chen et al. 2006; Meagher 2007).

According to Kate Meagher (2010), an inability to recognize important issues that come with women's participation in the informal labor force and the contributions that come from their work has narrowed the literature and generated debates about women's empowerment in the informal economy. Meagher reiterated that concerns with empowering women in the informal economy have trapped some researchers into seeking to remove the obstacles in the informal economy, such as women's lack of access to finances or training. This "empowerment trap," as Meagher argues, has kept researchers from understanding the interplay of root causes and crosscutting factors that account for the lack of improvement in women's lives, such as the root causes of the limitations accompanying gendered structure of informal economies (2007:72). According to Meagher (2010), the wrong picture of women given by the literature has diverted

attention from pertinent issues such as gendered informal economies that shape the lives of women in informal economies.

The 2003 World Development Report highlights the importance of different forms of social institutions, including the informal economy. It reports that these social institutions contribute to a sense of collectivity for women who act in them and enhance trust and solidarity that eventually leads to a sense of social inclusion and improves women's wellbeing. For instance, among the women involved in mining in the Talensi area, their sense of belonging to the mining industry stemming from their ability to work together in small groups could help provide that sense of inclusion as a form of transformation that would lead to improved wellbeing.

In view of her critique of empowerment, Meagher (2010) calls for studies that not only emphasize the quantitative indicators that reveal correlations between women's activities in the informal economy, but more importantly, engage in qualitative research to analyze how gender relations are produced in informal economies. According to Meagher (2010:477), the lack of attention to the gendered structures of informal labor economies leads to "survivalist" rather than "growth" activities. She proposed the need to integrate women's activities in informal economies into the global economic chain by bridging the gendered gaps in work practices.

In examining gender relationships in the Talensi mining industry, this chapter engages the factors and root causes that produce gender roles. The chapter also analyzes how gender relationships that emerge from interactions in the workforce influence wages. Consequently, this chapter focuses on gender roles in the male-dominated Talensi mines in order to understand the impact of gender roles on wages.

## **Gender Roles and Male Dominance**

In view of the arguments about the causes and factors that account for gender roles, some scholars have paid attention to the validity of male dominance (Delcore 2007). According to Delcore (2007), the concept of male dominance argues that a significant difference in the amount of power, control, and/or authority exists between men and women across nations. The importance of considering the concept of male dominance in gender roles is that, theoretically, gender roles are linked to women's status (Buvinic et al. 2008). According to Buvinic et al. (2008), there is a close link between the roles allocated to women in a society and the status of women. Based on the link between roles and status, Buvinic et al. (1976:5) define gender roles as "actions taken by men and women" in a society, and status as the "positions that accompany the actions" of men and women. Thus, Talensi women's roles position them in a society in relation to men.

Other researchers, such as Symonds (2015), have contributed to earlier arguments for the link between gender roles and women's status and reiterated that the status accorded to men and women in a society is based on the relative cultural valuation of gender roles. These arguments emphasize that every culture places more value on some roles than others, even though the factors that form the basis of the valuation may differ from one culture to another.

The definition of roles and status given by Buvinic et al. (1976) and others implies that the kinds of roles women engage in determine their status. Women's roles as shankers position them in the mining industry. Paradoxically, women in the mining industry are willing to take up other jobs, but as Tenee, like Azuma also indicated, "The men will not allow us to work in deep mining pits." There is a popular story circulating around the mine about why women cannot work in deep mining pits. Kande shared this with me:

A *salmabalga* woman dug a pit that was so deep that any time she entered the pit to work; she would be out of view of the other women. One evening, all the women left the mining site to go home. Not knowing that it was approaching sunset, the woman in the pit continued to work until sunset. When she finally climbed out of the pit, everyone had left. She decided to walk home alone. After walking a long distance and not being able to reach home, she sat under a tree. By this time, it was completely dark. She was confused and afraid as she sat under the tree. Suddenly, an old woman appeared at where she sat and asked her what she was doing in the middle of the forest. She told the old woman she lost her way and ended up at this place. The old woman decided to escort her back home.

EK: Do you believe the story you just told me ever happened?

Kande: Yes, I do and everyone here believes this story.

EK: Why did the woman get lost in her familiar environment?

Kande: (whispering) because she was menstruating, a practice that drives away good spirits.<sup>12</sup>

So many miners told this story in different forms. However, no one could mention the exact name of the village the lost woman came from or her household name. This story may be “mythical,” but the moral lesson of the story is that women agree that they should not work in pits even when they have expressed their desire and capability to do so in discussions. A kind of division of labor emerges out of the restrictions that limit women’s jobs. The limitation creates boundaries between men and women’s work. The restrictions placed on women to prevent them from engaging in certain roles confine them to jobs that are usually not attractive to men. This form of division of labor does not produce specialization and work efficiency. Rather, it emerges from normative restrictions placed on what Talensi women can and cannot do. In view of the restrictions, some roles are accorded more importance than others are. Both women and men in the Talensi mines place more importance and value on tasks that have restrictions on participation. Since women cannot perform certain tasks, it follows that men’s tasks have greater economic value and social significance.



## **Significance of Male Dominance in a Local Context**

The concept of male dominance normalizes a view of the relationship between males and females in which men exert control over women's behavior. The concept has generated theoretical debate on whether male dominance is universal or not. Some researchers argue that the dominance of one sex results in the subordination of the other sex and that there is a universal prevalence of patriarchal practices (Lorber 2012). Others argue that universal male dominance is mythical and that in most societies in the developing world, there is a balance between men and women, with men yielding prestige and women yielding power (Sanday 2002). Some scholars claim to have identified matriarchal systems (Amadiume 1997) and even gender egalitarian ones (Leacock 1981).

Sherry Ortner (1990) debunked the arguments and counterarguments for the universality of male dominance and proposed the theory of gender hegemony. Ortner's (1990) theory proposes that the universality of the ideologies, beliefs, and values should not occupy researchers' interests. Rather, she argues, the meanings associated with male dominance should be the major concern. In support of Ortner's assertion, Sinnott (2004) reiterated that rather than engaging in debates on universal gender practices, researchers should be concerned with how societies produce and contest meanings to create relationships among the people. For instance, in the Talensi mining industry, hegemonic roles can be appreciated with an understanding of the meanings associated with male dominance by assessing how these meanings produce men and women's roles as well facilitate an individual's access to resources including land and property.

According to Delcore (2007), the overarching principle of Sherry Ortner's discussion of gender hegemonies is that the theory considers cultural particularities that not only affect specific systems of beliefs and ideas, but also actively shape the entire lived social process. The theory

encourages the identification of some of the issues that these meanings and values place importance on, while highlighting conflicts and tensions in debates on universal male dominance (Delcore 2007). Through Sherry Ortner's (1990) original argument, the concept of male dominance has become useful when analyzing local contexts, and expanded to include the lived experiences of a group of people in an organization. In viewing male dominance within a local context, Ortner (1996) highlights the ideologies and beliefs that dominate within societies.

In view of the argument on male dominance, the following section examines how gender roles in Talensi mines are produced and contested from the societal norms of the everyday lives of the people. Talensi norms define men and women's roles; however, norms that usually favor men produce gender roles that favor men and enable them to control a greater proportion of the resources available. Men's roles that attract a greater wage constitute what I term "hegemonic roles." These hegemonic roles draw their value and importance from the beliefs and ideologies of the Talensi society.

The overview of gender roles that follows examines the processes of making meanings, attaching values, and applying importance to beliefs and ideas in Talensi mines. Among the Talensi, the roles of men and women begin at birth and continue after death. The cycle of Talensi life and death establishes roles for men and women. What makes gender roles in the Talensi mining community important is that, once the roles have been established, they further create gender wage differences that disadvantage women.

### **Producing Gender Roles: Physical, Social, and Cultural Factors**

Tasks in Talensi small-scale gold mines are gender-specific. I categorize the factors that account for gender roles into physical, social, and cultural. According to the Talensi miners, the

factors that account for gender roles provide different explanations for gender roles. However, these factors are closely interrelated.

### ***Physical Factors***

A wide range of beliefs about women's traits and abilities restrict Talensi women from participating in certain kinds of jobs and limit their involvement in other jobs. Little evidence exists on the physical makeup of individuals that accounts for differences between men and women, and most agreed-upon differences are mythical (Maccoby and Jacklin 1987). However, in several societies, the "myth" of physical differences between men and women persists and the differences sometimes define behaviors, work patterns, and wages.

In the small-scale gold mines in the Talensi district, physical factors emanate from the idea that women are not strong enough to perform tasks that take place in the pit, such as digging and blasting. As a result, even though there is no hard and fast rule preventing women from working in certain kinds of jobs, stories about pit tasks suggest that the conditions in mining pits are too dangerous for women.

The physical "difference" between what men and women can do is generally inferred from the physical characteristics associated with men and women. These physical differences support assertions about role definitions. For instance, traditional ideologies consider men as more aggressive, independent, and able to carry out arduous tasks while women are considered nurturing and more able to carry out repetitive tasks, but less able to do difficult tasks (Buvinic et al. 1976).

In the Talensi mine, two main issues were raised. The first was the idea about women's traits and abilities and the second was about the "risky" pits. During group discussions and

interviews, there were issues of divergence between men and women's views on women's traits and abilities and the "risky" pits. One man described the difficulty involved with working in the pit:

How can we allow women to work in the pit? We don't jump into the pit. Rather, we stretch out our legs, one on each side of the wall of the pit, holding onto the upper part of the wall and gradually descend into the pit. Will women be able to stretch out their legs when there are other people in the pit? Even if they wear pants, stretching out legs is difficult for women to accomplish and when there are other people standing below it is not decent for the women.

Some of the women begged to differ from this opinion. Some *salmabalga* (shallow pit mining) workers acknowledged the fact that when the pit got deeper they required the support of men because the job became risky and sometimes fatal, but they argued that when proper measures were put in place, they could avoid most of the risks. "After all, men also work in teams and experience risks such as cave-ins," Abena concluded. According to the women, the men discouraged them from continuing their work in deep pits so that they could take the pits away from them. Men asked women to leave only when the men realized that the women were closer to the gold rock. Paradoxically, the women also admitted, "We expect the men to do the more difficult tasks." To my surprise, none of the women had made an effort to enter deep mining pits. I saw amazement on the women's faces when I informed them that I had entered one of my male friend's pits with him, even though I told them that it was a scary thing to do even when my friend supported me in descending into the pit.

### ***Social Factors***

Among the Talensi, social factors that contribute to gender roles concern the ideas that women cannot work close to men, especially married women. Talensi social values discourage men and women from working in close proximity to each other unless they belong to the same

lineage. Mining pits are considered “hidden” and “secluded,” so they are not conducive environments for men and women to work together. Talensi men and women regularly work together in open farm fields, but not in areas that are out of the public view. When other people are unable to see what is happening in the pit, they do not approve of women working with men. The “dark” mining pits are not acceptable places for social interaction.

In addition to regarding the pits as secluded or hidden, men who argued against women working there emphasized deplorable conditions. Miners spend many consecutive days and nights working in the pits. While they are working in the pits, they urinate, defecate, and spit, creating unpleasant and unhealthy working conditions underground.

When miners identify gold, they do not leave the pit for fear that other miners may steal the gold. This means that if a woman should work in the pit she would also have to spend days there, making it impossible for her to carry out her household duties. Even though women miners spend many hours per day shanking and have very little spare time for housework, their presence above ground allows them to interact with their children. They go home during work breaks and at the end of the day, which would not be possible if they were working in the deeper mining pits.

### ***Cultural Factors***

Throughout the world, women have been discouraged from working underground in mining communities. For example, coal miners in the Eastern United States adhered to the beliefs that the presence of women underground would cause explosions (Rolston 2013). Many mining camps also share myths about the link between gold and spirits underground (Nash 1979).

In the Talensi industry, the miners also believe that menstruation keeps away “good

spirits,” and this contributes to the idea that women cannot work underground. Women miners in Talensi are generally younger adults of childbearing age. There is a general belief held by both men and women that gold is a spirit and that only people who possess *ebzuktur* (“good luck” in the Talon language) are able to discover gold. Women who are menstruating do not have good luck.

Paradoxically, difficult mining tasks require a workforce of younger adults. This belief about menstruation and spirit continues to impact work at the mine. Akwasi, a *moyerman*, believes “the rule is bending because there are a few women in the mining community who own pits.” However, a further investigation revealed that only one woman from Obuasi was regarded as an owner of one of the pits even though her sons were in charge of working in it. The general perception was that the woman owned the pit, even though she had never worked underground. As some of the other women told me, the woman who was supposed to be a pit owner started digging as a *salmabalga* worker but when the pit got deeper, she handed it over to her sons to avoid losing it to other workers (see Chapter 2 about Azuma’s story, when men took her pit). Fortunately, the male workers who joined the woman’s sons continued to work in the same pit. The men agreed to give part of the gold to the *salmabalga* woman to compensate for her hard labor, an agreement they reached probably through her sons’ influence. The pit workers also continued to refer to her as the owner of the pit. Partnerships between men and women concerning pit ownerships are rare in the mining communities, but if encouraged, they would help women in a significant way.

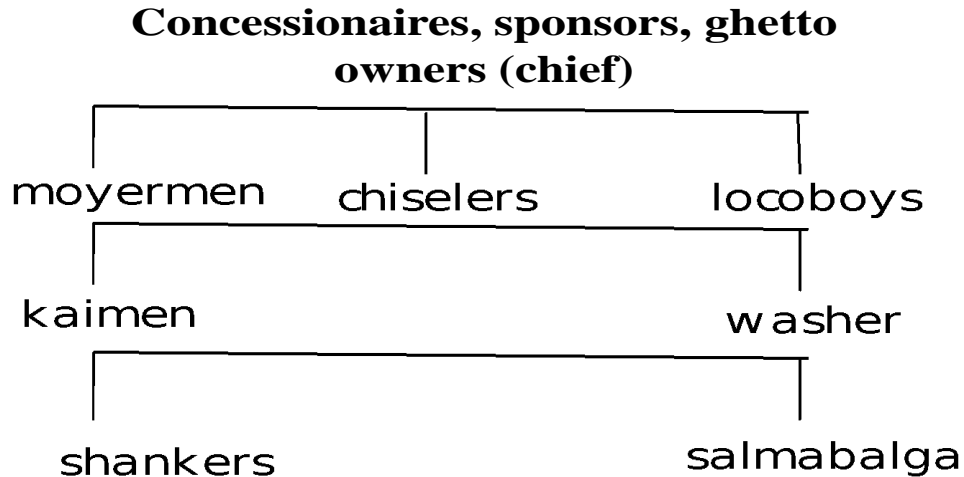
The beliefs described in the women’s stories have important impacts on Talensi mining activities. Ideologies about gender roles, statuses, and dominance are closely interconnected. When these beliefs determine women’s roles, they position them within the division of labor.

Borrowing from Ortner (1989), in this study, I have referred to the roles that are considered more valuable and important in the Talensi small-scale mining industry as “hegemonic roles.” In order to demonstrate the significant intersections between roles, statuses, and dominance, I discuss the organizational chart of the industry. I argue that hegemonic roles attain higher status, are placed on top of the chart, and dominate over non-hegemonic roles.

***Talensi Work Organization: Structural Differences, Values, and Importance***

Talensi miners organize their activities around several gender-specific tasks. The tasks are placed on three main tiers, with the most important tasks on top. They group together mining tasks that have the same level of importance and value. This organizational chart was drawn with the help of a group of women miners during a focus group discussion.

**Figure 8: Organizational Chart of Talensi Small-Scale Mining Activities**



Some of the women pointed out that concessionaires, sponsors, and *ghetto* or pit owners occupy the highest tier on the organizational chart and argued, “Without them we would have no small-scale gold mining activities in this area.” Concessionaires acquire the mining land from the

government of Ghana through the Minerals Commission. According to the Upper East Regional Director of the Minerals Commission, each concession covers 25 acres of land. The Commission does not encourage sole proprietorship. Rather, about ten miners come together to acquire a concession. Initially, 12 miners acquired the Kejetia concession. However, only three of the original owners continue to work at Kejetia mines in 2014. The rest have relocated to other communities outside the Talensi district. Sponsors are capitalists who are responsible for providing financial support for the business. The sponsors may or may not live in the mining communities. *Ghetto* or business owners acquire a piece of land from the concessionaires and recruit a work team called *ghetto* or sometimes a “gang.” *Ghetto* owners supervise the gold production process from underground to above ground. In most cases, they work together with the underground workers. The chiefs of the mining communities, who are landowners, but who may not be small-scale miners, have a share in the quantity of gold produced on their land. Each *ghetto* gives the chief *bolisi*, (a Talon word for the chief’s share).

*Moyermen*, chiselers, and *locoboys* constitute another group and occupy the next tier on the chart. *Moyermen*, or drillers, bear the greatest risks associated with inhaling large amounts of dust that come out of the rocks during drilling in the pit. The miners explained that chiseling requires previous knowledge and experience (usually acquired from the South). *Locoboys* perform the most strenuous tasks of carrying rock ore from the pits to the surface and into the homes of the *ghetto* owners. *Kaimen* and washers are not regular workers for the industry. The miners invite *kaimen* to pound sample or rocks that have high content of gold. *Kaimen* use metal mortars to pound sample or rock with high gold content. The miners explain that pounding sample in metal mortars reduces the loss that takes place during crushing. Washers are workers responsible for sluicing and amalgamations. Some of the men’s tasks overlap in that a *kaiman*



can also be a *locoboy*. Shankers and *salmabalga* workers, the only tasks involving women, occupy the lowest level of the chart (Figure 8).

The explanations given by the women indicate that the four main characteristics that determine the value and importance of mining jobs are capital investment, risk, skill, and previous knowledge. A worker with any of the four characteristics is likely to be recruited into a task placed higher on the chart than a worker with less or none of the four characteristics. Generally, women do not possess any of the characteristics that are required to attain a higher placement.

Women's position and their roles together portray the interrelationship between the social structure of the mine and the women. They have to struggle every day to improve their income. Women's everyday struggle as miners is seen in how they move from one location in the village to another looking to jobs to do; the conflicts that emerge from their work; their desire to win a leader's favor to increase wages; and the lack of negotiations over their tasks and wages. Men who engage in hegemonic roles do not usually experience conflicts with people who work for them. The basis for a woman getting a job and wage is solely dependent on the employer's discretion. Tene mentioned that, "Sometimes I do not receive any chipping after shanking, either because the employer may be unsure of meeting his production costs and refuses to give shankers wages in the form of chipping or that an employer may be stingy. My reaction when I receive no wage from work done for an employer would be to refuse to work for the employer again." Talensi female miners do not have legal rights to demand payment from their employers because there are no avenues for them to complain about an employer. Most of the women I met complained about lower wages. The women would show me some of the chipping they received for working for their employers (see Figure 7). Men, on the other hand, would tell me how

generous they are to the women. Role positioning in a work organization is closely linked to the distribution of rewards. Wages for men and women differ, with men earning higher wages than women do, even though, among women, some earn higher wages than others do.

## Gender Wage Gap

A related concern in the literature on inequality is gender wage gaps. All over the world, gaps between the wages of men and women have been observed (Mills 2003). In Talensi mines, shankers do not require specialized skills, but informal characteristics such as “whom you know” or networks of relationships. These characteristics are among the factors that are significant for employment and wages. To analyze the earnings of Talensi mining workers, I collected data from both men and women on work participation, including three shankers, one water vendor, and two chiselers for the first two quarters of 2015. In the next section, I provide graphical representations and discussions of wages and background information on each of the workers who participated in the data collection.

**Table 1: Workers’ Wages in Load/Chipping per Number of Work Days**

Worker	Average quantity of load/chipping in kg						Number of working days						Wages (Ghana cedis)					
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Shanker A	27	102	144	108	150	252	6	19	24	21	21	18	-	50	108	110	143	205
Shanker B	21	174	390	-	210	570	3	16	20	-	13	22	-	-	-	-	290	830
Shanker C	33	120	130	147	18	60	8	10	12	17	6	6	-	-	-	-	505	320
Chiseler A	-	864	504	-	864	504	7	11	11	-	17	9	-	1370	430	-	652	1835
Chiseler B	-	-	-	-	216	360	-	-	-	-	7	10	-	-	-	-	315	405

Table 1 shows the average wages of five of the workers who work directly in gold production. These workers are women who are shankers and men who are chiselers. Shankers do not work everyday for many reasons: when an employer has not invited them; when they are too tired to work or fall sick; when the employer is stingy; or when there are no jobs (during heavy rains, when there is no new gold find, or when old pits are exhausted or filled with water). They also do not work when the work halts due to a mining accident, or when they need to attend social events such as funerals or festivals.<sup>13</sup> Chiselers work in a pit for two to five days, after which they wait several days before starting another cycle of digging, pumping out water, drilling rocks, blasting, allowing the dust to settle and the pit to cool down, and chiseling. During this waiting period, chiselers take some time off to rest from the tedious work. Boger said, “I go back to my village. I am away from my family working in the pit for days so I use the break period to visit my family.<sup>14</sup> If this waiting period coincides with the planting season, I go back to the village to plant the household crops. As the oldest child, I am responsible for planting and maintaining the household farm.” Some men belong to more than one *ghetto*, “gang,” or work team. When a *ghetto* has jobs, the *ghetto* owner recruits other members to replace those working for someone else. Water vendors may work for a few months, at most three months, and go back to their villages because of soreness in their necks and backs due to the physical nature of the labor. Some water vendors return after a few months of rest, while others do not return to the mining communities.<sup>8</sup>

### **Brief Background Information on Participants of Wage Analysis**

Six workers participated in the data collection for this wage analysis. Three of the participants were shankers, one was a water vendor, and two were chiselers. The participants

---

<sup>8</sup> In Table 4.1, I do not show data on water vendor because she receives cash as wages.

provided information on their wages and time spent to get those wages. I provide a brief description of each of the participants:

### ***Shanker A or Ammie***

Shanker A, also called Ammie in this chapter, is a hardworking elderly woman who followed her husband to the mining site with her daughter. Ammie is not a Talensi; she is a Builsa.<sup>15</sup> My friend Maggie, the *akpeteshie* (locally brewed gin) seller, introduced Ammie to me. Ammie is a frequent customer to the *akpeteshie* bar. Her daughter is a final-year student in Tongo senior high school, and Ammie spends the greatest proportion of her income on her daughter's education. She once told me, "My goal is to make sure my daughter completes high school and pursue further studies." Ammie lived in Prestea with her family but they relocated to the Obuasi mining community in the Talensi district when her husband's friend invited them to work in Talensi mine.<sup>16</sup> When Ammie first came to the mining community, she cooked local food and sold it at the crossroads between Obuasi and Kejetia. A few years later, her business collapsed because many people bought her food on credit during the lean season and did not pay her back. She now works as a shanker. She has lived in Obuasi for more than twelve years.

Unlike most of the shankers who accumulate their chipping for three to four months before processing it, Ammie processes her chipping at the end of each month, or sometimes every two weeks. She processes her chipping any time her daughter requests money. She also gets loans from her buyer when she needs extra money. Ammie's husband works as a chiseler for a *ghetto* in Obuasi. For over ten months, his *ghetto*, or "gang" made up of ten workers, had been piling up load at the sponsor's house. The sponsor, who is a scrap dealer, that is, sells used metal products in Tarkwa in the Western region of Ghana, did not honor his promise to share the load after three months. Ammie always complained about the family's financial difficulties. Even

though the sponsor sends remittances to the workers occasionally, the money he gives to the workers cannot adequately meet their daily needs. When I inquired why her husband does not find another “gang” to work with, Ammie explained, “My husband has worked with his present *ghetto* for ten months. They have piled up so much load, but they are required to continue working until the sponsor returns. If he leaves, he would not get the same share as his colleagues who continued to work. Since my husband has already spent ten months with this ‘gang,’ he has to wait until the sponsor returns.” The *ghetto* with Ammie’s husband agreed to use the division-three system to share the load.<sup>17</sup> Sponsors, *ghetto* owners, and “gangs” negotiate the work dynamics for the distribution of load before they begin to dig a pit.

Despite the financial difficulties caused by the delay in sharing her husband’s load, Ammie has been able to make a living from her low income. She has provided the finances for her daughter’s education, which she once said “is the most important pursuit for me in life and I couldn’t have achieved this if I hadn’t come to the mines.” She continued, “When my husband brought home income, we were doing well financially. When they share the load, we will make enough money and save part of it.” Ammie’s husband occasionally went to the site known as Accra, one of the four Talensi mining communities, to work when their financial situation worsened. However, he cannot completely join the “gang” at the Accra site for fear that he will lose his share of the load to which he had contributed.

### ***Shanker B or Sanpan***

Shanker B, or Sanpan is a remarkable woman who was a successful shop owner in Tongo market before she came to Kejetia in 2013 when a fire destroyed her shop. Sanpan’s husband came to work in the mine as a chiseler while they lived in Yameriga, a village about

five kilometers from the mining communities. The first day she arrived in Kejetia, she began shanking. When I met her in October 2014, she had accumulated almost two bags of chipping in a four-month period.

Sanpan spent the next six months accumulating chipping for this study. She processed her chipping at the end of each quarter. The first quarter coincided with the Goree festival, held in March every year. She used a part of her money to attend the festival. Before processing her chipping, Sanpan depended on her buyer for small loans or took out part of her savings, accumulated in a rotating credit scheme known as *susu*.

Sanpan learned about the requirements of the mining industry when she arrived. She also told me that she found out about the important factors that make women successful in the industry. One way to improve one's income is to work for a *ghetto* owner whose load is sample or has a higher quantity of gold. According to Sanpan, most of the concessionaires have sample or load with high gold content. Sanpan identified employers whose load had sample and established "brotherly" contacts with them, becoming a leader for two main sponsors or concessionaires. Sanpan initially came to the mines intending to raise savings so she could restart her retail shop in Tongo market. After about one year of working in Kejetia, she no longer wants to be a shopkeeper in Tongo market. Rather, she has planned to transfer her retail business to her hometown.<sup>18</sup>

### ***Shanker C or Buriah***

Shanker C, or Buriah, is a middle-aged woman with a hearing impairment. Before she came to the mining community, she lived with her husband in a neighboring community. The oldest son of Buriah's co-wife shot and killed her husband after a quarrel ensued between them.

Upon the passing of her husband, Buriah's friend invited her to work in Kejetia. Again, my friend Maggie, the *akpeteshie* (locally brewed gin) seller, introduced Buriah to me one afternoon when she came to have a drink at Maggie's shop. Maggie communicates to Buriah in sign language. Maggie learned sign language when caring for her sister with a hearing impairment. Sometimes when Buriah gets frustrated trying to explain a point to someone who cannot understand her, she brings the person to Maggie to interpret. We had most of our conversations with Maggie present.

When I began collecting data from Buriah, she had accumulated two maxi bags of chipping over five months. She was very cooperative and agreed to separate her old chipping from the new so that I would be able to record her chipping. She planned to process her gold for the Goree festival because there would be a family reunion. Buriah expected her son who lived in Accra to attend the reunion.<sup>19</sup> She wanted to give her son money to support his mechanic apprenticeship in Accra. While she was accumulating her chipping, she took small loans from her buyer any time she needed money.

Buriah's employers found her to be trustworthy. This gained her leadership roles. She was also sure to work for employers with sample or load with high gold content. Maggie told me that Buriah would not work for an employer unless she was sure the load was sample or high quality load. Buriah demonstrated skill and enthusiasm in her work. She would ensure that her employer gave her sufficient chipping as wages and become angry when the employer did not give her enough chipping. With her dedication to work, most of her employers respected her and gave her additional chipping when she asked for it.

### *Water Vendor or Dalamgda*

The water vendor, referred to as Dalamgda in this chapter, is one of the older adults in the mine. She sold water in bowls in Kejetia. She has one son and two grandchildren who live about ten kilometers from Kejetia. She explained to me that she worked to support her son to take care of his family. Her son planted the household crops and she worked to provide him with financial support. Each water vendor identifies regular buyers or customers. Dalamgda's two main buyers were Nica, my host, and a food vendor. Sometimes, a random customer might ask her to fetch water for her/him. The main source of water for cooking and drinking was the stream. Dalamgda fetched water pumped out of the mining pits for processing gold (see Long et al. 2013).<sup>20</sup>

Dalamgda goes back and forth between her village and the mining community. She spends one to two months selling water to the residents. When she is tired, has back or neck aches, she returns to her village and stays for a few months before returning to Kejetia. She says she comes to work in the mines because the income from the household farm cannot sufficiently take care of her household. She wants her son to have more children to expand his family and she is working to support the care of her grandchildren. In 2014-2015, Dalamgda worked from October to December and left to spend the Christmas with her family. She returned in January, but left again in March. She planned to return in September after I had left the field.

Water vending is a very difficult task. On average, Dalamgda fetches and sells ten bowls of water each day, using a 30-liter bowl. She walks a total distance of one kilometer to and from the stream. When the steam dries up during the dry season, the price of a bowl of water increases from GH¢1.00 to GH¢1.50 (about 25 - 30 cents), but water vendors have to walk extra distances to fetch water to sell. In order to get water to sell in the dry season, Dalamgda sinks a hole in the riverbed late at night. It takes her two to three hours to fill the six bowls in the early morning



from the water that collects in the hole overnight. She then carries each bowl to buyers. With very high temperatures in the afternoon, she is not able to collect water. She saves most of her wages in a rotating credit scheme or *susu* account.

### ***Chiseler A or Boger***

Boger is a middle-aged man, about 35 years old, who works as a chiseler. He lives in one of the neighboring communities, about three kilometers from Kejetia. He has two wives who live with him in his village. He lived in Kumasi for several years before returning to his village. Boger mentioned that when he lived in Kumasi, he was a shop attendant and unloaded goods from trucks into the shop. He returned to his village when his friend informed him about the small-scale mining activities in the district. When he comes to work in the mines, he lives with his fiancé. Most often, he works for his nephew, who is one of the three concessionaires remaining in Kejetia.

### ***Chiseler B or Movie***

Movie is Sanpan's husband. He asked to participate in the data collection, but since it coincided with the planting season (he occasionally left for his village with Sanpan to cultivate the family farm), he spent only a few days working in the mines. I was not able to collect much data from him because of his frequent trips to his hometown.

## **Women in Mining Work**

The women's life stories identify in a more general sense the factors that shape the realities of Talensi mining activities. Many factors bring women into the mining communities, but according to the women in Kejetia, the main reason is to work for wages. According to Werthermann (2009), informal mining camps attract girls and women in Burkina Faso, West

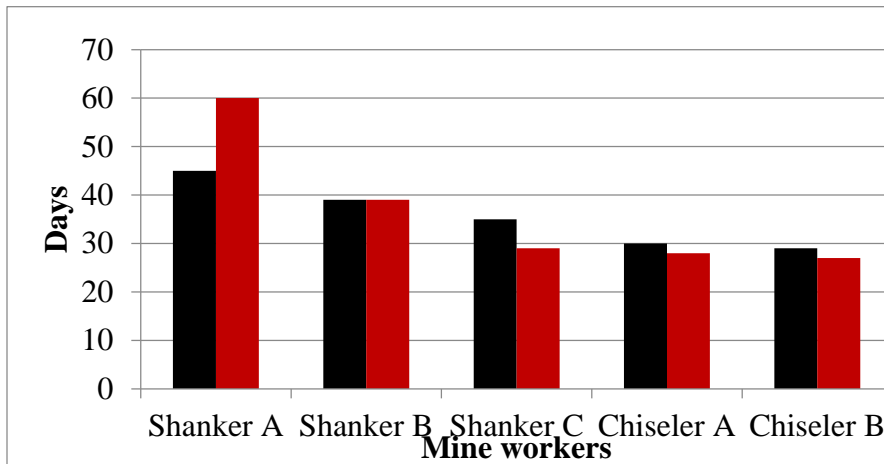
Africa. Werthermann argues that material benefits lure women into mining camps. At the same time, Werthermann added, women's migration to the mining camps is fraught with ambivalence because mining camps provide women with opportunities to engage in illicit sexual activities. On the other hand, June Nash's (1979) studies in Bolivia shows that women may follow their husbands who have moved into mining sites, while others come with friends. Talensi women come to the mines from all the neighboring communities. A few women may choose to come alone. In view of its reputation as a place where anyone can work regardless of skills and educational background, the mine attracts a large number of inhabitants from Talensi district. Other women want to escape from the more difficult tasks on household farms, where there is little or no remuneration, into the mining industry, to make some income. June Nash (1979) indicated that women who followed their husbands into the mining communities did not usually work for wages but offered household support services such as home keeping. The situation is different for Talensi women. Women relocate from villages into the mining communities for personal, household, and community.<sup>9</sup> No matter the reasons for which women come into the Talensi mines, once they come, they work to earn wages. They explained that they intended to save a part of their wages and invest their money into a business, to acquire personal property, or to take care of their children. Werthermann (2009) posits that women make decisions about their participation in the mining industry and they weigh viable alternatives for their work in the mining camps.

---

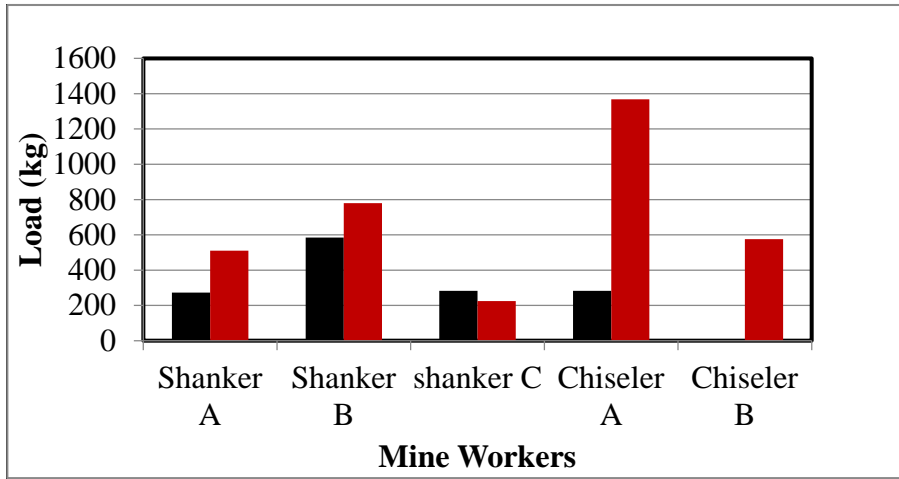
<sup>9</sup> Kande, who engages in laundry service, explained why she came to the mines: "My brother brought me back into the village from Kumasi because he was convinced I would drop out of school and take to the streets. I fought with my classmates all the time so the school authorities asked my brother to remove me. He sent me to another school but I didn't change my behavior."

The mining industry has no standard procedure for labor recruitment. Sanpan’s “family” connection secures her the jobs she finds suitable; Buriah becomes upset to get her employers’ attention and gets consideration for regular jobs because she has hearing impairment. Ammie’s age influences job recruitment. In addition, it is notable that even though shanking is tedious, water vending is more tedious and temporary. In addition, chiselers work for a few days a month since the work has different phases and chiselers are only responsible for one part. These stories therefore, help us to understand how women affect and are affected by the mining industry.

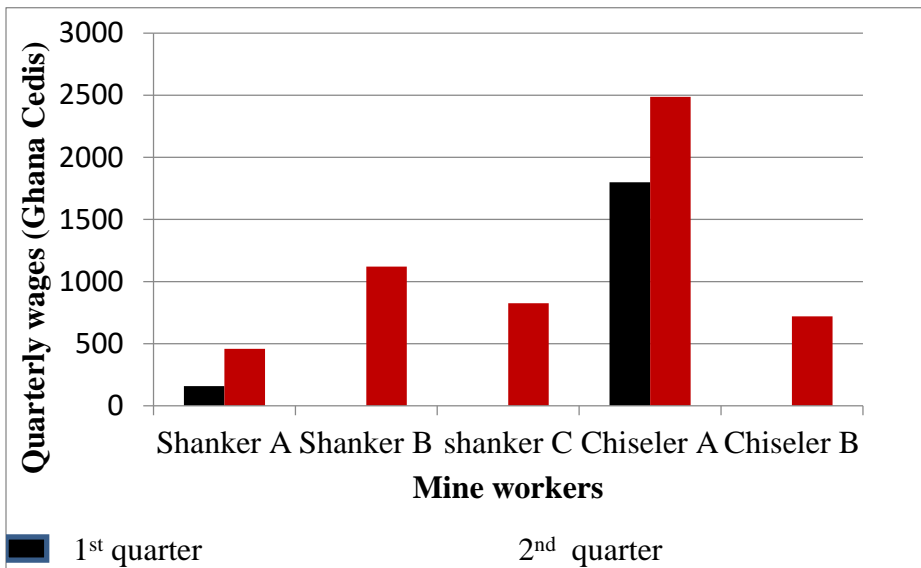
**Figure 9: Number of Days Spent for Work in Two Quarters in 2015**



**Figure 10: Quantities of Load/Chipping for Wages in Two Quarters in 2015**



**Figure 11: Quarterly Wages of Small-Scale Mining Workers in 2015**



**Table 2: Total Number of Work Days and Wages over Two Quarters in 2015**

Type of worker	Days	Wages (Number of <i>appiah-dankwa</i> of chipping )	Wages/number of work days		Daily Wages	
			(GH¢)	(USD)	GH¢	(USD)
Shanker A	109	783	7.18	1.90	4.35	1.15
Shanker B	74	1365	18.45	4.85	7.60	2.00
Shanker C	61	628	10.30	2.71	3.48	0.90
Water vendor	26	286	11.00	2.90	1.60	0.42
Chiseler A	52	2736	52.62	13.85	25.33	6.67
Chiseler B	17	570	33.53	8.82	3.17	0.83

NOTE: Both male and female workers receive wages in load or chipping, measured wages with *appiah-dankwa*.

In the mining industry, the wages of the workers are in load or chipping (Figure 10). Men process their load as soon as they receive their share, but women accumulate their load over time. The difference in processing periods stem from the fact that while men have a higher quantity and quality of load/chipping to process, the content of gold is very low in the chipping women process. Chipping is a secondary product in the gold production process and has lower gold content (see Figure 1). The longer processing cycles for women also helps them accumulate enough chipping to pay for the processing cost.

The three shankers and the two chiselers worked for different number of days. Shanker A worked for the highest number of days, totaling 109. Shanker B worked for 74 days while shanker C worked for 61 days. However, out of the 109 days shanker A worked during the period, she received 783 bowls of chipping; shanker B received 1365 bowls for 74 days of work; and shanker C received 628 bowls for 61 days. A bowl refers to *appiah-dankwa* and weighs six

kilograms when filled with chipping. Comparatively, chiseler A worked for 52 days and received about 2736 bowls when his rocks were milled. Chiseler B joined the measurement exercise in the second quarter of 2015.

As shown in Table 2, there is a complex relationship between the three main factors used for this analysis—workdays, wages in bowls of chipping, and wages in Ghana cedis. It is also evident that the wages of women miners do not correspond with the number of days they worked. In Table 4.2, shanker A worked for 109 days while Shanker B worked for 74 days in the first two quarters of 2015, but the wages of shanker B exceeds that of shanker A, both in terms of quantity of chipping (1365 bowls of chipping vs. 783 bowls) and in terms of cash (GH¢18.45 vs. GH¢ 7.18). The factors accounting for wage differences among shankers will be explained later. As shown in Table 2, shanker B has a daily wage of GH¢18.45 while shanker A has GH¢7.18 as daily wage. Even though shanker A worked for more days than shanker B, shanker A has less chipping as wages and lower average wages than shanker B for the number of days they worked. In addition, shanker A worked for more days than shanker C and also had more wages in chipping than shanker C. However, shanker A had lower wages than shanker C for the number of days they worked. While the wages for shanker A is GH¢7.18 per day for the number of days she worked, shanker C made GH¢10.30 per day. On the other hand, Dalamgda, the water vendor has a daily wage of GH¢11.00 while chiseler A has a daily wage of GH¢52.62. Chiseler B also has a daily wage of GH¢33.53. The data on wages clearly indicates differences within women's wages, but this difference is not as large as the wage difference between men and women. The figures obtained from wage estimates of this research shows that shankers' daily wages constitute about 20 percent of the wages of chiselers. The percentage wages of women to men, though lower than the estimates from the studies conducted in Mali, confirms the general lower

wages of women. The wages of women engaged in pounding and carrying ore in the small-scale mining industry in Mali are 60 percent lower than the wages of men who dig ore (Hinton et al 2003). In addition, average wages of workers in the Upper East region is lower than wages in other parts of Ghana. Hilson (2012) indicates that, in 2006, the average family income in the Upper East region was about GH¢130.00, that is less than one-quarter of the average household income (GH¢544.00) in Greater Accra region.<sup>10</sup>

In addition, even though the wages of some of the women are higher than the minimum wage in Ghana as shown in Table 4.2, this picture is deceptive because the mineworkers do not work every day of the month (Table 4.2).<sup>11</sup> I therefore calculated the wages the workers make per day. The daily wages of shankers show that each woman's monthly wage is inadequate (see Table 2).

Moreover, while some shankers such as Sanpan work on their household farm and have access to household food, whereas others such as Ammie work solely in the mines. Sanpan returned to her village to plant crops in her household farm in May 2015. When I paid her a visit in her village, she had a small plot of land on which she had planted peanuts. She told me that the peanut farm belonged to her and that she would use some of her harvest for meals and would sell the rest for income. She informed me that "last year (in 2014), I had a good harvest from planting peanuts. I sold a part of the peanut for GH¢100," that is, about three weeks' wages when she works in the mines. However, since the village has a short rainfall period, Sanpan is only able to plant once in a year. In addition to her income at the mine, Sanpan has access to food from the

---

<sup>10</sup> Hilson (2012) points out that the conversion rate at the time was 1.4 Ghana cedis to US\$1.00

<sup>11</sup> The minimum wage in Ghana is GH¢7.00, while Sanpan's wages for the days she worked is GH¢18.45. However, miners work is uncertain and difficult so they work for a lesser number of days each month.

household pool. Some women do not make any income beyond having household food. For instance, Sanpan's co-wife does not earn any income. She depends on the household farm's produce because unlike Sanpan, she has no money to purchase herbicides to clear the weeds to plant her personal farm.

In addition, shankers receive different wages for doing the same amount of work within the same period. For example, groups of women who work on the same team are supposed to receive at least half an *appiah-dankwa*, or small measuring bowl, per worker. However, some of them may receive more than half while others receive half an *appiah-dankwa* or even less than half.

In Table 2, Boger (chiseler A) has the highest wages for the first two quarters of 2015, even though Boger worked less time than each of the three shankers did. Chiseler B joined the measurement team during the farming season and spent many days outside Kejetia. Most of the shankers process their chipping before special events such as Christmas, the Goree festival in late March or early April, planting season in May, or the harvesting of the last crop (millet) in late August through early September. According to the shankers, they process their chipping in large quantities in order to reduce losses during milling and to meet the production cost.

### **Women's Expenditure**

To give an update on women's expenditures, I provide an overview of Sanpan's expenditures after she processed her chippings in May 2015. Sanpan processed nine bashers of chipping and had five blades. She incurred a milling cost of GH¢90 (GH¢10 per milling one basher) and gave GH¢20 as tip to her husband for washing and burning. She sold each of the five blades at GH¢80/blade, totaling GH¢400. She saved GH¢30 in her rotating credit or *susu*



contribution; bought one pan at GH¢30; and gave GH¢10 to her co-wife who takes care of her son in the village. Sanpan also paid GH¢20 toward a piece of cloth she purchased on credit; saved GH¢50 in her rural bank account; and saved GH¢150 in a mobile money account. She kept the rest of the money to meet her daily needs. The mobile money is also readily available to use when she needs money.

### **Non-Economic Determinants of Wages in the Mining Industry**

Two main factors influence wages in the mines: labor recruitment and kinship relationships. Each of these factors affects men and women workers differently. They also affect groups of workers differently.

## **Labor Recruitment and Wage Payments**

Studies have shown two ways to examine gender relations in the workplace (Mills 2003). According to Mills (2003), one is to do so in the context of labor recruitment, and the second is to assess how products, goods, and services are redistributed between males and females. Local labor recruitment reflects family bonds, access to resources, and distribution of household resources. In this study, I will examine labor recruitment as a factor for determining wages in Talensi mines.

Labor recruitment in the Talensi mines occurs differently for the two main groups of workers studied in this chapter – female (shankers) and male (chiselers) workers. Unlike female workers, the recruitment of male workers is usually done through negotiation. One of the locoboys in Kejetia explained, “We have two main forms of wage negotiations we make with our *ghetto* owner concerning wage distribution. We have the division three system and the work-to-pay system.”<sup>21</sup>

According to the shankers, they work for any employer who wants their services. They do not negotiate for time, amount of work, or wages. The quantities of chipping they receive as wages are determined by three categories: leaders, participating workers, and non-participating workers. The differences in the processes for recruitment and payment determine the categorization of the workers.

### ***Shanking Leaders or Work Supervisors***

Most of the Talensi women enter the mining industry first as full-time shankers. As illustrated above, a few women may come with a different job, but engage in shanking part-time. Male employers usually select shanking leaders, who play an important role in the gold

production process. Women become leaders through an intimate relationship with the employer. For example, a leader might be the wife or fiancé of her employer. Other women become leaders through long-standing friendships that result in trust.<sup>22</sup> A woman who has lived in the mining community for a long time may establish a leadership relationship with some of the employers. A shanker may also acquire a leadership role through kinship. The Talensi miners establish kinship relationships in many ways, including by having a common residence, by birth or through marriage. People who live in the same community regard themselves as “sisters” and “brothers.” A leader supervises an employer’s load from crushing to milling and is responsible for providing pans or metal bowls for employers to process their load. When shankers have to continue the work the following day, they keep the chipping in the leader’s pans or bowls overnight. This leadership role comes with the largest share of payment to shankers.<sup>23</sup> A leader usually gets one *appiah-dankwa* (six kg of chipping) or more as payment.

### ***Participating Workers or Women the Leader Invites to Shank***

The shanking leader invites shankers with whom she would like to work. The number of women the leader selects depends on the quantity of load. However, factors such as friendship, respect, and trust influence the selection criteria. According to Baale, one of the shankers who was a leader for three employers:

I select women who have worked with me on previous tasks and have remained loyal and trusted. I am a leader for three employers: my “brother,” my friend’s husband, and my husband. My friend used to live with her husband at Kejetia, but she moved to Bolga to set up a clothing store. All my employers trust that I will supervise their work with diligence. I don’t want my employers to lose confidence in me so I select shankers who are my friends and those who are less likely to “steal” the chipping. I have worked with the same group of women for more than two years. My work team provides the pans or bowls we use for shanking, carry the load to my employers’ house, and get the chance to shank

In most cases, the leader solicits pans or bowls from those she had invited to work. The shankers find space to sit around the load, but those the leader invites to shank make place to sit before the other shankers. At the end of shanking, each participating shanker receives about one-half to one-third *appiah-dankwa* (two to four kg chippings) as wages.

***Non-Participating Workers: Women not invited to Work***

The leaders do not invite a large number of women to shank. However, these women also go to the employers' home and wait for shanking to be completed. I refer to this category as non-participating workers. At the end of shanking, when the leaders pay the invited participants, the non-participating workers wait for their turn to receive chipping. The quantity of chipping this category receives ranges from one-sixth to one-third *appiah-dankwa* (one kg to two kg). Sometimes an employer may refuse to give them any chipping. There are more non-participating workers when there are fewer tasks to go around. Other women sometimes choose to remain non-participants. Ammie, one of the shankers who participated in the wage analysis argues that:

When an employer is not generous, it is better to receive little quantities of chipping for not working than to work under hazardous conditions. When I work, I will only receive just a little more chipping. I know that the small quantities of chipping I receive for not participating in shanking will not help me accumulate enough chipping for processing to get enough gold. I am selective with my employers. I work for those who are generous.

Shankers also distinguish between employers whose chipping they consider sample, or that has a high gold content, and employers whose chipping is waste, or has low gold content. The type of chipping women receives from a concessionaire/sponsor or a *ghetto owner* is usually "sample," that is, high quality chipping. On the other hand, chipping women receive from men who are not part of the work teams is usually waste. With prior knowledge of employers' roles on the work team, shankers choose employers with sample. Interestingly, they can also identify sample or high quality rock by taste and sight.

## **Kinship Relationships and Wages**

Apart from labor recruitment, kinship relationships also influence wages in the Talensi mines. Shankers stay near the crushers to be invited to shank. One shanker explained, “I sit around two of the crushers only. One of the crushers is owned by my brother and the other crusher is owned by my sister’s husband.” Both her brother and sister are owners who live in the same village as her. In another discussion, Nica boasts, “I am the leader for two *ghetto* owners because they are my brothers. My brothers will not process their load unless I am available to supervise for them.” One day as I sat with her, a man tossed GH¢10 bill into her hands. She explained, “The man who gave me the money is one of my brothers,” or her employers from the same village.

Similarly, Sanpan comes from the same village (Yameriga) as Lopo, who is a concessionaire. She is one of Lopo’s leaders. Sanpan explained that Yameriga is not her original hometown or ancestral village. However, she has lived in Yameriga since she married her husband as a teenager and claims the village as her own. Even when she returns to Yameriga and Lopo wants to process his load, he sends her messages to come back to the camp to supervise the workers for him. It is only when she does not respond to the messages that Lopo invites other workers to supervise his work for him.

Besides determining worker-employer relationships, kinship also influences workers’ earnings, including male workers. Boger, who works for Lopo and who was one of the chiselers who talked to me about his wages, told me that a visitor who came to visit Lopo asked his wife whether Boger was married. Lopo’s wife laughed and told the visitor that Boger had two wives. Boger later wanted to know why the visitor asked the question and Lopo’s wife told him the visitor, who went into the pit with them, observed that unlike the other workers, Boger was not

aggressive at picking pieces of ore for his payment. Boger explained that, “The more ore I pick the less ore Lopo gets.” Boger added, “I am more concerned that Lopo make ends meet and accumulate savings to expand his business because when I need money from Lopo, he will not turn me away. “ Lopo is Boger’s nephew and Boger wants him to do well in his business because mining is capital intensive.

Workers with kinship relations have more work privileges than workers without. Kinship relationship accounts for work participation and determines leadership roles. Generally, women do not have high incomes, but women with kinship relations make higher incomes than those without such relationships. This is evident in the wages of Sanpan and Ammie. Women with kinship affiliations get regular tasks, enjoy leadership positions, and are more likely to have higher wages. Shankers whose “brothers” are concessionaires, sponsors, and *ghetto* owners get the opportunity to work for employers with sample or high gold content.

### **Approaches to Understanding Gender Wage Gaps in Talensi Mines**

In determining the gender wage gap, I argue that normative practices influence wages in the Talensi mines. I use the lived experiences of Talensi miners to determine the link between gender roles and gender wage gaps. Explanations of gender wage differentials began with social scientists that used human capital as a model for explaining the differences between men’s and women’s wages (Blau and Kahn 2000). According to Blau and Kahn (2000), human capital—education, skills, and knowledge—determine the earning capacity of an individual. In the case of Talensi miners, the influence of human capital on wages is minimal because most of the miners have no education, skill or knowledge, except for men who had previously worked in other mining organizations. According to Tenee, one of the Talensi women shankers, “We do not have the skills, investment capacity, and previous knowledge to engage in some of the tasks men

perform.” Blau and Kahn (2000) further argue that human capital alone cannot explain the gaps between men’s and women’s wages, but that discriminatory tastes of employers, coworkers, and customs in which women are denied entry into jobs that have been earmarked for men also creates wage gaps. For example, when Talensi women are denied entry into certain jobs, this leads to an oversupply of female workers for traditionally female-dominated jobs, resulting in lower wages for women.

While gender wage gap has been studied in social work, scholars have been concerned with understanding wage disparities among social work professionals – educators, practitioners, and policy makers (Lane and Flowers 2015). Scholars confirm that wage differentials have existed among social workers over the years and affect the credibility of social workers as professionals who advocate for social justice (Huber and Orlando 1995; Kenyon 2003; Koeske and Krowinski 2004). There is a persistent call for continuing research in the area of gender wage gaps in the profession in order to determine and bridge the gap (Lane and Flowers 2015).

In addition, current debates in anthropology have also raised concerns about gender wage gaps, with some ethnographers identifying wages as one of the multiple interlocking systems that generate gender differences, along with class, nationality, and other systems. The primary interest of some of these scholars has focused on gendered wage disparities in the global labor force (Mills 2003). However, other anthropologists have been interested in understanding gendered wage differences within actual women and men’s lived experiences (Clark 2010). These scholars believe that wage gaps produce a wide range of struggles and contestations among men and women.

## **Women's Wages: Gender Characteristics and World Prices of Gold**

One of the factors contributing to the Talensi gender wage gap is the employment gap. Wage differences are associated with several characteristics. The factors contributing to wage differences include the characteristics of working men and women (skills, educations, and knowledge), area characteristics such as operational and management issues, and the difference in the characteristics themselves (Olivetti and Petrongolo 2008). According to Olivetti and Petrongolo (2008), since selection for most employment, whether formal or informal, is non-random, the characteristics used as a basis for selection into employment contribute to wage differences. In most cases, the processes of assessing the skills and experiences for employees by the employer become important. Olivetti and Petrongolo (2008) compare entry requirements that show that the expectations of employers for women's entry into similar positions as men tend to be higher. These arguments concern employment into the formal economy, but they are applicable to informal economies as well.

Emphasis on the role of factors such as beliefs and ideologies in employment has been advancing (Fernandez and Fogli 2005; Fortin 2005). Fortin (2005) uses the term "soft or fuzzy variables" to refer to factors such as beliefs and ideologies that influence labor recruitment and determine employer-employee relationships. However, Merry (2016) argues that scholars should use qualitative approaches to study social phenomena, rather than quantifying social phenomena. According to Merry (2016), the use of numbers to describe social phenomena risks sacrificing the insights of rich, ethnographic accounts. Merry discusses how world bodies such as the UN develop a set of indicators to measure social problems of countries against world standard in order to provide accurate information for policy makers, investors, governments, and the general public. Booming global indicators risk producing knowledge that is "partial, distorted, and



misleading” (Merry 2016:3). Merry argued that qualitative methods are useful for locally informed systems of knowledge such as women’s everyday experiences.

In the Talensi mining industry, beliefs, ideologies, and kinship relationships are some of the factors that influence labor recruitment and determine employer-employee relationships. These factors are important for employee selection and the amount of chipping an employer may give as wages. In Talensi mines, characteristics such as specialized skills do not have a strong influence on wages. Rather, characteristics such as kinship relations have significant influence on employment and wages. Sanpan argues that, “Lopo will not produce gold without asking me to supervise the production process,” an indication that the influence of kinship relationship is a prominent criteria for employment and wages. However, even though some women draw on their kinship relationships to increase their wages, women generally have lower wages than men have. Women with kinship influences and higher wages are able to get ahead within the complex Talensi kinship networks.

Apart from factors such as kinship, the world price of gold influences the incomes of the miners, both men and women. In September 2014, when I first arrived at the Talensi mine to begin my fieldwork, the price of a blade of gold (0.8 grams) was GH¢120, but the price of a blade was reduced to as low as GH¢80 in July 2015. The miners expected the price to continue falling for a few more months. Sometimes women may delay the processing of their chipping until they accumulate enough, but they do not delay the sale of gold once the gold is extracted. The women sell the gold immediately after they extract it and use the money to meet their immediate needs. In fact, most of the women process the gold only when they have to meet immediate needs. Some of the needs include Ammie’s regular processing of gold to pay her

daughter's school fees or Buriah's delayed processing to coincide with the Goree festival when the family reunion will bring her son to Tongo from Accra.

Some of the men, on the other hand, may choose to hold their savings in gold and delay selling the gold for a few more weeks when they find out about rising gold prices on the world market. A few months after I began my fieldwork, I visited the wife of a man who died from a cave-in accident. The widow told me she suspected her husband had some gold nuggets in his pocket before he went into the pit because he had mentioned to her that he was waiting for rising gold prices on the world market. By delaying the sale of gold, the men may attract relatively better prices. Several men have approached me on the streets in Kejetia to ask me to buy their gold because they mistake me for a gold buyer. The men feel that strangers who buy their gold may offer better prices than the local buyers in the mining communities may.

## **Conclusion**

In the Talensi small-scale gold mining industry, mining jobs are hierarchical. Hierarchical relationships influence most of the effort to obtain resources. The hierarchy is constructed along gender-specific lines and influences the wages of men and women differently in the workforce. Men's roles include all of the activities that take place underground, including the blasting and chiseling of the rocks. On the other hand, women are responsible for two of the gold production activities that take place above ground—shanking and *salmabalga*. Some women do other jobs above ground that are not gold production activities. These jobs include operating local restaurants and brewing *pito* or local beer. Talensi ideologies and the value of male dominance influence representations of gender roles. Women lack any form of negotiation and organizational structure in activities such as labor recruitment.

The chapter shows that physical, social, and cultural factors account for gender roles in the Talensi mines. According to the miners, the tasks viewed as less dangerous, or risky, and those that are performed in public view, are more appropriate for women. This chapter shows that whether women can or cannot work underground depends on a complex interrelationship between their physical situations, the social conditions inside the pit, and the cultural norms of the area. An integrated approach to assessing the factors that determine gender roles in the Talensi mines provides insight into gender relationships and division of labor, as well as highlights the realities of the everyday lives of women in small-scale mining, an approach useful for effective programs to improve the lives of the women.

The significance of underground tasks is that they are the preserve of men and attract more value and importance than roles performed above ground. The roles reserved for men reinforce male hegemony. Women's participation in lower paying jobs, coupled with limited job opportunities inside and outside of the mining communities, produces persistently poor women, even though the financial situation of self-employed women is relatively better.

However, Talensi women sometimes contest the men's hegemonic roles. For example, Tenee argues, "What the men do, we (referring to the women) can also do but they (the men) will not allow us." Despite women's interest in working in the pits, paradoxically, women agree that they menstruate, and therefore, they would drive away the spirits that facilitate the gold find, promoting a strong sense of cultural inhibition. The cultural inhibition based on women's physical makeup and reinforced by their fear of entering the pits, as well as stories men tell of dangerous pits and poor conditions, gives a picture of interrelated factors that are difficult to separate. The interrelatedness of the factors that account for women's roles highlights a more complex way of dealing with gender relationships in the Talensi mines.

Finally, this chapter shows that other factors may influence women's conditions in the mining industry. The interplay between socio-cultural factors such as beliefs and ideologies and wages determines women's conditions. In Talensi mines, factors such as beliefs and ideologies may define the tasks of women, limiting them to tasks that may not provide adequate wages. In addition, the price of gold on the world market is significant in determining women's wages. Kinship, beliefs, and ideologies are some of the factors that provide opportunity to some of the women to make more wages. Unlike male miners who usually delay the sale of their gold for a better price in future, most women in the Talensi mines sell their gold immediately after extraction. Women's inability to delay selling their gold for better prices in the future reduces their chance of taking advantage of higher gold prices.

This chapter demonstrates the close relationship between gender roles and wages and illuminates that several factors account for differential roles and wages in the mining industry. Strong ideological views about what women can and cannot do and about male hegemonic roles are identifiable root causes for non-negotiation that should be addressed in order for women to improve their wages. Even though the entire workforce is "trapped" in poverty, the dynamics of this trap differ for men and women. Any attempt to support the workforce of the small-scale mining industry should take a holistic view of men and women's activities.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **“WE ALL STEAL LOAD/CHIPPING:” THE COMPLEXITY OF TALENSI WOMEN’S PRACTICES**

In the Talensi small-scale gold mining industry, “stealing” load or chipping is a common practice among male and female workers. Talensi shankers, or women who sift crushed rock, talk of stealing load as a strategy to acquire more wages. Shankers do not work in deep mining pits, a challenge that reduces the women’s capacity to make adequate wages to meet their everyday needs. Aside from inadequate wages, the existence of gender role differentiation in the mining industry also limits women to working less lucrative jobs than men. There is a consensus among the women, “We all steal load/chipping,” specifying a strategy they use during shanking to compensate for their lower wages. Women steal chipping unnoticed during shanking, especially when thick dust from shanking forms, which reduces visibility. Paradoxically, even when employers notice the women stealing, they do not penalize them when it takes place during shanking, although the miners consider stealing chipping at any other time as a criminal act with requisite forms of punishments.

This chapter seeks to understand how the practice of stealing load reflects the anthropological and sociological understanding of crime in order to reveal the different ways that societies classify crime. In addition, this chapter aims to understand how the workers in the Talensi small-scale mining industry perceive stealing and how they talk about what constitutes criminal and noncriminal acts. I will use women’s personal stories about stealing to uncover everyday patterns of stealing, highlight conflicts in meanings and values that accompany these

actions, and identify some of the key values that justify the rights of women and men to the claims they make in the mining industry.

Throughout the chapter, I use the concepts of law, criminal justice, and cultural justice to provide an understanding of crime from different perspectives. No overarching theory of crime exists. These concepts help to explain what constitutes criminal and noncriminal acts in different societies. According to Laura Nader (2003), the difference between criminal acts and noncriminal acts is defined differently by the criminal or cultural justice systems of different societies. Nader's (2003) assertion indicates that societies use their criminal codes to identify crimes, but in some cases, societies use their cultural underpinnings to distinguish between criminal and noncriminal acts. For example, in James Scott's (1985) studies in rural Malaysia, he mentioned crime as an example of everyday resistance and referred to acts of everyday resistance as "weapons of the weak" (1985:33). Scott identified some of the other weapons of the weak in the village of Sadaka, including "foot dragging, arson, pilfering, sabotage, and many other forms of everyday acts of insubordination" as ordinary weapons of "powerless" groups (1985:29). Kabeer et al (2013) argue that Scott did not elaborate on the sense of collectivity among the people who engage in the actions that constitute the weapons of the weak. According to Kabeer et al. (2013), a sense of collectivity moves women's actions beyond the weapons of the weak and provides an understanding of how the weapons help women to meet their needs. In the field of social work, for instance, Barry Checkoway (1997) pointed out that people use collective action to solve social problems and argued that collective action yields social solutions. According to Checkoway (1997), in analyzing an action by a group or a community, it is important to consider the interests that can be achieved by the collective. Kabeer et al. (2013) call for studies to identify stronger collective forms of resistance. This chapter examines the collective worlds of

women who engage in stealing load in the Talensi mine to understand the influence of women's shared sense of collectivity about their actions.

Organizationally, I begin this chapter with an explanation of the crimes from previous studies. I also give a historical background of Euro-American development of the concepts of crime, examining the interpretation and meaning given to crime, and citing examples of empirical studies that interpret crime from perspectives other than criminality. I then provide other perspectives on crime using the Talensi practice of stealing load. Within African perspectives, crime may have cultural dimensions. Cultural explanations of crime bring into view a need to differentiate between criminal justice and cultural justice. In determining the distinction between criminal and cultural justice, this chapter examines the relationship between crime, law, and the state that determine crime in societies, while differentiating between criminal and cultural justice systems. The chapter confirms Laura Nader's (2003) view that some groups of people in a society may use crime as a cultural measure to meet their common interests.

The primary goal of this chapter is to draw attention to the different ways in which societies classify crime. Through an understanding of Talensi women stealing load, this chapter resignifies or provides new meaning to stealing. In addition, it juxtaposes stealing load by shankers with women's capacity for community building, inculcating a sense of collectivity and belonging, and providing the opportunity for income redistribution. This is important to my general argument because it sheds more light on the tensions between the everyday cultural practices and the criminal laws of societies.

### **Conceptual Perspectives of Crime in the Empirical Literature**

Pioneering work on crime and criminology in Europe linked criminal activity with what James Scott (1985) described as dangerous classes of people who were uprooted or dispossessed

from rural communities and congregated in cities. According to James Scott (1985), the peasant population in Europe had the potential for protest and rebellion and in the process threatened the emerging bourgeoisie. Theories influencing the ideas about peasant protests include the Brechtian theory or the distancing effect proposed by Eugen (Bertolt) Brecht, a German theater director and playwright. Scott explained that Eugen Brecht based his argument on Marxist theory and challenged theater spectators to be self-conscious and take a realist view of drama. Brecht argued, actors create a distance between themselves and spectators in a way that makes spectators lack the self-consciousness needed for critical judgment of the social and economic conditions a play depicts. Scott (1985:304) critiqued Brechtian theory during the studies he conducted among Malay peasants to show that “the Malay poor are much mystified of their situation.” Scott explained his assertion that poor persons in Sedaka were critical of rich landlords, claiming that the poor people used everyday resistance to make their voices heard.

Other classical studies, for instance, the studies by Engel linked crime with workers. Engel referred to theft as “the most primitive form of protest” while Marx hypothesized that the theft of wood by rural German workers in the 1840s was a form of worker resistance to proletarianism (Engel 1969:240, cited in Greenhouse 2003; Marx 1933, cited in Linebaugh 1981:78). Linebaugh (1981) draws attention to Marx’s interest in traditionally constituted crime in favor of the composition of the working class. According to Linebaugh, Marx became preoccupied with the material interests of the working class rather than the political issues. The way Talensi women steal is a clear indication of their deliberate attempt to add to their wages. Whether stealing load by the shankers in the mining industry is perceived as a form of protest or not, the women consciously and realistically use stealing load as a means to improve their wages, which Linebaugh would refer to as maintaining and increasing one of the forms of value of the



workers (1981:86). Revisiting Engel's argument, Linebaugh stated that the workers used wood theft as a form that enabled them to reject the terms of the work. As will be shown later, Abena, one of the shankers I interviewed in the mining industry, insisted that, "We would steal chipping anytime we have the opportunity to do so." Abena expressed the women's desire to use stealing load to show that they disapproved of the terms of the work and looked forward to finding a way to establish better terms. Boger, a chiseler, emphasized women's interest in using stealing to improve their wages when he said, "Do you think the chipping we give to the women is all the wages they make? Women make more wages from stealing load than from what their employers give to them."

The prevalence of linking stealing with disadvantaged groups exists across the globe, and women are a majority in these disadvantaged groups (Kowalsky 2009). For instance, Kowalsky (2009:9) indicated that during the Russian revolutionary period, Russian criminologists linked female deviance with the qualities associated with peasants and the countryside. Kowalsky reiterated that Russian criminologists established a link between female deviance and women's physiology and genetic makeup, reiterating earlier views about crime and disadvantaged populations. The main point of Kowalsky's (2009) argument was that the perception that women, youth, and peasants were considered "minority" populations that commit crime became widely accepted, during this revolutionary era of the Soviet Union and in other parts of Europe.

Similarly, in the United States, most of the disciplines concerned with society produced pioneering urban ethnographies that reinforced the close association between criminality and disadvantaged populations, with particular emphasis on deviant male youth (Schneider and Schneider 2008). However, Schneider and Schneider (2008) pointed out that the pioneering ethnographies of the Chicago School of Sociology in the 1930s made it difficult to challenge the

concept of crime. Other concepts that evolved from studies about crime included professionalized and organized crime (Braithwaite 1985; Reynolds 1995), crimes of state and capitalist enterprise (Mattei and Nader 2008; Nordstrom 2007), and illegal activities and coercive legal orders (Naylor 2002).

More recently, however, anthropologists have challenged the earlier views of crime that focused on disadvantaged populations, indicating the complex interconnectivity that exists between the three main concepts—state, law, and crime—and how the state uses the law to manipulate disadvantaged groups (Greenhouse 2003; Parnell 2003). According to Philip Parnell (2003), the state used laws to determine which human actions were criminal and which were not, and in the process there produced political subjectivities (borrowing Foucault's 1977 ideas about governmentality). Jean and John Comaroff defined political subjectivities as the situation whereby the state creates "moral panic" while showing the objective conditions of crime in excess of actuality (2006:91). The composer explained that the idea of "moral panic" emerged out of Jeremy Seekings' (1996) ethnographic studies in South Africa. According to Jeremy Seekings, post-Apartheid South Africa generated the objective conditions of crime through the idea of the "lost generation," the situation where young blacks from broken homes, boycotted schools and took to looting and stealing to register their concern (1996:107).

However, subsequent arguments emphasized that crime, state, and law are entities that are capable of operating separately and that the earlier studies that regarded the concepts as operating together were purely mythical (Parnell 2003; Schneider and Schneider 2008). For instance, Philip Parnell (2003) emphasized that the link between law, state, and crime fracture in cases of non-legal crime, explained as crime that is not determined by legal prosecution. In confirming non-legal crime, Nader (2003) pointed out that long before the separation between

state, law, and crime were advanced, anthropologists such as Bronislaw Malinowski had defined crime as “the law broken,” to highlight the separation between law, crime, and states (Malinowski 1926:99, cited in Nader 2003). In another example, Linger (2003) showed how the 1985 fall of Brazil’s military dictatorship produced local police who adopted the state’s violent tactics to punish men and women who violated gender roles by beating and raping them.

To further their argument, Philip Parnell and Stephanie Kane (2003) expressed the view that law and crime are social processes that affect each other in different ways and that in most cases the state uses the law to manage its people during dramatic changes such as migration, revolution, war, and democratization. For instance, under democratic conditions, people are able to challenge interpretations of the law, a process that has the tendency to reduce the extent to which the state can apply the laws of the land. Parnell and Kane (2003) also argued that during times of dramatic social change, crime might be a form, an experience, or a mode of expression that people could use to manage the problems that accompany the changes. In explaining their assertion, Parnell and Kane (2003) pointed out how dramatic changes caused people to commit crime and showed how they experienced the changes differently, while reasserting perceived essential differences in gender, class, race, and ethnicity, social categories that were initially connected in crime theory.

In challenging the role of the state in using the law for the purposes of criminalization of disadvantaged groups and in emphasizing the cultural processes of crime, Parnell and Kane (2003) proposed that crime has the ability to organize ways that groups interrelate through symbolizing relationships and obscuring some of the relationships that the process generates. For example, Hilary Kahn (2003) posited a purely cultural basis of crime in her study of how Guatemalans culturally construct crime. According to Kahn (2003), in Livingston, a town

located off the coast of Guatemala where tourists visit all year round, the inhabitants interconnect crime, morality, and foreigners. Kahn (2003) argued that the inhabitants used unspoken social rules of crime to exchange their land with tourists' goods. Guatemalan people believed that foreigners—Germans, Spanish, and other tourists—took away the treasures of their land and so the inhabitants perceived “stealing” as a form of everyday social exchange.

Kahn's (2003) study of the local people in Livingston shed more light on the cultural processes of crime and called for anthropological studies to move crime from the realm of the state and law into the realm of everyday activities of the people. In the Livingston example, Kahn (2003) argues that crime became a moral obligation to people who perceived an exchange of the treasures of their land for tourists' clothes, watches, dollars, and diseases. The view of crime as a practice that exists in the everyday lives of people in ways other than as a criminal act within the law of the state took a new turn as anthropologists became more engaged in studies that showed a relationship between crime and culture (Nader 2003). These new approaches to the study of crime, according to Nader (2003), constitute the non-legal perspectives on crime that many studies had pointed out, and that this research seeks to contribute to. In view of the new perspective on crime, Talensi women's action calls for more studies that would explicate the cultural processes of crime. Because of the non-legal approach to crime, this chapter is interested in studying crime as a cultural process rather than as a form of criminality while identifying the tensions in crime classifications and distinctions.

Following the proposal to study the cultural processes of crime, Comaroff and Comaroff (2006) assert that scholars have become more engaged in extensive studies of the relationship between crime and culture. They add that studies have revealed that although democratic governance and privatization of economic resources brought about interesting debates on crime

and law pertaining to the First World and the Second World of the former Soviet bloc, the interplay of crime and law manifests itself in the post colonies of the Third World as well. According to these studies, the Third World experienced the law of the first world during its colonial predation. One of the introductions from the First World into Third World countries was the Western system of law and order.

However, Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff (2006) argue that the interconnection between crime, state, and law introduced by colonizers met many challenges, especially in postcolonial times. In the postcolonial period, Comaroff and Comaroff (2006) show how the complex interpretation of the relationship between crime and culture that emerged reinforced ethnic assertions of connectedness, natural rights, and corporate rights. In Talensi ideas about crime, the ideas about connectedness and rights are pronounced. Once Talensi women are working for an employer, their act of stealing load can be understood in terms of the women's views about their right to take some of the chipping, and since every shanker engages in the act of stealing load, it becomes their corporate right. Even though the stealing is done individually, the shankers encourage each other to do it. The women talk about a colleague who feels reluctant to steal as a woman who cannot "outsmart" her employer. My own understanding of the situation in the mining industry is that the absence of any form of law enforcement agencies such as police in these communities may also account for why employers are more tolerant of women stealing load from them during shanking. If employers wanted to report all the theft cases, they would have to travel a very lengthy distance to the nearest police station, provide transportation for the officers into the community to execute the arrest, and then the employers would have to transport both the officer and the thief back to the station, where a lengthy bureaucratic process also ensues.

The interpretation of the relationship between crime and culture became more marked in the colonies during the introduction of ideas of legality. Comaroff and Comaroff (2006) explained how the postcolonial ideas of legal rights became more pronounced, producing a kind of “policulturalism,” a term they used to explain the legal ideologies from the West that were transferred into non-Western countries. Policulturalism, according to Comaroff and Comaroff, is the view that introduction of the Western legal ideas in post-colonial era resulted in a terrain where the legal ideology gave way to “ID-ology.” ID-ology emphasized collective goods and shared identities, rather than individual legal rights, and this collectivity led to various forms of identity struggles that expressed themselves in the everyday lives of the people (Comaroff and Comaroff 2006). Although the Comaroffs argue that ID-ology created identity struggles, in the mining industry where all the shankers are women and Talensi, the resulting sense of collectivity enhances rather than hinder women’s everyday solidarity, leading to improve economic position of women.

The ensuing identity struggles cited in many African countries produced a line between criminal justice and cultural justice, a line that eventually became very thin (Geschiere 2006; Comaroff and Comaroff 2006). In one example, Peter Geschiere (2006), who has done extensive studies on the practice of witchcraft in the criminal justice systems of South Africa and Cameroon, illustrates the activities of witches whose actions caused harm to people and who were brought before criminal courts. Geschiere (2006) narrates several witch cases that met with challenges during court rulings. The court of law exonerated some of the accused witches, using cultural explanations, while in other cases the court prosecuted the witches for harming people. The witchcrafted cases recorded in Peter Geschiere’s studies involves men. These witches are people who assume some form of authority in the South African and Cameroonian societies

because they are regarded as powerful men with the capacity to heal, protect people from the harm of less powerful witches, and cause harm to perpetrators of wrongdoing.

On the contrary, in Ghana, most witchcraft cases involve older women. Crampton's (2013) studies on the anthropological analysis of witchcraft in Ghana reveal that witchcraft is an older women's problem. According to Crampton, witchcraft cases in Ghana continue to assume a more serious dimension because the approaches used to solve witchcraft cases have been what he refers to as "rights-based interventions" (2013:200). Rights-based interventions, as Crampton explains, are interventions that attempt to make systemic changes and are instituted mostly by non-governmental organizations to support accused witches, but these interventions have not been able to deal with local moralities and social response. Most of the older women accused of witchcraft in the Talensi district are publicly shamed during the annual festival. The accusations are made within households. Crampton explains that rights-based interventions have been more effective at linking cultural practices to global discourses in local contexts

Among the Talensi, accusations of witchcraft become public and involve the whole community, even though they emerge from households. These accusations make households and communities important in discussions of witchcraft. Crampton (2013) argues that effective advocacy and intervention for witchcraft should work from within the social norms through informal conflict mediation among families and community systems. Even though, as Crampton investigated, older women are more likely to be accused of witchcraft in Ghana, in the Talensi mines, most of women are younger adults. Women are accused of witchcraft or use "juju" (magical charm). These accusations for poor sales among food sellers are the most frequent. For example, Nica told me a story about food sellers who bath in the stoves of their colleagues at midnight to reduce the sales of their colleagues in order to improve their sales. Some shankers

were reluctant to switch jobs into food selling because of the belief that their colleagues would use witchcraft or *juju* (magical charm) against them. Accusations of witchcraft and use of *juju* are common everyday practices in the Talensi mines.

According to Peter Geschiere (2006), the witch hunting cases presented before the criminal courts show the blurry borders between the processes through which cultural practices embedded in the everyday lives of the people took place. These studies point out that people's practical experience reveals ambiguity in everyday practices. In view of ideas advanced in the scholarship, I show in this chapter that ambiguous practices may be difficult to understand and interpret in creative situations in which there are not an easy way to resolve legal cases.

In addition, Geschiere (2006) provides new contexts for the anthropological interpretation of everyday criminal activities. New interpretations of crime, such as the Talensi mining situation, make it difficult to determine whether a particular action is a criminal case or cultural act and whether an action falls under the criminal or the cultural justice system.

However, Geschiere (2006) states that it became evident that in most societies, many factors contribute to the determination of criminal and noncriminal acts and that even the law courts in his South African and Cameroonian studies could not adequately make the distinction. It is not surprising that the interpretation of theft is more difficult outside the courts such as in mining communities in the Talensi district.

The conceptual framework I have provided for crime clearly indicates different conceptual views for the categorization of actions into criminal and noncriminal acts. Societies classify crime differently. Distinguishing between criminal and noncriminal behaviors in different contexts highlights the many processes that societies use in making these distinctions possible. However, the framework also brings to light the various conflicts of meanings and



values involved in the patterns of crime and justification that nations make to determine the rights and wrongs of the people. In the rest of this chapter, I attempt to understand criminal and noncriminal actions in the Talensi mines and to identify what values and meanings the mining industry uses to justify stealing chipping, a practice that is common among the shankers and in the mining communities.

### **Making a Distinction between Criminal and Non-criminal Acts using Abena's Story**

In the Talensi mines, stealing load may be criminal in one context and noncriminal in another. Several factors account for what action does or does not constitute crime in everyday Talensi practices. Some factors that I recorded are the timing of the incident, the context, and the person who carried out the action. Among all the miners, stealing that takes place during shanking is not considered criminal. The women shared several examples about actions that constituted stealing and those that did not constitute stealing during the interviews I conducted. I have used the interview I conducted with Abena, a thirty-five-year-old shanker, to illustrate the typical ideas women shared about stealing load in the mines.

#### ***Abena's Story***

Abena came to the mining community from Tongo, the Talensi district capital, and had lived in Kejetia for seven years (before I began fieldwork in 2014). Abena came to Kejetia at the invitation of her late father's youngest wife. Abena referred to her late father's wife as "mother." Abena's mother introduced to her a young man who had also come to live in the mining community a few months before Abena's visit. Abena and the young man married and the couple set up a crushing machine in the mining community. In 2014, there were four crushers in Kejetia.

I recruited Abena for an interview when I visited her husband's crusher. During a short conversation, Abena informed me that she owned a plot of land and a house under construction in Konongo in the Eastern region of Ghana. I became curious and decided to further discuss with

her how she had been able to save enough money to buy the plot of land. During the interview, Abena explained women's access to income in gold production activities:

EK: How do you view your wage as a shanker?

Abena: I make enough income in my work as a shanker and in helping my husband manage a crusher.

EK: Which of the two activities, shanking and managing the crusher, brings you more income?

Abena: Shanking brings in more income because I get all my savings from the chipping I accumulate during shanking. I don't process my gold until I need to use the money to take care of an urgent need or an emergency. I'm very selective about my employers. Most often, I get sample that provides me with enough gold when I process my chipping.

EK: How do you get sample (see Chapter 2) for wages and what do you mean by being selective?

Abena: Oh! I am selective about my employers. I only work for concessionaires, sponsors, and *ghetto* owners. I mostly work for Rob and Lopo, the two main concessionaires at Kejetia. In fact, I'm the leader for Rob's female workers. Rob is my uncle and his friend is Lopo, so I also work for Lopo. If Rob has work, he'll call me to supervise and Lopo will call me to work with people from his village. Both men have several mining pits and collect load from *ghetto* owners who work in their concession. Rob and Lopo always have work for shankers and their load is sample. Working for the two men provides me with regular daily tasks and (Abena lowers her tone) you can also "steal" chipping from them and avoid detection because they process large quantities of load.

EK: Why do you "steal" chipping?

Abena: (laughing) Everyone "steals" load or chipping. I've stolen from my employers and other women steal from their employers. In most cases, I steal from Rob and Lopo and sometimes from other employers too. Stealing is a common practice among shankers.

EK: Why is stealing chipping a common practice for shankers?

Abena: We are gold miners. We work for gold. You have to be able to get money working in the mine. If you do not make it here, where can you get money? If you do not become rich here, then you will never be rich. This is your "last stop." Workers receive monthly salaries or fixed wages in formal employment. Here at the mines, we do not get regular income but we make sure that we get income to take care of our family. Here is the gold land so if you cannot make it in the mining community, then you cannot make it anywhere else in our district.

EK: Do you intend to become rich here?

Abena: Yes, and I've achieved my aim. My aim for coming to the mining communities was to save enough money to educate my three sons. There are rumors that when we get connected to the national electricity grid we cannot shank so if we don't shank and my children can't work underground, what can I do? There are also rumors that when the pits get too deep they will hand the whole community over to the "Chinese" (there is a gold mining company owned by one Ghanaian in partnership with the chief and Chinese nationals in Obuasi). If the negotiations between the "Chinese" and the chief go through, we would have to leave the mining communities. Before the unfortunate happens and we have to leave the mining communities, I want to go back to my local community with money to start a business and to be able to educate my children.

EK: What would have been your situation if you had not worked in the mines?

Abena: Oh! You know, we do not have jobs in this area (referring to the Talensi district) except mining. This is why we have to make money now. Besides, both women and men are participating in mining to make income for improved lives. Sometimes, visitors who come here (to Kejetia) see women as "helpers" but I do not believe that. We sell our gold just like the men and we work just like the men. We all want to be rich.

EK: How can you (women) become rich considering the small quantities of chipping you receive as wages?

Abena: I work so hard to earn income. I am "smart." Although women's incomes are smaller than that of the men, for that, we cannot change our wages because we are not employers. Nevertheless, women who work hard should also make money. As for me, I work hard to make money because I believe only lazy people cannot make enough money. Once you work hard, you should make enough money.

EK: How do you make enough wages in the mines?

Abena: We steal to add to our wages. We are also miners. We work on gold and we must have more income than when we lived in our villages. The men also "steal" underground, that is why *ghetto* owners hire security guards. We would continue to steal to improve our wages.

EK: Do you also steal from your colleague shankers?

Abena: No, stealing from a woman is not a common practice in the mining communities, but stealing from a man is common. Women don't get a lot of chipping and they are not employers. As a woman, you have to work so hard for long hours to get chipping so it is not good to steal from your fellow women. When you steal from a woman and your friend sees you, she will report you, but women rarely report you when you steal from an employer. Every woman looks for an opportunity to steal from her employer.

One issue that kept recurring in the interview with Abena is the perception of women stealing chipping or load. Women state clearly that they steal to add to their wages. As Abena

stated, gold mining is closely associated with wealth. The local communities expect the person who spends several years working in the mining communities in a difficult environment with important health hazards to return to the village with enough money. Another woman, Liz, told me that she wanted to return to her village, but she could not return because she did not have enough money. She said her mother had asked her to stay in the mining community until she could return with some money to start her own business. Liz's mother had agreed to raise her two daughters for her until she could return with enough money to support her family. For many of these women, the material basis of their work in the mines keeps them in the industry. While I lived in Kejetia, the women would look for every opportunity to accumulate chipping to extract gold. Apart from the Talensi women who mention and demonstrate how they steal, employers also talk a great deal about women stealing chipping or load.

### **Work Conflicts: Employers as Supervisor and Shankers as Thieves**

One day, I participated in the gold production process for Boger, a chiseler who participated in the wage analysis for this study. Boger was processing his load and his fiancée had travelled to Bolgatanga, the regional capital of the Upper East region in Ghana to buy goods for her retail shop. Boger's fiancée was his shanking leader so in her absence, Boger asked me to supervise the shankers who worked for him. My major assignment was to be present at the shanking place the whole time the work was going on. My presence was supposed to help reduce stealing by the shankers.

I followed the shankers to the crusher or rock-crushing machine while Boger went to negotiate with the washers who would extract the gold after shanking. The path to the crusher was narrow so we could only walk in single file with the shankers carrying Boger's load in front. I moved as close as I could to the women in order to observe how they would steal, if that

occurred. It was also an opportunity to get details about how theft takes place. I decided not to report to Boger when someone picked some of his load. I was able to observe one of the women who picked two pieces of the load and put it into the basher or a plastic bowl (see figure 5.1) of her friend. She smiled at me when she realized that I saw her pick the pieces of rock, but she moved away to stand at another corner. I perceived she was moving away from the load to prevent any suspicion.

After all the processing work was complete, I asked Boger why he was upset at the distance between the shankers and me on the narrow path to the crusher. Boger explained that the women are always on the lookout for opportunities to steal. Boger informed me “most of the women do not depend on the small amount of chipping they receive as wages.” Boger’s statement once more confirmed the ideas Abena raised during her interview, including her statement that “I would steal any time there is an opportunity for me to do it.

**Figure 12: Shankers Getting Ready to Work**



In Figure 12, the shankers are waiting for the go-ahead from their leader to begin shanking. The sand-like substance in the foreground is a heap of chipping or load. On top of the heap of chipping is an *appiah-dankwa*, a measuring bowl that women use to scoop chipping into the sieve used for sifting the chipping or load. The shankers have returned from crushing the load and have heaped the chipping at the employers' home, and are waiting to begin shanking. After crushing, the shankers wait for the go-ahead from their leader before they begin to shank. Several women followed the leader to the employer's home, but they cannot begin to shank until the leader is ready to supervise (Figure 12). While waiting for the leader, the shankers sit closer to the load so that as soon as the leader gives the signal for them to begin shanking, they will have the upper hand. The leader gives priority to the shankers who carry the load. However, any

of the other women present can join the load carriers, provided that there is space around the load. The women who cannot find space around the load cannot shank, but they will also still receive a percentage of the chipping when the women who participated in the shanking receive their wages.

The women share many of their life experiences while waiting for the leader's signal, a period that may be either short or long. A short wait time may be about fifteen minutes while a longer time may stretch over one hour. The women mention three main moments in the work process when stealing is most likely to occur. Women would steal pieces of rocks when they carry the load to the crusher, when they wait around the load for the leader's signal to start shanking, and during shanking. During each of these situations, the women look for an opportunity to steal. Figure 12 shows that the women are conversing in small groups and they pay little attention to the load. The woman who owns the appiah-dankwa can fetch some of the chipping into her basher unnoticed. In addition, during shanking, thick dust emission from the chipping reduces visibility so that it becomes difficult for a shanker to see another shanker sitting next to her. While the women are chatting, those who sit close to the load may fetch some into their basher unnoticed.

When a shanker is caught stealing, the leader usually asks her to put it back or ignores the shanker's action altogether. When the employer notices that a shanker is fetching chipping into her basher and the employer wants to take action against the shanker, the other women may plead with the employer on her behalf. Even when the employer insists on punishment, the most common punishment may be in the form of a verbal warning, a reprimand in the form of disallowing the shanker to work in the future, or being asked to put the chipping back. No woman reports a shanker who steals from an employer unless the reporter wants to seek favor

from that employer. If a shanker stole chipping at any time other than during shanking, the employer would accuse the shanker of a crime and might seek to arrest the shanker, or publicly disgrace her.

In addition, treating stealing during shanking as a noncriminal act, female employee-employer relationships contribute to the complexity of crime in the industry. Sanpan shares her experience when she stole four pieces of rock from Lopo her employer.<sup>24</sup> Load usually comes out of the pit wet and the load is dried in the sun before crushing. Sanpan told me that after she picked pieces from the load Lopo was drying in the courtyard before crushing, she assumed that Lopo did not notice her action because Lopo did not ask her to put the rocks back. After all, Sanpan picked just a few pieces and Lopo is her “brother.” Sanpan explained why she picked the rocks:

I picked the pieces of rocks because I saw from where I sat during shanking that some of the pieces of rocks had gold nuggets in them and planned how I would pick them unnoticed. I picked only four pieces of the load, put them into my basher, and walked back home to put them in my room. The next day, I gave the rocks to a kaimen (pounder) to pound and process. When I sold the gold, I made GH¢1400 as income. I know Lopo saw me pick the rocks, but I also know he would not accuse me of theft. He might ask me to put the pieces of rock back, but in this case, Lopo just ignored me.

On the other hand, if Sanpan went out of her way to enter Lopo’s compound while she was not working for Lopo to take pieces of rock, Sanpan’s action would be termed criminal and Lopo might be upset and ask Sanpan to bring the pieces back in order to shame her publicly. In addition to public shaming, Lopo might report Sanpan to the chief or, in a few cases, report her to the police. In Chapter 3, I shared a story about a man who jumped over a mud wall into a sponsor’s compound to collect the residue from the load or chipping that had the gold extracted, which the miners refer to as “over.”<sup>25</sup> When a neighbor informed the sponsor about the incident, the sponsor reported the thief to a police. The sponsor considered the man’s entry into his



compound as unlawful, and the sponsor attempted to have the thief arrested to deter other people from unlawfully entering his compound to steal. The officer left the community only after he thoroughly searched for the criminal and still coming up short. One of the regular drinkers in Maggie's *akpeshie* or local gin bar informed me that the thief went into hiding in a mining pit when he heard a rumor that the sponsor was trying to have him arrested. After the incident, the whole community discussed the theft throughout the afternoon. Most of the people blamed the thief for stealing what did not belong to him, although a few people indicated that what the thief did was a minor offense that the sponsor should have overlooked.

Another theft occurred at the Yanton mine, popularly known as the Chinese mine, which was fatal.<sup>26</sup> Shortly after I began my fieldwork, three men died in one of the shafts in the Chinese mine. One miner explained to me that the men entered the shaft to steal after blastmen had blasted the rock. Since the smoke from the blasting was too thick, the “thieves” died. The miner blamed the dead on the Chinese staff of the Yanton mine for being unfriendly toward their workers. The miner even went on to say that he suspected the Chinese deliberately reset the blast, knowing that some of the workers had entered the shaft. The miner concluded, “This is the reason why I would never work for the Chinese company. In our ghettos, we will never deliberately cause the death of anyone who enters our shaft, even if they do not belong to our team.”

In the summer of 2012, during my preliminary dissertation fieldwork, a shanker named Bisi told me that a colleague known as Lela picked up a few pieces of rock, and when Lela was processing the rocks, she found two large gold nuggets in the middle of one. When Lela sold the gold she instantly became rich, but Lela was kind enough to return part of the money to the employer whose load she had picked the rocks. Budu, a chiseler who confirmed Bisi's story, said

that once Lela's employer allowed her to pick the sample or rocks with high content of gold, the employer could not demand money from Lela because the employer had transferred the right of ownership of the sample to Lela. Budu went on to explain that Lela returned part of the money from the sale of the sample to her employer as an act of kindness because the news about her "hit" had spread through the whole community even before she sold the gold. However, using the argument about rights from Comaroff and Comaroff (2006), I deduce that once shankers have a right to the product they work on, employers may also perceive themselves as being entitled to the gold obtained from the rocks they give out. I make this deduction because Budu told me that the shanker would not refuse to give part of the money to the employer. If the amount of gold obtained is insignificant, there is no obligation on the part of the shanker to return any of the money to the employer, but once the amount of gold obtained is substantial, the shanker would return part of it. According to Bisi, Lela was able to build a house and to send her daughter who had dropped out of school for financial reasons back to school. Although Lela's daughter had given birth to a baby when she dropped out of school, Lela took care of her grandchild and sent her daughter back to school. Bisi remarked, "Lela had so much money that she could accomplish any goal."

The notable comparison between Sanpan stealing pieces of rocks from Lopo and the man who stole "over" or load residue from a sponsor's compound is that the two cases contradict each other. Miners attach more value to load than "over." Miners argue that, unknowingly, a few pieces of rocks from load may have a large quantity of gold in them as shown in the story about Lela. On the other hand, "over" has had the gold extracted from it and the miners see "over" as residue, though this perception is not always accurate, as I explained earlier.

Among male miners, when the blastman or worker who breaks up underground gold-bearing rock completes blasting and locoboys carry the load above ground, quarter boys enter the pits and collect any quantity of load they can gather. Quarter boys are not part of the work team, but they are miners who hang around with the work teams and do some errands for the workers who stay in the pits for long hours. Quarter boys get the opportunity to make income from the leftover load in the mining pits to take care of their family.

The actions of quarter boys, shankers, locoboys and all the other workers of the mining industry create a kind of “community” for sustaining the mining industry. Budu, a worker who doubles as a ghetto owner and a chiseler, stated, “All the workers are important to this community and to the work we do.” Budu recognized women’s activities as vital to the industry and pointed out that “we (referring to men) will always have to make sure that the women get jobs to do.” In chapter two, I referred to a statement Budu made that “you (referring to me in an interview) don’t expect me (Budu) to carry pans with load from a crusher home.”

Even though Budu, the chiseler I interviewed used the statement to reinforce gender roles, the statement also indicates recognition for women’s contributions to the mining industry. Budu perceived women as part of the mining industry and argued for their integration into the mining activity through the jobs they do. One day, I inquired about what the women would do when the government of Ghana extended electricity to Talensi mining communities.<sup>12</sup> Budu told me that the men would allow women to engage in roles similar to the roles of women in mining

---

<sup>12</sup> Shanking is an intermediary process between crushing and milling load or chipping. In gold extraction, the first process involves crushing the rocks. However, diesel-powered grinding machines called crushers are unable to grind the rocks into a smooth product required for amalgamation, that is, chemical separation of gold from rock (see figure 1). Women miners shank load, chipping, or crushed rock to separate the powdered product from rough particles. The rough particle residue is also milled into a smooth product. In mining communities which have electricity skip shanking because electric-powered grinding machines are able to crush rocks into smooth products.

communities that have electricity. Budu concluded, “We will always make sure that women have jobs to do because women are part of the mining community.”

Stealing occurs in different ways in the mines. It provides the basis for the distinction between actions the miners consider criminal and those the miners do not consider criminal. It also shows that Talensi miners do not consider stealing during shanking as theft. Stealing during shanking does not result in arrest by the police, shaming, or any other form of punishment. Women are not deterred when caught stealing during shanking. In fact, Abena showed women’s determination to continue stealing when she stated, “Women will continue to steal when they have the chance.” However, if a shanker stole at any other time or place apart from during shanking, she would be committing a crime and would be punished, even though women rarely steal at any time other than during shanking. Talensi society places high value on hard work, and Talensi believe that wealth comes with hard work. Whoever works hard is expected to make an adequate income so hard working shankers who steal chipping during shanking get away with it without punishment. On the other hand, a person who steals during non-working time is perceived as an idle person who wants to live off other people’s hard work and who deserves to be punished for stealing. These perceptions about work and stealing create a distinction between acts that are criminal and those that are culturally acceptable.

### **Criminal Justice vs. Cultural Justice**

In developing countries in Africa and Latin America, and even in Australia, governments allow local authorities to make local laws that sometimes create contradictions between laws the states enact and those local authorities enact (Comaroff and Comaroff 2004). According to Comaroff and Comaroff (2004), most of the national laws stem from Euro-American laws, despite existence of local laws before the advent of European influence. In Ghana, for instance,

even though national laws and customary laws work alongside each other, clashes between national and local laws are common. While the government of Ghana has oversight over national laws, the chiefs of the local communities are responsible for ensuring that the people abide by the local laws. Local laws are the main laws that operate in several hard-to-reach communities in Ghana such as the Talensi mining communities where the people cannot easily reach law enforcement officers in larger towns because of distance.

The interplay between national and local laws sometimes creates conflict, especially when the laws involve everyday practices. The distinction shows that whereas national laws that cover everyday practices create the conditions that cause everyday practices to find their way into the legal domain, local laws on the other hand, allow the everyday practices of the people to remain disconnected from the legal system (Comaroff and Comaroff 2004). For instance, Comaroff and Comaroff (2004) argue that many of the everyday practices the legal system classifies as criminal under national laws are acceptable cultural practices under customary laws as shown in this research. Comaroff and Comaroff (2004) also argue that a principled distinction between crime and culture is often hard to sustain under customary laws, particularly in the remote reaches of a country where the people most keenly feel the compelling force of custom and where the presence of the state is stretched thin.

This research shows that, in the Talensi mining industry, for example, the distinction between cultural and criminal practices has become blurry. In one instance, miners account for stealing load as an everyday cultural practice, while in another instance, miners perceive a similar practice as criminal. Talensi miners perceive cultural and criminal action differently, especially concerning stealing chipping. In the mining industry, therefore, stealing chipping, as

an everyday “crime,” is ambiguous and the practices perceived as criminal or noncriminal have blurry borders.

### **The Ambiguity of Crime**

One area of concern about the concept of crime in anthropology is how the borders of crime continue to be ambiguous. Anthropologists call for the need to put crime talk into perspective in order to illuminate everyday responses to crime while emphasizing the motivation for criminal activities and providing contextual cases that highlight the trivial rather than the apocalyptic view that has been associated with all forms of crime (Schneider and Schneider 2008). According to Schneider and Schneider (2008: 366), the apocalyptic view of crime produces a process that tends to diffuse the borders of the different types of crime, project many types of groups and practices as criminal, and attract prejudicial consequences from state authorities, media, and citizen discourses. Schneider and Schneider (2008) define the apocalyptic view of crime as one where governments engage in criminal violence or encourage institutions to eradicate crime by using terrifying methods such as killing children on the street and leaving their murdered bodies for other presumed criminals to see or dehumanizing victims of police brutality through media representation. For instance, Schneider and Schneider (2008) posit that discussions about crime in the United States equate minor acts such as youth street gang crime with more serious acts of drug trafficking. They argue that unless legal authorities put the different forms of crime into proper perspective, many minor offenses will continue to attract the same types of punishments as major crimes. Schneider and Schneider’s (2008) discussions mention that the inability to categorize perceived criminal practices into more and less serious activities has created more problems in the twenty-first century, where the criminal imaginary has exploded globally. They also give examples of new images of criminals such as traffickers

and terrorists that are emerging, while trivial offenses continue to occupy front stage discussion with the same form of seriousness. Scholarly discussions also call for the need to pay more attention to studies on crime for a better understanding and control of crime (Nordstrom 2007).

In contrast to the apocalyptic view that all crimes are dangerous and deserve punishment, Talensi miners make distinctions between different types of criminal activities. Even though the miners use the same Talon word, *zuurg*, to refer to all forms of stealing, the miners perceive some cases of stealing as criminal, while they view other seemingly similar cases of stealing as noncriminal. Whereas Talensi miners would consider stealing load from another miner's home as a dangerous act that deserves punishment, the same miners do not view stealing load while shanking as dangerous. In fact, they do not consider stealing chipping during shanking as theft at all. In the Talensi situation, the weight given to stealing on different occasions accounts for the ambiguity in criminal acts and allows the cultural process to embed itself into criminal situations.

Given the different ways in which Talensi miners view stealing, it is important that this chapter assess the explanation for stealing chipping other than as a criminal or noncriminal act. Based on James Scott's (1985) assertion, shankers steal to protest their lower wages. Scott's (1985) view of protest limits the capacity of Talensi women to organize, a limitation that would leave Talensi women with crime as the only option for protest or rebellion to challenge their employers. However, this dissertation does not dispute the relationship between crime and protest. Rather, it extends the views advanced by scholars such as James Scott.

### **Stealing, Organizing, and Protesting**

Scott (1985) asserts that disadvantaged populations use "weapons" including foot dragging to voice their grievances. Talensi women in the small-scale gold mining industry also use their sense of collectivity to organize protests. Women form networks of associations for the

purposes of savings and welfare. Talensi women form rotating credit schemes known as *susu* and welfare associations that provide them with the opportunity to support each other. Earlier views about disadvantaged populations and their use of “weapons of the weak” in lieu of protests and rebellions suggest that these populations lack the organizational capacity that would bring about change. As argued by Kabeer et al. (2013), this alleged absence of organizational capacity has been one of the factors that condemn women to forms of work that leave them doing economically insecure jobs and that has led to the springing up of organizations that have set out to work with women in informal economies. First, these arguments, Kabeer et al. (2013) argue, assume that women are unable to organize and that where women do organize, they form temporary groups for taking an action. Secondly, these arguments point to easy and quick ways by which women’s groups disintegrate (Kabeer et al. 2013). Such arguments assert that women’s groups are not sustainable because women come together to take temporary and single-purpose action.

Although the capacity of women to organize and form strong associations is a more pertinent need for women who reside outside their local villages than for those who live in their local communities, Talensi women working in the mining communities have proved their capacity to organize into strong groups. Talensi women form strong associations that promote their wellbeing and enhance their capacity to save money. At the time of my fieldwork, some of the associations, especially the rotating credit groups known as *susu*, have existed for five years or more. Although the only welfare association in Kejetia established to support women in times of emergencies was only nine months old when I started fieldwork in September 2014, the association was well structured and functional. Its members held regular weekly meetings at 7 p.m. on Saturday nights, paid dues, and reached out to members who had absented themselves



from meetings for more than two consecutive weeks without any form of verbal notice. The members of the association did not show any signs of discontent with their group. They had flexibility regarding payments and the association encouraged members who defaulted from paying dues to do so, working out payment plans with them. In fact, the only members who defaulted were those who traveled out of the community for a long period. Kate traveled to Banda Nkwanta, another mining community, for four months to care for her sick sister. While she was away, the members of the welfare association excused her from paying her dues. As soon as Kate returned, she paid half of her four months dues in arrears and promised to continue to pay until she was in good standing. The women indicated that the welfare association was important to them as a support group because the association stood in for the support their local community would have provided. Women who reside in the mining communities do not participate in most of the activities in their local communities, especially during the peak season for gold production.

Besides women's ability to organize into strong groups, Talensi women also have the capacity to protest publicly without resorting to "weapons of the weak" (Scott 1985). In 2011, I arrived at Kejetia a few months after a community protest against the Yanton or the Chinese mine. Originally, the foreign nationals are responsible for providing technical and financial services to the miners. However, the miners felt deceived when the foreigners set up their own mines and are alleged to be competing with the locals for mining space. In view of the external support the foreigners were supposed to provide, Yanton mine expanded its activities to cover a large part of the mining lands. In addition, according to the secretary of the Kejetia mining committee, the foreigners did not fulfill their obligation to support the rest of the local miners. They promised to provide technical and managerial services to the entire mining community;

unfortunately, the miners claimed that the foreigners failed to fulfill their promise. This lack of support from the foreigners led to distrust and tension between the local and the foreign miners. The lack of trust later generated into a longstanding dispute in which the local miners became suspicious of the activities of the Yanton mines. Speculation that the Yanton mine was planning to take over more of the mining lands in the area sparked off a destructive protest by the local miners against the foreign mines that lasted for several days.

During an interview with the Upper East Regional Director of the Minerals Commission, the government of Ghana's Commission that oversees mining activities, the Director expressed his disapproval at the protest. The Director stated that the take-over was a mere rumor and that the miners had not checked with the commission to get the facts because they were suspicious of the involvement of the Commission in the activities of the Yanton mines. The lack of trust in the Commission caused the miners to engage in the destructive protests.

However, the importance of referring to this protest in this chapter is to show Talensi women's participation in the protest. During the protest, Talensi women were deeply involved in the activities. The women participated in the protests, attended community meetings, and contributed to the discussions that devised the plans and actions the community should engage in to stop the "Chinese" mine from proceeding with the alleged takeover. Nica, my host, informed me that the women made monetary contributions as well, and when the police arrested some of the local miners and put them before court, the women nominated two representatives—a food seller and a shanker. The two female representatives initially accompanied the six men whom the police had arrested and arraigned before the regional court. The representatives attended the court proceedings for over one year and stopped due to a delay in the court ruling. During the

protest, Nica mentioned that the women played key roles and remained visible. Nica narrated her own participation in the protest with other women:

We formed a blockade with the men to stop the police from entering into our community to arrest suspects. When the police made a forceful entry, one of my female friends set the car tires the men had piled up close to where we had formed the human wall on fire. We wanted the media coverage to tell our story to Ghanaians, especially the part of the protest the TV crew covered. We made sure that we participated fully in the protest so that men did not become the only participants. We believed that when we became fully involved in the protest, the protest would gain credibility as a community protest. We wanted to send a message across to the government of Ghana that the protest involved the whole community. When we allow foreigners to take over our mine, what other work would be there for us to do? This is our land, this is our mine, and this is our lives.

Following this protest, Talensi women have the capacity to protest and may be able to protest for better conditions of wages without resorting to the “weapons of the weak.” However, with the level of uncertainty surrounding gold production, even male employees are reluctant to engage in extensive negotiations with their employers. As Gavin Hilson (2012) explained in his studies on the “poverty trap,” sponsorship of mining activities involves a hierarchy of investors. What is of interest in this regard is that *ghetto* or business owners are uncertain about how much gold they would be able to produce from any particular production site to cover the cost of investment. Similarly, the employees cannot determine the amount of gold they would be able to extract from the load the ghetto owner may give to them as wages. The uncertainty about the gold that each person in the production chain is expected to get creates a situation that influences the inability of the workers to ask for more wages.

A sense of expectation among workers who think that one day they will be able to “hit it,” also keeps them working in the mines without making demands for more wages. In addition, the costs and benefits of production are shrouded in uncertainty. Women’s expectation that they will “hit it” causes them to accept their wages because, as Tenee, one of the shankers, alluded to,

it decreases the dependence of women's livelihood on their wages from men and explains why the men give them those wages.

The men bear the risks of cave-ins, they invest their money, and we are not able to determine the gold in the chipping until we process the gold. Moreover, we cannot know how much gold the men extract. Everything in this gold production business is based on "luck." Gold production involves a very complex form of activities that affects benefits as well.

With the kind of uncertainty that Tenee points out, women do not have a basis for protest when they are unable to point to specific ways to make more demands. Women, like the men, live with the expectation that they will be able to make great gains one day. Women engage in stealing as a way to add to their wages to meet their immediate needs and save a portion of their income for the immediate future, but their continuing hope of "hitting it" in the future influences their general expectations and offers reasons to continue mining.

### **Summary of the Chapter**

In the Talensi mines, stealing is a practice most of the women engage in. Stealing load arises out of women's collective life world since all shankers look for opportunities to steal chipping. In view of the way Talensi women steal chipping, to borrow from Comaroff and Comaroff (2004), the shankers by their action reframe a practice that is normatively opposite to acceptable behavior. In the Talensi mining communities, the women have created a situation whereby stealing is not viewed as criminal, but as a cultural practice that does not attract punishment of any form. A form of conflict develops between the law of crime and the practice of crime when stealing, regarded as criminal converts into a civil issue, and in the process the women turn criminal justice into cultural justice.

According to Barry Checkoway (1997:12), "amidst the routine of everyday events, people put the pieces together and make sense of their situation in a new way." According to

Checkoway, when people see an underlying concept that sheds new light on their lives, it can change their world and motivate them to pursue new forms of social action. Checkoway (1997) indicates that a form of awakening that causes motivation when people pursue a social action to improve their conditions. Abena, the shanker whose story I shared at the beginning of this chapter, confirmed the sense of collectivity among women when they steal. Abena remarked:

We are all gold miners. We work for gold. You have to be able to get money working in the mine. If you don't make it here, where can you get money? If you don't become rich here, then you will never be rich. This is your "last stop" to make money.

Women's collective action to steal load becomes one of the strategies they use to improve their income. However, by acting collectively, based on their sense of community and shared interests, they are able to achieve some of the desires they cannot achieve as individuals. Talensi women showed their sense of community during the interviews by jokingly acting out or demonstrating how they steal and in the process; other shankers would laugh and show their approval in support of their colleagues' actions.

One notable revelation is that discussions of stealing created a comfortable environment for women to share their own personal experiences. These experiences may not necessarily have a link to stealing. However, as the conversations about stealing revealed in the interviews, the women discussed non-related issues about their families, local villages, and friends. A common thread in the conversation was that no shanker regarded "stealing" as a criminal act. Rather, the women talked about "stealing" as a strategy that identified them as shankers and as a way by which they adapt to the mining jobs and improve their lives. These experiences women share with each other contribute to the group building process of the industry.

Even though building a shared identity and interest among women may pose some challenges because women have to meet different needs, their sense of collectivity had a positive

impact. Abena indicated, “We don’t steal from women.” According to Abena, stealing from another woman is inappropriate. After all, she continued, “since we all struggle to make enough money here, it is inappropriate to steal the little chipping your fellow woman accumulates through long periods of hard work.” Abena mentioned that it was shameful to steal from another woman, but she did not associate stealing from a man with any kind of shame. She explained her conception that “the men decide the quantity of chipping to give to us as wages, whether little or enough.”

The women’s capacity to defend their interest includes their associational capacity (Silver 2003). Women in the mining communities do not only form associations through their work, but also associate with each other by way of a common practice. Through Talensi women’s ability to steal, the women are also able to draw recognition to their presence as active participants in gold production in the mining industry.

### **Conclusion: The Social and Economic Contradictions of Crime**

Previous studies have shown crime as a form of resistant action “minority” populations use to put across their views to those in authority (Scott 1985). These studies regard crime as an act within the criminal justice system, a system in which states enact laws to determine criminal actions and by so doing use the law as an apparatus for social control (Greenhouse 2003). In a bid to understand other ways in which people have used crime outside the criminal justice system, recent scholars have argued that in some societies, people use crime as a cultural practice, drawing attention to the ambiguity of crime (Kahn 2003; Comaroff and Comaroff 2006).

The larger Talensi social organization allows workers to have a right to access some of the products from the work they do during work hours. In fact, similar ideas about work and the

right of the worker to have some of the items they produce exist in the larger Ghanaian society. This practice may be similar to the idea of giving tips to the person who renders services in Euro-American society on top of inadequate wages. The difference between the Western idea of tips and the Talensi practice of stealing is that whereas receivers of a service give tips to the person who rendered the service, in the Talensi situation, the worker takes the chipping from the employer.

Through their activities, Talensi women have come to use stealing during shanking to create a sense of connectivity and to build community and in the process normalized the practice. The sense of community for the women provides a platform of belonging and shows their position in the mining activities, As Laura Nader (2003) explained in her study, the practices that lead to criminalization can provide intersections of social relations through which people perceive and symbolize differences and similarities. In light of Nader's argument, it is evident that in the Talensi mines, shankers identify some similarities among themselves when they steal and identify the difference between them and their employers. The shankers see themselves as employees working for employers. The identification of this similarity binds shankers together and the bond this identification generates among shankers leads to the desire not to give each other up for stealing and even not to steal from their female colleagues. In the Talensi mine, the practice of stealing and having the space to talk about it facilitates the sense of collaboration and collectivity among the women and in the process, helps them to survive in the mining industry (see Checkoway 1997).

One notable issue that reinforces women's sense of collectivity is how the women talk about stealing. Most of the women talk about stealing openly and sometimes demonstrate how they have stolen from one employer or another. This sense of openness removes the stigma or

disgrace that would generally be associated with stealing in a typical “traditional” Talensi society. When Talensi women chat endlessly sharing their experiences about stealing, they reduce the stigma attached to crime.

In addition, the benefits women accrue from stealing load/chipping have the tendency to lead to the redistribution of income in the mining industry. Talensi women’s participation in the mining industry is forging dynamics that may lead to improved lives for women in the labor force. By fostering the conditions that cause workers at the lower end of the wage distribution system in the Talensi mines to steal load/chipping from their employers, the women are designing a system that allows them to gain more income than they would otherwise get from their work. The bottom-up approach the women create is creating new imaginaries. Talensi women are forging their way through a process that could lead to increased income for improved lives.

Finally, this chapter reveals Talensi women’s capacity to organize and to protest when the need arises. Women residing in the mining communities believe complementing the efforts of the men to send their problems to the government of Ghana may yield positive results. In fact, Nica believes through the protest their voice was heard and that has allowed them to prevent the take-over by the “Chinese,” even though the Minerals Commission sees the idea as only a rumor. However, this study also points out the uncertainties in the gold production industry as one of the major issues that affects the organization of work. It also shows how uncertainties of production limit the capacity of workers to make demands for appropriate wages. Women’s lower placement in the hierarchy of work, coupled with the uncertainties of the industry, influences their capacity to protest. Unfortunately, these major issues have not received much attention.



Thus, even though small-scale mining activities have fallen on hard times, in the Talensi mines, men and women continue to eke out whatever they still can from the mines as their benefits. Recognizing the particularities of the mining industry would allow a better understanding of the processes that shape its organization. In spite of the challenges Talensi women face in the mining industry, the understanding this chapter provides of crime in the mining industry shows Talensi women's ability to devise a collective strategic practice and to normalize a strategy to improve their wages. Women's practices in the mining industry contribute to the need for reclassification of crime and can be one way in which the women to be supported. Talensi women are setting stealing outside the realm of the criminal code, as a cultural practice that provides them with increased opportunities irrespective of the harsh conditions they may face as miners.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **LAND AND PROPERTY RIGHTS: BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES TO TALENSI WOMEN**

The participation of rural women in jobs outside their homes is transforming women's lives in Ghana, including their rights to land and property. The rapid expansion of small-scale mining activities in developing countries is one of the causes of major transformations in women's lives (Kippenberg 2013). The Human Rights Watch of the International Labor Organization (ILO) points out that tens of thousands of small-scale gold mining sites have surfaced across Asia, Latin America, and Africa (Kippenberg 2013), attracting men and women into mining communities. In Ghana, for example, small-scale mining jobs are providing women and men who previously engaged in subsistence farming with work and income opportunities in the Talensi district. On the other hand, many studies have shown the challenges people encounter in the small-scale mining industry. Gavin Hilson's (2012) study highlights the cycle of poverty that traps small-scale miners in the industry, while Whitehead and Tsikata (2003) draw attention to the problems of power relations in rural communities concerning women's land claims that land policies should address so that these claims benefit a large segment of rural populations.

In Africa, even though extensive literature covers claims to land and property, scholars have paid little attention to the growing land issues emerging with the expansion of the small-scale mining industry. The emergence of the mining industry has contributed to some of the transformations that already exist in many parts of Africa, such as land access, transfer, ownership, control, benefits; customary land tenure, and land titling. From the FAO webpage,

Nelson (2004) defines land tenure as the relationship, whether legally or customarily defined, among people, as individuals or groups, with respect to land, including water and trees. Atwood (1990:21) defines land title in the African context as legally sanctioning primary land claims that are recognized informally by local communities. Many debates highlight the insecurity of land tenure rights (Alchian and Demsetz 1995; de Soto 2000; Posner 1972) and the failure of land titling to promote individualized land rights (Deininger et al. 2003).

This chapter examines the transformations, challenges, contestations, negotiations, and beneficiaries of the Talensi small-scale mining industry concerning access, transfer, ownership, control, and benefits of land and property. Specifically, this chapter examines Talensi small-scale gold mining activities and the role of women in landholding and property ownership. Women's claims and rights to land and property in the local communities where mining activities are taking place are also examined, focusing on the diversity of local women's land claims and property rights.

Conceptually, historical, economic, social, geographic, and political factors influence claims and rights to land and property in Africa, vested in the land tenure system, the land titling system, or a combination of the two. I use the broad concepts of land tenure and land title to show the paradigm shift from farming to mining for women, their rights to land and property as well as interconnections. Parker Shipton (1994) argues that people relate to land not just as individuals, but as members of groups and networks. In order for women to access, transfer, own, control and benefit from land and property, they need the ability to acquire land or property.

This chapter does not discuss how the mining industry, land tenure, and property rights are influencing Talensi households. An extensive investigation into kinship relationships in rural mining communities would be a valuable addition to the literature. However, this chapter includes changes in Talensi households only when they influence land and property claims, especially concerning women.

Women's access to land and property is complex and transformational. The emergence of small-scale mining in the Talensi area is providing women who do work related to mining with the opportunity to accumulate wealth, but the industry is simultaneously transforming land and property rights for women who continue to farm the land. The main areas of transformation include land claims, use, control, and transfer. The cultural practices in the Talensi society continue to place limitations on women's claims to land and ownership, while women engaged in crop production face new challenges in dealing with land fragmentation, scarcity, and conflicts as well as poor soil as more land is set aside for mining. In the gold production industry, however, some women are acquiring individual land and property with their income. The mining industry is intensifying land use and new forms of land contestations. These transformations require attention for any appropriate and effective land and property policy reforms for the small-scale mining industry.

### **Conceptual Framework: Land and Property Rights**

Anthropologists have long been concerned about issues of landholding and property distribution. Classical works in Africa point out that land tenure and property ownership do not so much involve the rights of persons over things, rather they involve "the duties between persons in respect of things" (Gluckman 1965: 136). Based on this conception, anthropologists have looked at property relations at two levels. On the first, Kalinoe and Leach (2001) argue that

the general perception is that customary land tenure does not concern ownership per se, but instead it is the rights and duties of use, transfer, administration, access, occupation, and reversionary control that matter. These rights and uses combine in ways that tend to differ from property or ownership as conventionally understood in Europe or North America (Berry 1989; Okoth-Ogendo 1989). For example, Berry (1989) posits that colonists recognized how the land tenure system of many African countries made it difficult if not impossible for individual land ownership. Conservative economists such as de Soto (2000) argue that the lack of individual land ownership inherent in the land tenure system slowed down economic development in Africa because it discouraged investment on the continent. However, this communal argument about land tenure has been debunked as an evolutionary idea (Platteau et al. 2005).

Other studies have concentrated on such issues as the relationship building that generates practical issues of diverse claims (Shipton 1994). Many of the complex and diverse claims to land in the Talensi district are the result of local nuances. No matter how land tenure and property ownership are viewed in many parts of Africa, it is important that one does not lose sight of these local nuances and concepts of fairness or equity, ideals that signifies a true African spirit (Shipton 1994).

In view of concerns about fairness and equity, scholars have called for studies to consider gender relationships and how they influence women's claims to land and property (Whitehead and Tsikata 2003; Yngstrom 2002). In fact, in the Talensi mining communities, the issue of fairness and equity in land outweighs all other issues. Inequities in land influence ownership and access to jobs and even income. According the Tsikata (2016), recognizing unfairness in land concerning women would help promote women's integration into commercial production. The gendered work patterns discussed in chapter two as well as ownership of mining pits based on

gender are some of the issues this dissertation seeks to address. Fairness and equity in land are closely linked to land conflicts, an issue that further increases the gaps in access to and ownership of the resources of the industry. It is important that discussions about equity and fairness continue on the academic and policy fronts.

### **The Small-scale Mining Industry and Land**

In the Talensi district, mining covers over 72 kilometers square of land, an area that excludes the “illegal” mining activities. Small-scale mining is labor intensive and one of the two industries in the area that offers job opportunities, so issues linked to the industry are of great importance to the community. The other industry is a stone quarry. Small-scale mining is also capital intensive and attracts workers with diverse backgrounds

Janine Ubink (2008) reiterates earlier views of the problems related to land tenure and titling and points out that a lot of the struggle over land occurs during periods of major changes when competition causes land disputes. During small-scale mining activities, it is important to understand how the people affect land in the area and how land issues affect the inhabitants. Scholars argue that programs intended to decentralize authority to give more to grassroots land users may involve national and local elites who capture the benefits that were aimed at local and traditional managers (Woodhouse et al. 2000). In this way, the inhabitants who are expected to benefit from the program may not necessarily be the major beneficiaries of the programs.

In the Talensi district, a variety of people are involved in gold production with different positions and interests in the industry, including elites, local authorities, and small farmers who form networks so all members can benefit. With different levels of power, the interests may differ among the people (Toulmin and Quan 2000; Toulmin 2003). The elites of the mining industry comprise all the individuals who keep the industry moving, including the sponsors,

ghetto or business owners, equipment owners, and many other financiers who live outside the mining community but control activities. Land negotiations occur between these elites and local authorities such as the chief. Scholars have recognized the difficulty of these negotiations and the ambiguity of the social relations involved in land tenure embedded in the society, which is further complicated when the network is extended to include non-local key players of the industry (Daley and Hobley 2005; Peters 2009; Woodhouse 2003). In the Talensi small-scale mining industry, gold production players include not only chiefs, local elites serving as sponsors or concessionaires, and workers (both males and female), but also the Minerals Commission (representing the government of Ghana), the District Assembly or local government administration, and the Environmental Protection Agency. The variety of players in the industry, with different privileges and competing interests, shape the transformations, challenges, negotiations, and beneficiaries of the industry (Berry 2002; Shipton 1994).

Many studies recognize the exclusionary tendencies in land issues. Studies have pointed out that intensified competition for land causes exclusion of some individuals because of the manipulation of the ambiguities within the law by privileged members of the network (Cousins 2002; Juul and Lund 2002; Shipton 1994; Woodhouse 2012). Unfortunately, these studies do not pay much attention to women. Yngstrom (2002) argues that gender relations are central to land issues, especially concerning the insecurities, exclusions, negotiations, and claims that have occupied most studies of land and property. Scholars identify the different kinds of disputes that occur when access to wealth and authority are undergoing rapid change and argue that many factors and processes influence these disputes (Amanor and Diderutuah 2001; Ubink 2008), especially for women.

Most rural African women primarily engage in agricultural production, making the complexity of local norms, customary practices, and state laws concerning land very significant to them and their dependents. The relationship between women and land shows up in complex and diverse ways in these rural communities. Several factors determine who gets land, how much, and from whom; these factors have not been adequately addressed in the literature, especially during major changes such as small-scale mining. However, empirical studies show that women tap into their social relationships to access farmlands and that a married woman may access land differently than an unmarried woman (Whitehead and Tsikata, 2003).

In most African societies, rights to land and property are deeply embedded in the history of the continent. While scholars view land tenure as a pre-colonial phenomenon, colonizers introduced land titling to replace pre-colonial customary land tenure to ensure individual landholding and property ownership based on conceptions that emanated from European ideas of modernization and development (Lund 2002). Private individuals were encouraged to own land and property to limit the “communal,” traditional practices. However, many scholars have debunked this evolutionary concept to argue that land titling does not necessarily guarantee land security and equal access (Atwood 1990; Cousins 2005). In fact, in post-colonial times most African countries including Ghana, continued to use customary land tenure alongside land titling.

### **Land Claims and Property Rights: Disputes between Land Tenure and Land Title**

Some scholars propose that access to land and its associated rights can be understood by examining the institutions in which those rights are embedded. According to Parker Shipton (1994), the dynamics of these institutions (socio-cultural institutions, the market, and the state) and power relations among them that determine land tenure. Shipton (1994) highlights the extensive literature on land tenure in Africa based on the shifting influences of political



ideologies. Anthropological interest in land issues intensified in the 1980s, shortly after most African countries gained their independence, with research emphasizing the ways in which concepts, perspectives, and meanings attached to land tenure in Africa had close links to the colonial history (Shipton 1994).

### ***Pre-colonial Land System in Ghana***

In the pre-colonial history of African lands, the land tenure system of customary norms determined land access and ownership (Lund 2002). According to Lund (2002), proponents of the land titling system, such as Hernandez de Soto, held strong conservative economic views, and used customary laws to create a land tenure system that did not favor the poor. These customary norms, according to proponents, were flexible, negotiable, and location specific. Although Lentz (2010) argues that land rights were traditionally established through birthright, the first-comers came to determine landholding.

In many African communities, most of the factors involved in landholding are closely linked to the differentiation between first-comers and migrants (Lentz 2010; Shipton 1994). First-comers are the first arrivals who claimed land for crops followed by late comers or migrant settlers. Latecomers caused a complex process of land transfer linked to the religious practices of the first-comers. For example, according to Carola Lentz (2010), the Nandom people of the Upper West region in Ghana, gained access to and legitimized control over the land of the Sisala hunters and farmers by claiming to be the first-comers. Once a group or different groups come together to claim land, access to the land was usually contingent on membership in the larger group and allegiance to traditional authorities (Gluckman 1965; Berry 2002), producing a complex system of land claims, use, and transfers.

The arrival of the colonizers in Africa brought efficiency concerns. The colonizers pointed out that some traditional and indigenous land tenure arrangements constrained agricultural development and land productivity, a shift to formal, individual rights was needed to create incentives for farm productivity and that “communal” tenure emphasized group rights over individual rights so that the individual land user faced insecurity of tenure. According to Hernandez de Soto (2000) and the scholars who supported his views such as Alchian and Demsetz (1995), communal land tenure was a disincentive to the investments needed to increase the productivity and efficiency on which agricultural development and general social progress must be based.

While some scholars were advancing the insecurity perspectives of land tenure (Alchian and Demsetz 1995; de Soto 2000), other scholars were concerned about equity (Posner 1972), arguing that customary communal land tenure caused lack of access to land by certain groups. Proponents of land reform supported government interventions to take over “vacant” land and make it available to those who could not access land (de Soto 2000). However, many argue that superimposing Western configurations of property rights on African societies had led to increasing landlessness and concentration of land ownership (Atwood 1990).

### ***Colonial Land Titling***

During colonial times, a drastic change in the customary land tenure took place. Most African states enacted land laws that modeled English Common Law or Roman Dutch laws of land and property rights that favored individual property rights, supposedly increasing or guaranteeing poor people’s right to secure land (Deininger et al. 2003; Juul and Lund 2002). According to Deininger et al. (2003), scholars argued that in the tenure system, only persons of authority in the community could make decisions concerning land, denying people who were not

in authority access. Land titling was presented as a way to secure land for landless people by reducing or eliminating the uncertainty about land ownership given the scarcity of land with respect to the high human-land ratio (Deininger et al. 2003; Lund 2002). With land titling, land became individual and private property. An individual obtained title through purchase or through gifts, legacies or wills. The state's attribution of land assumed an obligation to develop it (Wanyeki 2003). However, Atwood (1990) and other scholars challenge the argument about the insecurity of land tenure and sees it an evolutionary development associated with modernization.

### ***Evolutionary Theory of Land***

The evolutionary theory of land rights is the main theory economists use to call for changes to land rights in developing countries. Key tenets of this theory posit that with increasing population pressure and market integration the rights to land spontaneously evolved toward individuation, leading to landholders pressing for the creation of duly formalized private property rights. Hernando de Soto (2000) strongly supported these evolutionary arguments for changes to customary land tenure perceiving that communal rights to land excluded all members of the community except those benefiting from prior and continuing use. According to de Soto (2000), in this kind of landholding, the individualization of land became necessary and the state responded by putting into place the structures for making this legal.

In more recent anthropological literature, several issues have been raised about the European understanding of the land tenure system. On the perspective of communal rights to land, scholars argue that the earlier land tenure system was not necessarily communal; however, Europeans did not understand the multiple authorities who had claims over land (Peters 2009; Whitehead and Tsikata, 2003). For example, Amanor and Diderutuah (2001), who studied sharecropping of oil palm in Ghana, argued that land tenure for sharecropping in Ghana involved

a complex system of contractual agreements that were difficult to disentangle. Anthropologists have long helped colonial administrations perpetuate the official mistaken view about communal tenure by painting a picture of what law was like in pre-colonial Africa before modern Europeans contacts and administration (Schapera 1994). According to Christian Lund (2002), individual private ownership existed within the customary, “communal” land tenure. Land titling is generally viewed as a method colonists used to gain access and control over land by establishing personal ownership and ceding vacant lands to the state. According to Lund (2002), this was possible considering the low human-land ratio in Africa at the time.

Land titling is perceived as a serious issue because it has created legitimacy problems regarding ownership (McAuslan 2000). Some historical studies indicated Africans lost their land rights through colonial titling with its unfamiliar arrangements (McAuslan 2000). Even in developing countries where governments encouraged efforts to ensure equitable access to land and have engaged in massive land reforms through land titling, there were documented cases of land insecurity (Deininger et al. 2003; Broegaard 2005).

### ***Post-colonial Land Tenure and Land Titling***

Debate on customary land tenure and colonial land titling continues to have major influences on land ownership in Ghana and other parts of sub-Saharan Africa today. In many parts of Africa, governments have accepted the side-by-side operation of customary land tenure and land titling (Berry 2002; Nelson 2004), with both colonial officials and African leaders having played a role. In many sub-Saharan African countries, including Ghana, Senegal, and Burkina Faso, both statutory and customary laws determine land rights (Platteau et al. 2005). In this pluralist legal system, geographic conditions influence the prominence of one system over the other. For example, in rural communities in Ghana, customary land tenure is the main

system. In rural communities, an individual's membership in a clan or household influences access to farmlands and land for houses. On the other hand, in urban communities, where most of the land is used for non-agricultural purposes, market exchange has become the main way to access land for housing and business establishments, and land titling predominates.

In view of the need to have both land tenure and titling, Elisa Scalise (2012) suggests that strategies to incorporate the two approaches should recognize customary land tenure while creating the space for negotiation. However, Scalise (2012) argues the fact that customary law can be ambiguous and hard to interpret while modern law can be difficult to enforce cannot be overlooked. In addition, the structure involved in the two approaches allows vacillation that in the process creates resistance to reform and cements the adherence to stereotyped gender roles (Whitehead and Tsikata 2003). In fact, the development of modern law alongside customary law has eroded safeguards for the well-established land tenure rights in marriage and divorce that women enjoyed before colonization (Platteau 1996).

The arguments in the post-colonial era for the promotion of land tenure and land titling have generated arguments that highlight certain basic local issues including who is more likely to access land in local communities; who are the winners and losers when land contestations emerge; and what challenges remain for groups who cannot own land. Both land tenure and land titling show problems with some populations having limited access to land (Peters and Kambewa 2007). In many local communities land rights still preclude the rights of women, so land benefits are not shared equally; on the other hand, stronger land rights for women in places where customary land tenure contradicts formal legal protections may also cause problems.

### **Gendered Lens in Land Access and Use**

The attention women land holding is receiving highlights the fact that women have traditionally been excluded from control and management of land (Logo and Bikie 2003). According to Ingrid Yngstrom (2002), most scholars who proposed land reforms did not mention women at all. Whether transformations in landholding takes place within state titling reforms, occurs within a community's land tenure system without state interventions, or through the side-by-side operation of the two systems, gender relations are central to land issues. According to Logo and Bikie (2003), bringing gender perspectives into debates on land tenure and land titling requires closer attention to land use because of the understanding that in much of Africa women's land rights are limited to use rights. Dzodzi Tsikata and Pamela Golah (2010) pointed out the close link among women, land, and labor. They assert that women's access to land and property should be considered within the forms of labor activities that women engage. It is important to note the interconnection between women, land, and labor in the mining industry as well.

### **Talensi Women's Access to Farmlands**

In view of the importance of farmland to women, the mining activity that takes place on land in the Talensi district affects their access to land. Recent studies show how changes to customary systems affect women's access to land. According to Tsikata and Golah (2010), some scholars argue that in the past interactions in traditional marriage institutions changed as agricultural land became scarce. They further argue that, applying the rules of supply and demand shows that as farmland became less available, women would lose their value to husbands, the practice of polygamy would decline, and bridewealth would fall to such an extent as to become obsolete (Tsikata and Golah 2010). Fortes (1949) argues that, in the Talensi communities, in the event of divorce, the bridewealth would provide some protection, but

women would find it more difficult to integrate back on to their family land. These assertions are based on the reasoning that women's access to land was purely a function of their value as agricultural laborers for the household farm. The relevance of these earlier views is that these assumptions bring to light the continuing interest in the interconnections among women, land, and labor (Tsikata and Golah 2010).

Among the Talensi, women's rights to land and the tenure systems that govern those rights are as diverse as the uses of land. Multiple land tenure systems co-exist in close proximity and groups or individuals hold multiple rights to land, sometimes the same parcel of land. These include rights to access, transfer, use, control and benefits from land. Married women have the right to use land from both their husband's and their own patrilineal households; unmarried women usually farm on their lineage land. Generally, women plant the household farms and the harvest from these farms go into a common pool used for preparing household meals, usually for three generations—couples, children, and grandparents.

In the Talensi society, a man's household grants the wives in the household the right to use land that belongs to them. In most households, family members do cultivation of food crops. A man and his wife or wives cultivate the same piece of land. Contributing to the production of food crops for the household pool is important to the Talensi woman. Lari, a married woman of about 45 years, has lived in the Talensi small-scale mining community for about three years. Lari came to live in Kejetia to accumulate savings for her business. However, at the beginning of the farming season, which usually falls between April and June depending on when the rainfall starts, Lari and some of the other women would go back to their husband's communities to plant crops. Nette, on the other hand, lives alone with her husband in Kejetia. Nette and her husband

go back to their community to plant food crops with her husband's household, which may include her husband's brothers and their wives.

Many widows continue to farm on their deceased husband's land. Nica's mother, whose husband died when Nica was a teenager, continues to live in her deceased husband's house and farm on his land. However, her late husband's brother has moved into the house with his wife. Nica's mother and the wife of Nica's uncle now farm on the same piece of land that belonged to Nica's father. When Nica's grandfather died, he left the land to Nica's father because Nica's uncle was too young. Nica's mother farmed on her husband's land for over fifteen years before her husband died and she continues to farm on the land. As long as Nica's mother does not remarry or relocate to her father's village, she is considered the deceased man's wife and is entitled to his property, including the use of his land. For unmarried women in Talensi, access to land is through their natal family; a woman cultivates her father's land until she marries. The situation becomes more complex in the case of a woman who has separated from her husband. Since a woman is not considered divorced until the bridewealth (about 1-4 cows) has been returned to her husband, she may find herself in a difficult position, especially when her father cannot return the bridewealth.

Grace's father used her bridewealth to pay for the dowry of her brother. A few years later, Grace separated from her husband. Grace's uncle—the younger brother of her father whom she now refers to as her father—is not in a position to buy and return the cows to Grace's husband to end the marriage. As a woman separated from her husband, Grace cannot access land from her husband's household for farming. When Grace returned to her own father's village, she farmed on the land of one of her brothers who lived in Accra, but when Grace's brother returned to the village, her uncle asked her to transfer the land to her brother. Grace would occasionally help her



mother on her farm, but with no land to farm on and reluctant to return to her husband, Grace moved to Kejetia to work as a shanker. Grace believes her uncle took the land from her so that without land to farm on she would return to her husband to avoid the return of the bridewealth; but Grace stated that, "I will never return to my former husband's home."

The stories of Grace, Nica, Lari and many others provide an understanding of women's land and property rights in Talensi society. The stories depict the strong relationship between women's access to land and their status in marriage and use of land. Talensi women's situations point to two main issues. First, women's access to land in agricultural communities is often based on their ability to perform farm labor because in most cases almost all the good lands are under cultivation during farming seasons, as Platteau et al. (2005) and other scholars have argued. Second, while husbands may grant women access to plots of land to cultivate, their rights tend to stop short of control over the land they cultivate. Women may use their husbands' land while they are married; when their husbands die, women may continue to work on their husbands' land until they remarry.

When Talensi women are widowed, the norm is that they marry their deceased husband's brother, a practice called levirate. According to Platteau et al. (2005), levirate is designed both to protect the access to land a woman has acquired through her deceased husband and to protect her deceased husband's lineage lands from possible inheritance claims of stepchildren born outside his bloodline. Even if a woman does not accept levirate, she may continue to farm on her husband's land until she is ready to remarry. Nica's mother refused to remarry into her husband's family. According to Nica, her mother did not want to marry so that she would be able to raise her own children, rather than have more children with a member of her husband's family. Since Nica has two brothers, she believes her father's family allowed her mother access to farm to care

for them. The brothers can request their land when they become teenagers. If that happens, her mother will lose her land to her siblings. Nica's brothers will not ask for their father's land because they do not want to deprive their mother who lives in the village access to farmland.

Broader forces also dictate Talensi women's access to land. Paul Richards (2005) posits that since women's rights to land are indirect, that is, women access land through their relationships with men, broader forces at work in shaping and modifying land tenure systems in general may affect their livelihoods. Richards (2005) argues that the lack of access to land created by transformations may cause major conflicts such as wars. According to Richard, recognition of conflicts that arise about land within marriages informs a new understanding about access to land. He pointed out important roles land plays within marriages, tribes, and nations as well as how societies deprive a sizeable number of people at all levels the opportunity to access land.

### **Women, Mining, and Agricultural Lands**

Scholars interested in land tenure systems in Africa have highlighted gender relations in the organization and transformation of landholding (Yngstrom 2002). Jobs associated with small-scale mining have made it possible for women to make income in the Talensi area, but there has been little research on women and land in the mining communities. Mining activities in the Talensi area are producing a complex transformation, not only for women who work in mining jobs, but also for women who continue to engage in farming activities. I examine this issue in two ways. First, the shift to mining of a large parcel of land that was once considered one of the few fertile lands in the Talensi district is explored. Second, I look at how this shift is affecting agricultural activities for women in the district who remain as farmers.

The vacant land away from the village traditionally used for farming is called "bush."

With the advent of small-scale gold mining activity, many farmlands have been converted to mining in the Talensi district. People talk about going to “bush” to work as miners because before small-scale mining activities started in the district, the land now called “bush” served as reserve farmland for surrounding villages.<sup>27</sup> Talensi people plant crops in the open spaces between houses in their communities. However, when the household size increases and they require more land, they move onto vacant lands further away from their communities to farm.<sup>28</sup> The need for the women to continue to crop at “bush” is more pertinent as the communities expand and people construct new houses. In a community like Yameriga, there has been a rapid expansion in the number of houses. There is a senior high school under construction, which is located less than one mile from the community. The people envisage that some of the high school students who cannot live in the school’s residences will rent houses in the community. Residents are constructing new houses along the main road to the school; I saw five houses under construction along the main road. Sanpan remarked, “My community is becoming business-minded. Many people are constructing houses to wait for the students. Household members who work in large towns fund most of the houses. Very soon, we will have no land to plant food.”

Bush was a very important farmland to surrounding communities because compared to most of the farmlands bush lands were relatively fertile. Most of the communities within five kilometers radius farmed on bush land until the land was converted into small-scale gold mining. Talensi district falls within the Guinea Savannah zone with infrequent rainfall (Benneh et al. 1990). The lack of frequent rainfall in the district makes bush, an area with a stream running through the land, a very conducive place for farming. Bush also boasts of flat lands in an area of dry, rocky highlands, so it was more suitable for women’s use. Men, who are stronger, could work on the highlands using donkeys to plough. Women use hoes to plant and weed, although

the men help them work their land at the beginning of the farming season. Most of the farmers who farmed at bush were women who planted food crops, including corn and millet, to feed their families and to raise income.

With the production of gold on this large parcel of the land referred to as bush, landowners as well as non-landowners who farmed the land were forced to move off the land. Farming activities ceased and the farmers, mostly women, struggled to look for other places to farm. A few of the women, unable to locate alternative lands, have joined the mining industry.

One day, Nica, my host, informed me that “gold had proved” or the miners have discovered gold on the land close to Gbane village. I visited the miners to find out more about *salmabalga* or shallow pit mining. I arrived at the new mining site in the afternoon in a rented car. The land was dry with only a few scattered bushes so we could drive all the way to the site where the people were digging the pits. As we approached the site, I saw almost every digger running away from us. The miners who were already further away stopped digging and stood to watch. I got out of the car to walk to a group of women selling water and bread. One of them recognized me and shouted to everyone to come back. I interviewed some of the women, inquiring about why the miners had run away. Agnes, Nica’s friend who recognized me explained their action:

EK: Why did you run away when you saw me coming?

Agnes: We didn’t know who was in the car. We all thought the police was coming to raid this area. Cars don’t often come here. Besides, the police came here last week to ask us to stop digging.

EK: Why did the police ask you to stop?

Agnes: The police don’t harass us, but this land belongs to a group of farmers who continue to farm on it. Three days ago, one of the farmers asked us not to dig on his land. You see, the landowner demarcated the restricted area with big stones and warned us not to trespass (she pointed to stones used as a boundary on a piece of land close to where we

stood to chat). We do not care about boundaries. When we discover gold on the land, we would encroach on the land. The farmer sent a message to us he would bring the police to arrest us if we continue to mine on his land. When we saw the vehicle, someone shouted, “the police!” and we all started running away. We don’t also have a license to mine.

EK: Why is this farmer threatening to bring the police?

Agnes: Some landowners establish their claim to the land by threatening the users. The landowner has threatened to bring the police to arrest us for various reasons. In case we find gold on the land, he would come forward for negotiation with the miners. The threat he issued is a way of making an early claim to the land. Since we haven’t found any gold, he would like to continue farming on the land until we locate the gold rock. Locating the rock sometimes takes years so the landowner wants to identify himself to us. He also does not want the miners to encroach on his farmland.

Lamba added to Agnes’ point when I mentioned that mining is creating an unsuitable situation for farmers. In support of Agnes’ point on how landowners would convert their farmland into mining activities, Lamba remarked:

Who cares about his farmland when miners use the land for gold mining? No one has come forward to claim ownership for this land (she points to the land she was working on) because we have not found any gold yet. However, someone has demarcated a portion of the land with stones for farming (repeating what Agnes said). This shows that the owner still uses part of the land for farming. As soon as we find gold on the land, the owner will get to know about it and come forward to negotiate with the men for his share. He may even come to join us to mine. The only thing we need to take note is that we don’t have to trespass the boundary he has set to use to plant crops to feed his family while we are in the process of finding out about the amount of gold deposits in the land.

After the government of Ghana took the farmland for mining, some women had to go back to farming using only household lands. Household farms belong to the whole household and the household harvest the crops into a pool for the use of the household. However, women planted personal crops at bush and used the income from the harvest to meet their personal needs. Now that the land has been demarcated for mining, the women are relegated to farm on the poorest sections of the land and on only a small plot from the household land.

Women have less access to fertile lands as mining activities expand. Generally, women do not have enough land in their communities to farm their own crops. In addition, the cost of food production is increasing as farmers continue to work on the same parcel of land. Even though the improvement in technical services provided to farmers might support an increase in yield, the increase that farmers realize from support services do not sufficiently compensate for the loss caused by the reduced fertility of the land available to them. A woman who I knew only as Boger's wife compared food production in the Talensi area when she was a young woman to the present day:

We used to farm in the "bush" area when I first married Boger as a teenager. All the women in Boger's household farmed at bush, so I got a piece of land on which I cropped millet for personal income. The land here was very fertile. Because of the relative fertility of bush lands, we planted in May with the first rain until September when the rainfall season ended. We would plant a variety of crops on "bush" lands and we were able to sell some of the crops after harvest. Nowadays, we cannot grow many crops. We cannot grow the first millet. The soils are so poor. I quit farming and I have learned hairdressing because my brother in Accra sent me money and my husband provided the rest of the money to take care of the cost of apprenticeship. I don't want to work in the mining community. My husband is already a miner and I don't want to join him there. Many of my colleagues cannot afford to learn a trade. They continue to work hard on the land, but they cannot harvest enough food.

Several types of grains are planted on Talensi household farms. The people practice mixed cropping (planting different types of crops on the same piece of land) as well as mixed farming (different kinds of crops are planted on different sections of the land). For those who practice mixed farming, the land is divided into about four plots: one for *karineena* or corn; one for *kazia* or millet; one for *zaa* or white millet; and *naara* or sorghum on the last section. In four weeks, when the crops have germinated, they plant *sofam* or groundnut, *tia* or black-eyed peas, *soma* or bambara beans underneath. Where the land is close to water, people often plant vegetables such as peppers, tomatoes, and cabbages in November, at the beginning of the dry season, in order to have enough food to eat and surplus to store for the difficult dry season when

they cannot plant any crops at all. The land then lies fallow, awaiting the next farming season. The households grow the crops for subsistence, but the women sell any excess to purchase items such as fish and soap for the household.

As farmland becomes scarce and women lose access to land for crop production, most of the younger ones leave their local communities to take mining jobs. Others travel outside the district into urban communities. In the Talensi crop production system, which relies heavily on division of labor, women's labor is critical. Women are responsible for clearing the undergrowth on household fields once or twice during each crop production cycle, depending on the location of the land. In most cases, the women team up to do the weeding. The reduction in women's labor for farming is causing transformations in Talensi social system. One of the transformations is that many crop producers are relying on herbicides to kill weeds before planting and before harvest, but herbicides are expensive. The second phenomenon is that farmers are using schoolchildren to weed the fields, especially on weekends and holidays, which is cheaper than buying herbicides and thus more common now.

**Figure 13: Teenage Schoolchildren Weeding a Contract Farm for Wages**



As an example, Boger pays the children he hires GH¢5.00 per person. The schoolchildren work in teams, lining up in a row as they weed forward (Figure 13). The size of the plot the children weed is based on several factors. They may weed until they are tired or the farm owner recognizes they are tired and tells them to stop. Since they line up and move forward while weeding, it is assumed that all the children do approximately the same amount of work in order to receive the same amount of wages. Any child can join the team at any time, but those who started weeding earlier negotiate with the late comer to continue to weed when the original team takes a rest. The employer pays the children at the end of each workday.

### **Conflicts and Disputes in Women's Farmland and Mining Land**

New land use practices in Africa cause many contradictory issues. For instance, the language used may raise questions that are very difficult to resolve. Many researchers describe transactions for land in indigenous languages, which have many of the characteristics of rentals



and sales (Kishindo 2004; Sjaastad and Cousins 2009). Other scholars discuss how transfers become subject to claims and counter claims (Kevane and Gray 1999; Kuba and Lentz 2006; Peters and Kambewa 2007). The increase in these semi-commodified transfers of land is, in part, fueling the increase in conflict over land across Africa. Transfers that involve land markets (Chimhowu and Woodhouse 2006) can be the most difficult to resolve. However, the issue in these debates are both the short-term and long-term view: Who are the winners and losers in contemporary transfers? According to Peters and Kambewa (2007), it is always important to determine winners and losers in land holding, an assertion they made while examining Malawi land policies. Peters and Kambewa indicated it is important for policy makers to assess “whose security is gaining or losing” in land policies in order to avoid some of the land disputes that emerge in African and to address the problems of the populations negatively affected (Kambewa, 2007:469).

Even though women do not engage in land disputes because they do not usually own land, it is important to understand that, in most cases, disputes affect women. The main dispute the women talked about was in regard to the Gbane chief who currently owns the mining lands. According to some of the women, litigation on the ownership of their vegetable land began as soon as the government identified the land as a prospective mining site. Three chiefs came forward to claim ownership. The local chief died, and one of the two remaining chief’s later withdrew. Therefore, the Gbane chief received the land. A woman called Nemuma, who farmed at bush and who is now working as a shanker shared her experience about the take-over:

EK: How long did you farm at bush?

Nemuma: My husband’s grandparents farmed on this land, his parents farmed on this land, and as soon as I moved into my husband’s village, his mother asked me to join her to farm here.

EK: How do women in your village access land for farming?

Nemuma: We usually get farmland from the chief and the lineage heads. According to my late father in-law, they got the land at bush from the late chief of their village. In fact, some of the members of the chief's family also farmed here. Other women may farm on portions of land belonging to other families. After the chief of our village passed, Gbane chief informed us that he is the owner of the land and that the government has demarcated the land for small-scale gold mining. Later, Gbane chief asked all the farmers to leave the land.

EK: How did Gbane chief take the land from you?

Nemuma: Ei, once the government wants the land, there is nothing we can do. One morning a group of women from my village came to their farm. While they were working on their farm, a government vehicle came with the government officials and the chief to visit the land. The officials told the women about the small-scale mining industry and they advised the women to leave the land after they harvested their vegetables. The news spread throughout the area that we were going to lose our vegetable land.

EK: Did you get any form of compensation?

Nemuma: No, we did not, but we heard the chief has received a lot of money from the government. I know if the late chief had received the compensation, he may have given us some of the money. You see, Gbane chief would not give us any money because he did not give the land to my husband's ancestors and Gbane chief does not know how long we have used this land. My husband's ancestors farmed on this land long ago, but I cannot get a portion of the land to farm on and I cannot negotiate with Gbane chief.

Most of the women affected are now farming only in their villages. When I asked whether the late local chief would have given the women who worked on his land money as compensation, Lariba affirmed that the late chief or his family would have provided compensation if they had won the litigation.

The dynamics of land ownership are changing, and these changes are closely linked to the ideas of first-comers and migrants (Allmand and Parker 2005). Meriga, one of the women from Gbane, hinted that even though the community of the late chief had used the land for many years, the people were really migrants who moved into lands that were "vacant" at the time of their arrival. Meriga also pointed out that with the discovery of gold on the land, the original

owners came forward to get their land and negotiate with the government. Landowners may show no concern for “vacant” land, but as soon as there are benefits attached to the land they come to claim the land. In most cases, this generates a long dispute. For example, the two older sons of the Gbane chief own the land now and oversee the activities of the miners. One of the two sons is a partner with a foreign mining company that provides the expertise and the machinery, and there is a concessionaire linked to the foreign company who manages the company.

### **Women, Mining Land, and Property Rights**

Even though women who previously farmed at Bush face challenges with the establishment of small-scale mining on their land, some of the women who shifted into mining enjoy benefits from the industry. Modest gains from mining jobs provide women with income to meet their everyday needs, including their children’s education; (Chapter 4), but women also receive other benefits. The mining industry provides opportunities for women to buy personal land and to own houses. While women may acquire land from their husband’s or their own households to construct houses, women who work in the mines are able to purchase their own land to construct homes. In the Talensi villages, the traditional land tenure systems continues to be the only means through which members of the households can access land, so women must purchase land from urban communities such as Bolgatanga. Even though few women are able to own titled land, they serve as models for other women who have an interest in owning land, but cannot afford it.

As the houses show in Figure 13, many families and individuals have constructed new, small houses because Talensi households are becoming individualized and smaller. Unlike the large compounds that Meyer Fortes (1949) described in his studies, Talensi families are

acquiring portions of the household land to build their homes and women are a part of this dynamic. Even though women may not own the land, they build their houses on the land and those houses become their personal property. This trend is becoming common even with married women. Ajala, a woman married for about forty years, who came to work in the mines several years ago, explained:

Three years ago, I was able to put a lot of money into my *susu* or rotating credit account working in the mines. At the end of the year, I decided to go back to Yameriga and take some rest. I collected all the *susu*, that is, contributions to the rotating savings scheme. I had accumulated. I had enough money to buy two packets of roofing sheets.<sup>29</sup> I requested for land from my father-in-law. He gave the land to me because I lived in a one-bedroom with my two children.<sup>30</sup> When my oldest son turned a teenager, he no longer wanted to share my room so he slept with his cousins in the compound. I needed a two-bedroom house so that my children would sleep in one room. The lineage head gave me a plot of land and I cleared it to notify the other household members about the exchange. A few weeks after I returned to Kejetia, the first of the two cave-ins for that year occurred and the mining work slowed down so I went back to my village. With the little savings I made on the trip, I organized my friends to help me construct my house.<sup>31</sup> I used part of my money to buy *pito* (locally brewed beer) for the women who came to help me build the wall of my house. We spend two weeks building the walls. I made sure I roofed my house before going back to the mines so that the rain would not wash the walls away. Back in the mines, I made more savings to spend on fixing the doors and windows. When I completed the building, my friends helped me to plaster the house.

Ajala gave this proud narrative to show one way through which women own personal property. Ajala's sense of pride stems from the fact that she recognizes that she is the sole owner of the house.

Talensi women in the villages cannot own the houses they build. Among the Talensi, when a young man marries, he constructs his home within the compound of the household. The new wife or the mother of the young man organizes friends to build the walls of the mud house for expansion. The young man is responsible for ensuring that the house has a roof. Despite the resources the women contribute into constructing the house, men own the house, partly because they build the houses on their household land, but also because they buy the material for roofing.

Men claim ownership of the houses because they argue that “roofing a house requires money to pay for the straw or for the sheets.” To avoid her husband’s claim to her house, Ajala made sure she roofed her house from her own savings. As soon as she completed building her house, Ajala’s two children moved into one of the rooms. Ajala explains:

Every member of my husband’s household knows that I own this house. Even if my marriage dissolves, I will continue to live in this house with my children. Because I own this house, I also make decisions on how I use the rooms. My oldest son moved into one of the rooms as soon as the house was complete. He is planning to marry soon. He mentioned that he will continue to live in my house with his wife until he is able to build his own house.

It is notable that women’s rights to access land for houses and for farming may differ.

Reiterating a previous point, spaces between houses are very important to Talensi households, because they farm on these spaces and move onto lands further away only when they require additional land. Ajala’s success in getting land for constructing her house might have been because houses require only a small plot of land compared to land for farming.<sup>32</sup> Ajala’s ownership, however, is tenuous.

Whereas I have the right to make decisions now, the household can influence my inheritance decisions. I got the land from the household so they may continue to influence my inheritance decision. The head of the household may not ask my son to leave the house, but he may disapprove of my daughter’s husband joining her life and ask her to go in her husband’s house.

Ajala’s statement implies that women who build their houses on household land enjoy ownership rights while they live, but their rights are limited concerning inheritance. Since men make major decisions for the lineage, they continue to enjoy that privilege. A daughter’s inheritance faces some challenges, especially when she marries. Patrilocality is strongly encouraged among the Talensi, and it is seen as unacceptable for a man to move into his wife’s home.

Other women like Nica, Abena, and Safia, prefer to construct houses on land in urban centers like Bolgatanga where they receive the title of the land as well as ownership. Some of the women in the mines save large amounts of money over a long period. Even though Nica has a house in Gorigo, her hometown, she has also purchased a plot of land she is developing into residential accommodation in Bolgatanga. Nica constructed a house outside her local community because, as she explains, “I want to build and own my house.” For Abena, purchasing a plot of land outside the region gives her the autonomy she wanted. She is building her eight-bedroom house for her oldest son from her first marriage.

Abena: I have three sons, but my first son is from my first marriage. My husband has three houses at Konongo. He informed me that he would give one of the houses to my two sons and another house to my co-wife as inheritance. He would give the third house to his oldest son as inheritance. You know, that oldest son is the son of my co-wife. This means while his sons get to own their houses inherited from their father, my oldest son gets no inheritance. After the information, I immediately started to build my own house so that my first son would also inherit it.

EK: Would it be possible for sons to inherit their mothers’ houses in the villages the same way they would outside the village?

Abena: Sons can inherit from their mothers in the village as well as outside the village so long as that mother owns the property. In the village, we continue to access land through customary land tenure. This means a woman can only build on the household land given to her by the leader of the household. Even though the woman would own the house, the household head may attempt to influence the woman’s decisions. This can generate into a feud so I believe women should purchase their own land outside the community and build their houses to ensure non-interference from the household.

EK: Considering the incomes women get in mining jobs, is it feasible for them to purchase land for houses?

Abena: I must confess, I have spent the last ten years of my life investing in my building, and I still yet to complete the finishing. Rob (a concessionaire) is my uncle and he encourages me to work hard, helped me to open a bank account, and to get a loan from the rural bank. My husband takes care of his sons and that allows me to save part of my income. Many of the women here are responsible for taking care of their children. Women who have to take care of their children may not be able to save enough money, even if they would want to build their own houses.

As Abena's story illustrates, when women move out of their local communities to purchase land to construct houses they do so partly for the purpose of inheritance. Women want to break the traditional cycle of inheritance and leave something for their children. Nica has a daughter who is her youngest child. Nica explains that "My daughter would inherit my house in Bolgatanga." Allowing daughters to inherit from their mothers is a total transformation of the Talensi inheritance system. This is possible because of the jobs available to women in the small-scale gold mining industry.

### **Contractual Arrangements in the Mining Industry: Implications for Women**

In the Talensi mining industry, many contractual arrangements for the share of gold or the rock ore influence what the miners receive as wages. The contractual arrangements in the mining industry exemplify the existing arrangements among landowners and crop producers in Ghana. The dominant share arrangement for farm produce was one third for the laborers; one third for the plantation owner; and one third for the landlord. As land becomes scarcer, landowners are dictating the divisions. In recent times, this thirds-based sharing, called *abusa*, is being replaced by division into half shares or *abunu*, in which the landlord commands a half share. Amanor and Diderutuah (2001) point out that the share arrangements are always complex as it is usually difficult to figure out what is being shared, that is, whether it is the land or the produce. In the mining industry, the employer may negotiate a contract with the landowner or the chief.

These complex arrangements between landowners and farmers also dominate the Talensi mining organization and take many forms (see Chapter 3). Even though the share arrangements do not directly impact the women, the arrangements made between the employers and the male

workers affect the quantity of load women receive. Men who do not feel cheated in these arrangements provide better wages for the women, but the opposite is also true.

Egya, one of the *locoboys* (men who carry rock ore out of the mining pit), described how the land for the pits is so central to these contractual arrangements:

EK: How many *ghettos* (work teams) do you belong?

Egya: I belong to one *ghetto*.

EK: How do you select which ghetto to join?

Egya: I selected my ghetto based on preference. I wanted to work for my ghetto owner who doubles as a concessionaire. I wanted to work in a ghetto where I was sure of getting regular jobs. Since my employer is a concessionaire and a ghetto owner, he has several pits I can work in. I have worked with him since I came to this community about five years ago. Some of the workers may select their employers based on other reasons such as the employer's ability to make better contractual arrangements with them. My ghetto does not have a good contract with the workers, but I have always had work to do when I started working with him.

EK: What are some of the share arrangements employers make with their workers?

Egya: The most common share arrangement in our mining communities is the division three. These share arrangements do not favor us (the ghetto or workers). I work with about 27 workers and we receive only one third of the rock ore.

EK: Why do you not negotiate to increase your share?

Egya: Employers would not agree to have any negotiations with workers. They always tell their workers that they only negotiate with the landowners. Even though concessionaires get their land from the government of Ghana through the Minerals Commission, in the communities the chiefs control the work we do. When they complain to the Minerals Commission to revoke the worker's license, the commission would agree to do so.

Egya indicated that landowners make major decisions about share arrangements that affect all the workers in the industry. Even though small-scale mining is an informal economy, streamlining and legitimizing contractual agreements between the concessionaires, chiefs, and



male workers as well as between male and female workers would improve the industry (Amanor and Dideratuah 2001).

### **Conclusion: Winners or Losers of Land and Property Rights**

The process of access to land and property rights is complex in Ghana as well as in many other African countries. Access, ownership, control, and transfer of land interconnect and impact women's rights to land and property. Many of the examples presented in this chapter indicate the winners and losers in land and property rights with the establishment of the small-scale gold mining industry. This chapter draws attention to the gains brought into the lives of some of the Talensi women, especially those who have been able to purchase land to build houses or whose lineage heads have released land to them. However, women in the Talensi mining communities, both miners and farmers, face challenges. Some of the women have abandoned farming because of scarcity of land, fragmentation of landholdings, and poor soil, while women who work in the mines cannot own land or mining pits.

Land titling gives women access to land and control over the houses they may build. This is a groundbreaking dynamic for Talensi women who formerly did not have any control over land and property; however, women who build on household land continue to have limited control over their property. Talensi women's situation sheds light on the conflicts between access and control over land because access to a resource does not necessarily mean control. According to Lastaria-Cornhiel and Garcia-Frias (2005), control of resources means an individual or group has command over that resource and over the benefits that derive from the resource. They argue that a right to control a resource is usually based on some form of ownership, while access to resources means the permission to use or possibility of using that resource for carrying out particular activities. Talensi women miners, through their capacity to buy land and build houses,

are able to access land and property as well as control their land and houses. Both the purchase of land and the construction of houses by women are therefore, changing the dynamics of land and property for women. Women miners who buy land and build houses are integrating access and control through their practices. In addition, women who buy land and build houses are influencing the inheritance system as well, because their children, especially daughters, can now inherit from them. In the Talensi social organization, it is not only difficult, if not impossible, for women to own property, but also women cannot inherit property. This new dynamic will be a driving force in a major transformation to the Talensi social organization.

In spite of these achievements, other Talensi women face challenges with the establishment of the small-scale gold mining industry. Intensified competition for land in the Talensi mining communities cannot be overlooked. The government's demarcation of 72 square kilometers of land for small-scale gold mining has greatly reduced the space available for farming. With the establishment of the small-scale mining industry, many stakeholders including the Minerals Commission, chiefs, landowners, concessionaires, sponsors and resident both inside and outside the mining community now make claims to Talensi lands through the mining industry. These players come into mining activities with different levels of power and interests, creating a complex dynamic for land access and ownership. Women tend to be the least beneficiaries to the rewards of the mining industry because they cannot work in deep mining pits or own mining land, have no control over mining land, and cannot participate in negotiations or decisions concerning the land.

Because some women are mining and others still farm, a new dynamic is emerging that creates disparities among women. Even though scholarly studies mention disparities among the privileged and the less privileged in access to land that usually concern men, these studies not

only overlook gender disparities, but also disparities between women who work in the mines and those who farm (Ubink 2008). In the case of some of the miners such as Nica, Ajala, and Abena, they show that women are using their work as miners to access land and property rights. On the other hand, women who farm in the area are facing poorer yields or losing their farmlands to mining activities. There is a need for scholars to recognize this tension between women's efforts in the mines and on the farms.

Unfortunately, the programs and policies the government has introduced to help women access resources may affect women differently. It is evident that many of the women in the mining industry have made gains by acquiring land and constructing their own houses. However, female farmers continue to face challenges with access and claims to land. The goals of policies regarding the mining industry should be to improve the benefits that go to all the women. Women who continue to farm should receive better access to land and extension services to improve their farming practices for better yield. This chapter opens up a new dimension in understanding land and property rights for researchers interested in women's experiences and how they are affected by national programs and policies

## CONCLUSION

### TALENSI WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN SMALL-SCALE GOLD MINING ACTIVITIES

Small-scale gold mining activity is providing social and economic opportunities for women in rural communities in Ghana, but they still encounter constraints in their work. Women are contesting some of the constraints they face and in the process are transforming the customary systems that have shaped their lives. Although prior studies have identified problems with the work organization of the small-scale mining industry, these studies have focused on male-dominated activities (Hilson 2012) and have not adequately addressed the problems of the rapidly increasing number of women who engage in various roles in the mining communities. For example, Sadia Banchirigah (2008) found that women represent 50 percent of the workforce in the mining communities. Hinton et al. (2003) argued that although women contribute to the mining industry in many ways, their contributions have often been overlooked in research and policy. In the Talensi small-scale gold mining activities, addressing issues that affect women could help improve their lives, especially those who work as laborers for wages. Based on Banchirigah's (2008) estimate, 20 percent of the women who work in the Talensi mining industry are directly involved in gold production activities, while the remaining women provide indirect services. In the Talensi mines, the second category of women engages in activities such as production and sales of *pito* (local beer), food vending, and laundry services.

I have focused my research and scholarship on exploring the everyday experiences of women involved directly in gold production in the male-dominated small-scale gold mining

activities in Ghana. I demonstrate that the intersection between women's socio-economic roles and practices and claims to mining pits are the major overarching issues. The investigation into the intersection between women's socio-economic roles in the mining activities, their rights to mining resources (income, land, mining pits, and houses), and their responses to their everyday experiences help to explain how these socio-economic roles produce both opportunities and challenges for the women.

Generally, studies on small-scale mining activities show that men work in the underground mining pits, but women do not; however, recent studies have shown that women in Zimbabwe are breaking this barrier (IRIN News 2013). The Zimbabwean women's groups who acquire and work in deep underground mining pits illustrates some of the shifts women are making in the mining industry. According to Elizabeth Hove and James Hlongwana (2015), Zimbabwean women who work underground make tremendous benefits for their work. For example, Hove and Hlongwana (2015) estimate that women who work in underground pits make about \$2,500 per month, about four times the average monthly income of Talensi women.<sup>33</sup> Even though the comparison may be misleading because of the very small number of women whose wages were analyzed in this research, the average income for women who work in deep pits in Zimbabwe calls for attention into income analysis on the financial benefit for working in deep pits. Unfortunately, in the Talensi mines, this breakthrough for women does not appear to be forthcoming.

Although the Zimbabwean breakthrough is not being seen in other parts of Africa, it is an important path for breaking down the mythical barriers that prevent women from working in mining pits. What makes the organization of the Talensi mining industry interesting is that the

mining activities show how Talensi prohibitions for women's socio-economic roles are impacted by the larger context of the social organization of the society.

The work organization of the Talensi mining industry is made up of tasks that take place above ground and those that take place underground. The above ground tasks comprise the two main tasks for women, shanking or shifting crushed rocks and *salmabalga* or shallow pit mining. Some above ground roles are done by men, including *kaimen* or men who pound rocks, but men do all the jobs that take place underground. These workers include moyermen or drillers, locoboys or workers who carry the rocks aboveground, and chisellers.

### **The Value of Ethnography in Social Science and Social Work Research**

The interconnection between anthropology and social work is fundamental in addressing women's socio-economic roles and practices, land and property rights, and women-initiated activities in research and policy advocacy. While the anthropological perspective enhances the understanding of gender relationships, claims and access to land, and new meaning-making for practices such as "stealing," the social work lens identifies some of the social injustices and suggests policies to support women in the mining activities.

As a discipline, social work is concerned with challenges and benefits people encounter in their everyday lives and the coping strategies and mechanisms they employ to deal with their situation. Social work also advocates for policies and programs geared towards providing opportunities for improving the welfare of people (Sossou 2006). This research facilitates identifying programs and policies that could positively influence people and improve their conditions in the Talensi mining district, using anthropological approaches.

Combining anthropology and social work in this research makes a valuable contribution to both disciplines. This research throws light on activities of women in Ghana useful for

international social work, which is still a young discipline. It also contributes to applied anthropology, also a young discipline in Ghana, providing evidence for policies that could improve the lives of women, including those in the field site in the Talensi district. According to Block (2012), long-term fieldwork enables the ethnographer to be fully immersed into the community and gain a deeper understanding of the life and experiences of the people he/she studies to recommend interventions and policy. During my 12 months fieldwork, I used ethnographic research methods to acquire insights into the influence of gender relationships on women's work in the Talensi small-scale gold mining industry. Ethnographic research findings have been used as part of a body of knowledge drawn on to inform policy (Becker and Bryan 2004), providing a worldview of the social meanings of women's lives.

For my ethnographic fieldwork, I used a variety of approaches including participant observation, semi-structured interviews, writing extensive field notes, and immersion into the group's activities to inquire about women's and others' expectations regarding women's work as miners (Bernard 2011). The isolated use of ethnographic methods such as semi-structured interviews or participant observation alone can produce decontextualized knowledge (Briggs 1986). This research contributes to context-specific research providing detailed, rich, and in-depth knowledge about the social meanings and behaviors of the miners within their communities as well as a broader understanding of the unique insights ethnographic research can provide to inform policy (Becker and Bryman 2004).

### **Implications of Research for Social Work**

Social work has an interest in improving the wellbeing of people, placing importance on the social and cultural contexts of disadvantaged populations; and making social justice issues important to social work. In fact, social justice is one of the core values in the social work code

of ethics (NASW 2008). Glisson et al. (2012), in designing tools for community assessment in macro practice, argue that communities built on principles of justice provide their members with opportunities to fully participate in and share the benefits within the community in a fair and equitable manner. However, Glisson et al. (2012) indicate that many disparities continue to be seen in different forms in many organizations that are also evident in the Talensi mining industry. Promoting the wellbeing of women involved in gold production in the Talensi mining industry requires exploring social justice issues and highlighting the challenges women encounter to suggest possible policy remedies.

Dealing with social justice issues is necessary in every community. The mining communities exist to benefit the individuals within them, but in most cases, only some benefit, with others being neglected or even exploited. This research provides evidence of disparities in Talensi mining activities. The fact that women are denied opportunities to engage in their roles of choice stands out as one of the main forms of injustice in the mining industry because it integrates with other practices to disadvantage women. For example, disparities in gender roles produce lower wages and lack of access to mining pits for women; unless the difference in gender roles is addressed, women will continue to experience these disadvantages.

In spite of the importance of gender roles, social workers have not adequately addressed them. Problems with gender roles are two-pronged—they affect the people social workers seek to support and the social workers themselves. Cote (2013), whose study concerns the importance of gender roles and expectations for social workers, argues that the overwhelming numerical dominance of women in the profession has led to gender biases exhibited as advantages for men



in employment and lower salaries and status for women. In spite of this, social work research pays little attention to the influence of gender roles and expectations.<sup>13</sup>

The emphasis this dissertation places on gender roles in the mining industry is in part a response to the call for social workers to address gender roles as a core social justice issue. The Talensi mining industry reveals the significance of gender roles in women's lives and shows how they contribute to differential wages and ownership of mining pit. In fact, mining activities are organized along gender lines. Understanding gender roles within the social and cultural context of a population facilitates the process of improving their wellbeing.

In addition to recognizing gender roles, the effort women make to improve their lives shows women's determination. In Ghana, women have attempted to improve their lives by organizing savings and credit schemes. This research demonstrates how these activities have shaped women's lives and helped some of them to acquire personal land and property. Women's capacity to purchase land and build houses has consequences for their general wellbeing. According to Tsikata and Whitehead (2003), land and houses provide women with the ability to access loans and other resources using their land and houses as collateral.

### **Implications of Research to Anthropology**

This dissertation provides fundamental contributions to conceptual approaches to the anthropological literature on gender, crime, land claims, and property rights. The arguments

---

<sup>13</sup> In another study, Hadass Goldblatt and Eli Buchbinder (2003) examined partner violence in Jewish communities and argue that understanding gender roles is essential in both family organization and the dynamics of intervention in these communities. They added that when social workers recognize the significance of gender roles, they are in a better position to help abused women. Goldblatt and Buchbinder assert that female social workers are empowered when they recognize how gender roles can make them submissive. Goldblatt and Buchbinder's study shows the influence of gender roles on the lives of the disadvantaged populations.

emerging from this research contribute to an anthropological understanding of the interactions between women working in the mining environment, their roles and expectations in the industry, and their ability to access resources such as land within this environment. The framework of this research moves these anthropological concepts forward and shows the interconnections among them.

### **Women's Land Claims and Property Rights**

Throughout history, land in Ghana has been linked to lineage heads, who in most cases are men. The empirical evidence shows that the relationship between women and land is complex, as land continues to play a critical role in the lives of women in Ghana and elsewhere. It is important for researchers to turn their attention to understanding the relationship between women and land. Ghana's initiative to convert large parcels of land in rural communities for small-scale mining as well as the inhabitants' own desire to encroach on farmland for "illegal" mining activities is generating new land issues in rural communities. Illegal mining, known as "galamsey," a term coined from "gather and sell," is expanding rapidly, especially since jobs are becoming more difficult to find. In addition, foreigners from China are also becoming involved in the mining activities. These measures have led to a shortage of farmland in the Talensi district, which generally increases conflict and competition (Amanor and Diderutuah 2001). Along with mining, farmers have to deal with the rapid construction of houses. Problems with farmland in the Talensi area overburden women more than men, since women are responsible for providing family meals. Bukh (1979) argues that the burden to provide food in difficult situations takes all the time and attention of Ghanaian women so that they are unable to engage in other activities such as farm extension services, which could teach them best farming practices. For example, continuing to use the same piece of land for the same type of crop leads to poor soil. Farmers

also face issues of land fragmentation (Mortimore and Harris 2005). Moreover, mining is causing serious degradation to the land, further reducing its productive capacity. Women in the mines complained about having lower yields from their farms, and some pointed out they can no longer depend on farming to feed their families sufficiently. The Talensi district is faced with the problem of low food production. This research demonstrates the tensions between farming and mining and shows how mining activities affect women. As mining activities expand, the adverse effect produces unfavorable conditions for farming activities. There is a need for more investigation and policies to support women.

On the other hand, the research shows how some women are able to make income from their activities in the mining industry and improve their lives. Despite the adverse implications for women, the benefits for women in the industry is well-appreciated. For women who have previously not engaged in work other than on household farms, the mining industry provides them with the opportunity to buy land and own homes. Talensi women's attempts to purchase land and property have ramifications for land tenure systems currently patrilineal.

### **Women and Informal Economies**

Informal economies have been expanding in many developing countries. Informal economies facilitate rapid expansion of low-skill jobs and promote the involvement of women (Chant and Pedwell 2008; Chen et al. 2006). The pervasiveness of informal economies has drawn the attention of scholars. While it is important to look at the benefits of informal economies, it is also important to look at the problems they create. Some conservative scholars have argued for regulating informal economies to increase the benefits for the workers (de Soto 2000); while others have called for regulating some sectors or activities of the informal economy (Crowell 2003, cited in Chen 2007:10). However, Kate Meagher (2010) argues that even when

regulated, governments may not provide adequate support for the activities of the new economies; she calls for studies to identify the root causes and factors of problems in informal economic activities. Meagher emphasizes that the gendered dimension of the informal economy is a dynamic of both local and global importance.

Developmental organizations focus on informal economies because of the importance of associated employment issues. According to Chant and Pedwell (2008), the interest of the International Labor Organization (ILO) and other agencies in the informal economy has led researchers to seek to identify the constraints that affect the lives of the participants in the economy. The extensive research that has been conducted notes that women remain concentrated in “invisible” areas of informal economies, such as domestic labor piece-rate homework and assistance in small family enterprises (Chant and Pedwell 2008:11). The gendered organization of the mining activities produces “invisible” women. Talensi women miners can be termed invisible, even though they are all over the mining communities, looking for work, carrying rocks, milling rocks, and shanking, activities that constitute the lowest tier of the hierarchy of work. Paradoxically, while women are seen everywhere participating in the everyday production activities, they remain in the “invisible” components of the mining activities because of the lower values of women’s activities as well as biases of researchers toward women.

The lack of improvement for women associated with the gendered work organization of informal economies has generated discussions in development circles. Chant and Padwell (2008) argue that even though ILO, governments, and other international agencies have addressed gender and informal economies, they have focused on skills and market access, entrepreneurship, and macroeconomic policy not gender roles.

This dissertation reinforces the importance of an investigation into the gendered organization of the small-scale mining industry by showing that gender roles are a major determinant of the value and importance of specific jobs in the Talensi mining industry. The gendered structure of the informal economy, Meagher (2010) emphasizes, produces constraints that structure markets and patterns of resources. According to Meagher, the “invisibility” that the gendered structure of informal economies creates traps women in poverty. In the Talensi mining industry, this invisibility may be reflected in the lack of value or importance given to women’s work, with tasks assigned based on their links to domestic activities, although the miners also consider other factors such as risk. The higher the job is in importance, the more lucrative it is. The invisibility of Talensi women’s contributions to the informal mining economy may lead to what has been referred to as “survivalist” rather than “growth” tendencies (Chen et al. 2006: 2137). This means that informal economies provide opportunities for women to survive, rather than cause major improvements in the lives of women. The invisibility of the women also lies in the fact that they escape research and policy. Women’s activities in the mining communities are linked to that of men. The general perception is that when men are supported, it will boost the mining industry and women will get more jobs for improved lives. According to the Minerals Commission, there is no immediate plan by the government of Ghana to support women’s activities. Currently the government is promoting the introduction of retorts, equipment, and financial services, all of which benefit men. Moving forward, researchers should pay attention to women’s activities in informal economies to make them visible, especially those in which men dominate, in order to support women.

## **Implications of the Research for Ghana and West Africa**

This research draws attention to the tensions based on the “invisibility” of women as active participants in the Ghanaian small-scale mining economy and the limiting influence of customary ideologies for women. The hardworking women in Ghana contribute to socio-economic activities as entrepreneurs or as wage laborers and help keep the economy moving. Many of the women described in this research as well as in large market centers are actively engaging in socio-economic activities to provide the basic needs of their families, while simultaneously contributing to Ghana’s local and export trade. However, many studies done on Ghanaian women have focused on large-scale, self-employed, entrepreneurial activities of women, leaving out the small-scale activities that form the bulk of women’s socio-economic activities in rural Ghana and West Africa. Women in small businesses work hard to make a living, like my mother did to turn her “table-top” business into a grocery shop that enabled her to feed and educate her children. This research shifts attention to the struggles of women in wage labor who work alongside men and whose ability to improve their lives is connected to male-dominated activities.

In addition, this dissertation demonstrates the shifting of women’s socio-economic roles through the lens of the small-scale gold mining industry. Few income-earning opportunities are available for women in rural Ghana, but women engage in whatever is available to accumulate wealth outside their households. Some use this money to purchase land and property, which helps women bridge the gaps in gender relationships and transform the customary systems that have shaped their lives. Socio-economic activities have the tendency to change the demographic conditions of households in rural communities. Women’s participation in activities offered in “transitional” socio-economic spaces such as small-scale mining industry limit their household

roles such as childcare; however, Talensi women visit the children they leave behind in the villages and continue to be involved in household crop planting.

This research illuminates the link between the social organization of Ghanaian rural societies and the emerging economic activities in the area and argues that control of the household is taking on new forms. The lineages and households continue to have a significant influence on women even in areas where women are shifting from farming to activities that provide opportunities to earn an income. This link between Ghanaian lineages and income-earning activities of informal economies should receive more attention. Only then can the importance of income-earning opportunities for rural women be better understood so that effective interventions and policies can be designed to improve the lives of women.

### **Anthropology of the Native: A Ghanaian Woman Researcher in Ghana**

As an African woman born and raised in Ghana, I began my fieldwork with mixed feelings. On the one hand, Ghana is my country of birth and I was happy to study an issue that I am passionate to promote in the future. On the other hand, I was skeptical about whether I would be able to distance myself and study women objectively. Anthropologists have confronted the dichotomy between “native” versus “foreign” and have used the term "decolonizing" anthropology to blur the differences between the native and foreign anthropologist (Tedlock 2013). Barbara Tedlock (2013) used earlier explanations of anthropological studies conducted in or near the anthropologists' places of birth to argue that no anthropologist is “native” because of the multiple identities they assume in the field. In addition, Kirin Nayaran's (1993) essay called for a reorientation of polarized anthropological views of “native” and “foreign.”

Regardless, I was studying my own people. During my fieldwork, the women shared information with me, but sometimes I had to draw the line between what information I was

interested in gathering and what I wanted to avoid. I had to remind the women regularly that I had come to collect data for my research. For example, some of the women I was meeting for the first time wanted to know more about my family, why I did not wear the local cloth, and carried a bottle of water with me all the time. Any attempt to explain would usually lead to long conversations about my personal life. I tried very hard to shorten these conversations, but answering these questions eased interactions; this ease of interaction makes considering the possibility of reflexivity important because of my position as an educated woman and a researcher with more knowledge and power.

In order to avoid imposing my ideas on the women, I made sure that I minimized my personal biases so that the voices of the women could be heard. Approaching this project with prior experience as not only a Ghanaian woman, but also as someone who has worked for over 15 years with groups of women in rural Ghana encouraged me to delve deeper into the situation of the women. I provided the women with the space to share their experiences in the mining industry. I distanced myself from my own knowledge and experiences as a Ghanaian. Since I had little knowledge of the organization of small-scale mining activities and patrilineages, I was able to learn about women's roles in male-dominated spaces.

This research adds to the literature on gender studies of African "native" women writing about their people. Tedlock (2013) points out that "native anthropologists" can bridge the relation between knowledge and power by advocating for policies that support their and other "native" communities. To bridge the gap between my position of power and that of the women, I began to advocate for them. I informed them about some of the programs that target women in the district, which I had learned about during an interview with the District Planner. For example, the District Planner told me about a funding package for which the District Assembly



offered grants to female household representatives, but few women applied for the funds and some who applied did not meet the selection criteria; part of the money was not used and was returned to the donor. None of the female miners I talked to had any knowledge about the program. I realized there was a poor information flow among the miners, especially women, the District Assembly, and the Minerals Commission. The women did not know about most of the gender-specific programs available in the district. The District Planner could not visit the mining communities with me, but she promised to visit in the future. I also met with the Regional Director of the Minerals Commission to discuss the contributions women make to the mining industry and requested that the women be represented on the mining committees.

The information the women in the mining industry provided helped me learn about their situation beyond my personal knowledge and experience. As a researcher, I gained expert knowledge about women's lives in Ghana and other West African countries. This research updates information on gender roles from the unique perspective of a woman, and I encourage other African female scholars to do the same. The work with the women in the mining industry along with the conversations and interviews I had with policy makers and the dissemination of the final report will provide evidence to inform policies to improve the lives of women.

### **Empirical Findings to Guide the Design and Development of Policy**

The empirical findings of this research show that policies should promote gender-specific programs that target stereotyped gender roles to improve women's lives. In many cases, gendered role differences in gold production were justified using social and cultural explanations and social pressure. During the fieldwork, women's desire to work in the same jobs as men surfaced many times in the conversations and interviews. However, even though women complained about their roles, they had no avenues through which to seek support because the

community and mining committee leaders are men. According to Whitehead and Tsikata (2003), policies should provide women with legitimate, women-friendly avenues to resolving issues that disadvantage them; this is not the case in the Talensi mining communities

It is important for women to be informed about the many groups and voices advocating for them and programs available that could bridge the gender gap and help women in land disputes. The women need to be encouraged to question long-standing beliefs that promote men's activities, but they need to be aware of the changes policies can bring about and be ready to accept them. Thus, interventions for raising awareness in the changes would be helpful to the women.

There should be policies that support small-scale economies, especially those in which women play active roles. Many small-scale economies are emerging in agriculture, commerce, and production in sub-Saharan African countries that are transforming the demographics of African countries and these economies should be analyzed and evaluated, to inform policy interventions. This research demonstrates that classic idealized notions of corporate economic life that limit women to home-based economic activities are out of date given women's active involvement in major economic activities even in rural areas. Earlier perceptions about patrilineal African social organizations within which men "owned the working power of women and women stay under men's authority," have also become ideas of the past (Fortes 1949:101). Women are moving into individualized jobs to earn personal income. Patterns of economic life have become flexible, with household members moving between communities and between jobs.

This research also demonstrates an underlying empirical base for policy that supports women's initiatives. One of the major programs the Talensi women have initiated is the *susu*, a savings and credit program that most Ghanaian women are involved in. Although there have

been many studies on microfinance organizations, it is important that women-initiated and women-operated organizations receive more attention, rather than the institutionally operated and managed programs more commonly studied. The structure, organization, benefits, and challenges of the locally initiated programs managed by women could be studied to help improve women's lives, especially since many of the institutionalized programs have not adequately benefited women (Gueyié et al. 2013; Jashim Uddin 2015).

### **Future Research: Beyond Kejetia and the Small-scale Gold Mining Industry**

The major findings of this research may be transferable to other small-scale socio-economic activities of women in Ghana and other small-scale mining camps in Ghana and West Africa. There are four main criteria for qualitative research: credibility or internal validity; dependability or reliability; confirmability or objectivity; and transferability or external validity (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Transferability refers to whether a set of findings is relevant to settings other than the one in which the research was conducted (Lincoln and Guba 1985). According to Becker and Bryman (2004), this means that the research findings should be generalizable or hold up in other settings. This dissertation research sought to provide an in-depth view of women's experiences in Talensi; however, the findings of this research have both local and broader transferability to other informal economies; women's economies; and "transitional" economic activities.

Studies conducted in other parts of Ghana and beyond should identify issues concerning the social implications of gender relationships, gender roles, access to resources, and the importance of advancing policies to improve the lives and wellbeing of the workforce, especially women. The empirical findings from this study will provide the fundamental understanding

necessary to those interested in working in West African communities where mining activities are expanding at a very fast rate.

This dissertation focuses on the participation of women in the small-scale gold mining industry in Ghana and provides a rich account of Talensi women's everyday experiences and practices in their social context. Although deep-seated social and cultural factors influence gender roles and women's access to mining resources at a particular space and in time, the analysis into the everyday experiences of women in terms of gender roles and access to resources goes beyond the Talensi small-scale mining industry. Small-scale mining activities take place all over Ghana, especially in the southern part of the country, and many involve women. This research concerns the mining of a precious metal, gold, but scholars need to consider other forms of mining, such as salt. The socio-economic roles of women in all forms of mining can contribute to an umbrella policy to support the activities of women.

Another issue for future research is investigation into the involvement of foreign nationals from China in small-scale gold mining activities in Ghana, and the implications of these emerging activities on women's socio-economic activities in the industry. Most of the activities of these foreigners are illegal, but there are legal ones. For example, according to the Regional Director of the Minerals Commission, the "Chinese" gold mine in Obuasi near Kejetia area was legally acquired; but I found out about other companies that are taking place further from the Kejetia mining communities that the people doubted were operating legally. The activities of these foreign miners can be studied to ascertain the implication of their activities on local miners, especially women.

There are many illegal mining activities all over Ghana, and women are involved in these activities as well. Attention needs to be given to women's roles in this type of mining. The police

pursue the workers in illegal mining activities; they constantly relocate to other areas and come back when the police stop arresting people. Future research can investigate women's roles in these activities and how the women deal with the conditions of these industries.

There is also a need for future investigation into informal economies in Ghana. There is a variety of informal activities including artisans involved in dressmaking and hair braiding and wage laborers such as *kayayoo* or head porters, that is, workers found in marketing centers carrying shoppers' goods from one point to another. All of the informal activities involve both women and men. As Meagher (2010) argues and this research confirms, the gendered organization of the informal economy contributes to how women benefit from their activities. As more women and men are working in informal economies, future research should shift the analytical lens to the social organization of these economies. Research that focuses on the gendered organization of informal economies is particularly important because of the limited study of this topic. To date, informal economies have been unable to improve the lives of women, although there are exceptions for some of the women in the small-scale gold mining industry (Chant and Pedwell 2008; Chen et al. 2006; Meagher 2007).

I have explored Talensi women's participation in the small-scale gold mining industry, looking at the social, economic, and cultural organization of the industry in order to understand resource allocation and distribution, gender roles, the benefits and challenges women face as they work in the industry, and the social mechanisms and strategic practices available to women. I started this project with little knowledge of gender differences in the work organization and the coping strategies of the women. As the research advanced, it became clear that there is a close link between the social organization of the Talensi households and the activities within the mining industry, especially concerning gender roles. I hope these issues will receive more

attention in subsequent research to inform the design of policies to improve the mining industry; determine the social, economic and cultural influences of the social organization; and pursue equitable benefits for males and females. It is also my hope that this research will kindle renewed interests in women's lives, especially rural women in Africa whose activities are sometimes overlooked. Finally, it is my sincere hope that the social context in which this research was conducted, the men and women of the Talensi mining industry, will receive research and policy attention so that their hard work in this difficult environment will be rewarded.

## REFERENCES

- Acharya, Dev R., Jacqueline Bell, Padam Simkhada, Edwin R van Teijlingen, and Pramod Remi.  
2010 Women's autonomy in household decision-making: A demographic study in Nepal. *Reproductive Health* 7(15): 2-12.
- Adams Alayne, Dominique Simon, and Sangeetha Madhava  
2004 Women's Social Support Network in Contraceptive Use in Mali. In Purkayastha Bandana and Mangala Subramaniam, eds. *The Power of Women in Informal Networks: Lessons in Social Change in South Asia and West Africa*.
- Adato, Michelle, Michael R. Carter, and Julian May  
2006 Exploring Poverty Traps and Social Exclusion in South Africa using Qualitative and Quantitative Data. *The Journal of Development Studies* 42(2): 226-247.
- Akapule, Samuel  
2017. The Upper East region: A hub of investment opportunities. *Ghana Web*, February 26. <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/The-Upper-East-Region-the-hub-of-investment-opportunities-513557>
- Alber, Erdmute, Tabea Häberlein, and Jeannett Martin.  
2010 Changing Webs of Kinship: Spotlights on West Africa. *Africa Spectrum* 45(3): 43-67.
- Alchian, Armen, and Harold Demsetz  
1995 *The Property Right Paradigm*. Ronald Rogowski ed. Elgar Reference Collection. Library of International Political Economy vol. 8 Aldershot, U.K.: Elgar.
- Alesina, Alberto, Paola Giuliano, and Nathan Nunn  
2013 On the Origins of Gender Roles: Women and the Plough. *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 128(2):469.
- Allmand, Jean and John Parker  
2005 *Tongnaab*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Amanor, Kojo, and Maxwell Kude Diderutuah  
2001 *Share Contracts in the Oil Palm and Citrus Belt of Ghana*. London: IIED.
- Amin, Sajeda  
2011 *Programs to Address Child Marriage, Framing the Problem: Promoting Healthy, Safe, and Productive Transition to Adulthood*. Population Council Brief, No.14.

- Amadiume, Ifi  
1997 *Re-Inventing Africa: Matriarchy, Religion, and Culture*. New York: Zed Books.
- Anheier, Helmut, and Salamon Lester  
2006 *The Nonprofit Sector in Comparative Perspective*. In *The Non-Profit Sector: A Research Handbook*. W. Powell, and R. Steinberg, eds. Pp. 89-117. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Ardayfio-Schandorf, Elizabeth  
1996 *The Changing Family in Ghana*. Accra: Ghana Universities Press.
- Ardener, Shirley, ed.  
1993 *Defining Females: The Nature of Women in Society*. Oxford: Berg.
- Arthur Lewis, W.  
1954 *Economic Development with unlimited Supplies of Labor*. *The Manchester School* 22(2):139-191.
- Asenso-Okyere, Kwadwo, Clement Ahiadeke, Isaac Osei-Akoto, and Beatrice Duncan  
2002 *Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Ghana 2000*. UNICEF Press.
- Atwood, David  
1990 *Land Registration in Africa: The Impact on Production*. *World Development* 15(5):659.
- Austin, Michael, Elizabeth Anthony, Ryan Knee, John Mathias  
2016 *Revisiting the Relationship between Micro and Macro Social Work Practice*. *Families in Society* 97(4):270-277.
- Banchirigah, Sadia Mohammed  
2008 *Challenges with Eradicating Illegal Mining in Ghana: A Perspective from the Grassroots*. *Resources Policy* 33(1):29-38.
- Bastian, Misty  
2007 *Review of Global shadows: Africa in the neoliberal world order*. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 49(3):743-744. <https://www-cambridge-org.proxy.lib.umich.edu/core/journals/comparative-studies-in-society-and-history/article/global-shadows-africa-in-the-neoliberal-world-order/> accessed April 3, 2017.
- Bayisenge, Jeanett  
2010 *Early Marriage as a Barrier to Girls' Education, Rwanda: A Developmental Challenge in Africa*. <http://www.khubmarriage18.org/sites/default/files/48.pdf>.
- Becker, Saul and Alan Bryman eds.  
2004 *Understanding Research for Social Policy: Themes, Methods, and Practice*. Bristol: The Policy Press.



- Belch, Michael and Laura Willis 2002 Family Decision at the Turn of the Century: Has the Changing Structure of Household Impacted the Family Decision-making Process. *Journal of Consumer Behavior: An International Research Review* 2(2):111-124.
- Benneh, George, G. T. Agyapong and J. A. Allotey  
1990 *Land Degradation in Ghana Commonwealth Secretariat*. London: Marlborough House.
- Bernard, Russell  
2011 *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Lanham: AltaMira Press.
- Berry, Sara  
2002 Debating the Land Question in Africa. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44(4):638-668.  
1989 Access, Control and use of Resources in African Agriculture: An Introduction. *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 59(1):1-5.
- Blau, Francine, and Lawrence Kahn  
2000 Gender Differences in Pay. National Bureau of Economic Research. Working Paper 7732. <http://www.nber.org/papers/w7732.pdf>
- Bledsoe, Caroline  
1990 Transformations in Sub-Saharan African Marriage and Fertility. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 510:115-125.
- Block, Ellen  
2012 'That's What I See': Enhancing AIDS Intervention Research through Deep Ethnography. *Qualitative Social Work* 11(4):379-394.
- Braithwaite, John  
1985 White Collar Crime. *Annual Review of Sociology* 11:1-25.
- Briggs, Charles L.  
1986 *Learning how to Ask: A Sociolinguistic Appraisal of the Role of the Interview in Social Science Research*. Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]; New York: Cambridge University Press
- Broch-Due, Vigdis, Ingrid Rudie, and Tone Bleie, eds.  
1993 *Carved Flesh/Cast Selves: Gendered Symbols and Social Practices*. Oxford: Berg Publishers.
- Broegaard, Rikke J.  
2005 Land Tenure Insecurity and Inequality in Nicaragua. *Development and Change* 36(5):845.

- Brown, C. K.  
1996 Gender Roles in Household Allocation of Resources and Decision Making in Ghana. *In The Changing Family in Ghana*. Elizabeth Ardayfio-Schandorf ed. Pp. 21-42. Accra: Ghana Universities Press.
- Bruni, Attila, Silvia Gherardi, and Barbara Poggio  
2004 Doing Gender, Doing Entrepreneurship: An Ethnographic Account of Intertwined Practices. *Gender, Work & Organization* 11(4):406-429.
- Bukh, Jette  
1979 *The Village Woman in Ghana*. Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies.
- Butler, Judith  
2004 *Undoing Gender*. Boca Raton: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Buvinic, Mayra Morrison, Andrew R. Sjoblom, Mirja Ofosu-Amaah, and A.Waafas  
2008 *Equality for Women*. The World Bank.
- Buvinic, Mayra, CS Adams, GS Edcomb and M. Kock-Weser  
1976 *Women and World Development: An Annotated Bibliography*. Washington, D.C.: Overseas Development Country.
- Castle, Sarah  
1995 Child Fostering and Children's Nutritional Outcomes in Rural Mali: The Role of Female Status in Directing Child Transfers. *Social Science and Medicine* 40(5):679-693.
- Carsten, Janet  
2004 *After Kinship*. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Chant and Pedwell 2008 *Women, Gender, and the Informal Economy: An Assessment of ILO Research and Suggested Ways Forward*. International Labor Organization. Geneva: ILO.
- Checkoway, Barry  
1997 Core Concepts of Community Change. *Journal of Community Practice* 4(1):11-29.
- Chen, Martha  
2007 *Rethinking the Informal Economy: Linkages with the Formal Economy and the Formal Regulatory Environment*. DESA Working Paper No. 46.  
[http://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2007/wp46\\_2007.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2007/wp46_2007.pdf). Accessed April 7, 2017.
- Chen, Martha, Joann Vanek and James Heintz.  
2006 Informality, Gender and Poverty: A Global Picture. *Economic and Political Weekly* 41(21): 2131-2139.

Chimhowu, Admos, and Phillip Woodhouse

2006 Customary Vs Private Property Rights? Dynamics and Trajectories of Vernacular Land Markets in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Journal of Agrarian Change* 6(3):346-371.

Citifmonline

2016 Rectified List of DKM Customers to be out this Week Retrieved on November 28. <http://citifmonline.com/2016/11/28/rectified-list-of-dkm-customers-to-be-out-this-week/>

Clark, Gracia

2010 *African Market Women: Seven Life Stories from Ghana*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

1994 *Onions are My Husband: Survival and Accumulation by West African Market Women*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Comaroff, Jean, and John L. Comaroff, ed.

2006 *Law and Disorder in the Postcolony*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Comaroff, John L., and Comaroff Jean

2004 Criminal Justice, Cultural Justice: The Limits of Liberalism and the Pragmatics of Difference in the New South Africa. *American Ethnology* 31(2):188-204.

Corcoran, Jacqueline

2008 Direct Practice. *In Encyclopedia of Social Work* 20<sup>th</sup> Edition, Volume 2D-1. Terry Mizrahi and Larry E. Davies, eds. Pp. 33-36. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cote, Jennifer

2013 The West Point of the Philanthropic Service: Reconsidering Social Work's Welcome to Women in the Early Twentieth Century. *Social Service Review*. 87(1):131-157.

Cousins, Ben

2005 Potential and Pitfalls of "Communal" Land Tenure Reform: Experience in Africa and Implication for South Africa. Paper presented the 2009 World Bank Conference Washington D.C., March 9-10.

Crampton, Alexandra

2013 No Peace in the House: Witchcraft Accusations as an "Old Woman's Problems" in Ghana. *Anthropology and Aging Quarterly* 31(2):199-212.

Crowell, D.W.

2003 *The SEWA Movement and Rural Development: The Banaskantha and Kutch Experience*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Dako Gyeke, Mavis, and Prince Owusu

2013 A Qualitative Study Exploring Factors Contributing to Gender Inequality in Rural Ghana. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 4(1):481-489.

- Daley, Elizabeth, and Mary Hobley  
2005 *Land: Changing Contexts, Changing Relationships, Changing Rights*. Paper Commissioned by Department for International Development.
- Deininger, Klaus, Eduardo Zegarra, and Isabel Lavendez  
2003 Determinants and Impacts of Rural Land Market Activity: Evidence from Nicaragua. *World Development* 31(8):1385-1404.
- Delcore, Henry D.  
2007 New Reflections on Old Questions in the Anthropology of Gender. *Reviews in Anthropology*. 36(2):109-130.
- Delprato, Marcos, Kwame Akyeampong, Ricardo Sabates, and Jimena Hernandez-Fernandez.  
2015 On the Impact of Early Marriage on Schooling Outcomes in Sub-Saharan Africa and South West Asia. *International Journal of Educational Development* 44:42-55.
- de Soto, Hernando  
2000 *The Mystery of Capital: Why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails Everywhere Else*. New York: Basic Books.
- Ekejiuba, Felicia  
1995 Down to Fundamentals: Women-oriented Hearthholds in Rural West Africa. In *Women Wielding the Hoe: Lessons from Rural Africa for Fermininst Theory and Practice*. Deborah Bryceson ed. Pp. 47-61. Oxford: Berg.
- Ellis, Frank, Milton Kutengule, and Alfred Nyasulu  
2003 Livelihoods and Rural Poverty Reduction in Malawi. *World Development* 31(9): 1495-1510.
- Engels, Friedrich  
1969 *The Condition of the Working Class in England: From Personal Observation and Authentic Sources*. London: Panther Books.
- Evans-Pritchard, E.E  
1965 *Theories of Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Farmer, Elaine  
2009 How Do Placements in Kinship Care Compare with Those in Non-Kin Foster Care: Placement Patterns, Progress and Outcomes? *Child and Family Social Work* 14(3): 331-342.
- Ferguson, James 2006  
*Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Fernandez, Raquel, and Alessandra Fogli  
2005 Culture: An Empirical Investigation of Beliefs, Work, and Fertility. *American Economic Journal: Macroeconomics* 1: 146-177.

Fortes, Meyer

1949 *The Web of Kinship Among the Tallensi: The Second Part of an Analysis of the Social Structure of a Trans-Volta Tribe*, London: Oxford University Press.

Fortin, Nicole

2005 Gender role attitude and the labor-market outcomes for women in OCED countries  
*Oxford Review of Economic Policy* 21(3): 416-438, 418.

Foucault, Michel

1977 *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison*. Alan Sheridan, trans. London: Penguin.

1976 *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. New York: Harper and Row.

Gage-Brandon, Anastasia and Njogu Wamucii

1994 *Gender Inequalities and Demographic Behavior: Ghana/Kenya*. New York: The Population Council.

Geertz, Clifford

1962 The Rotating Credit Association: A "Middle Rung" in Development. *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 10(3):241-263.

Geschiere, Peter

2006 Witchcraft and the Limits of the Law: Cameroon and South Africa. *In Law and Disorder in the Postcolony*. Jean Comaroff and L. Comaroff John, eds. Pp. 219-246. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ghana Demographic and Health Survey

2014 Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), Ghana Health Service (GHS), and ICF International. Rockville, Maryland, USA: GSS, GHS, and ICF International.

2008 Ghana Health Service (GHS), and ICF Macro. Accra, Ghana: GSS, GHS, and ICF Macro

2003 Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research (NMIMR), and ORC Macro. Calverton, Maryland: GSS, NMIMR, and ORC Macro.

Ghana Statistical Service (GSS)

2012 *The 2010 Ghana Population Census*.

[http://www.statsghana.gov.gh/docfiles/2010phc/Census2010\\_Summary\\_report\\_of\\_final\\_results.pdf](http://www.statsghana.gov.gh/docfiles/2010phc/Census2010_Summary_report_of_final_results.pdf). accessed March 18, 2017.

Gherandi, Sylvia

1994 *Gender, symbolism, and Organizational Culture*. London: Sage Publication.

Glisson, Charles, Catherine N. Dulmus, Karen M. Sowers, and Inc ebrary

2012 *Social Work Practice with Groups, Communities, and Organizations Evidence-Based Assessments and Interventions*. Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley.

- Gluckman, Max  
1965 *Custom and Conflict in Africa*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Godoy, Ricardo  
1985 Mining: Anthropological Perspectives. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 14:199-271.
- Goldblatt, Hadass and Eli Buchbinder  
2003 Challenging Gender Roles, *Journal of Social Work Education*. 39(2):255-275.
- Goody, Esther  
1982 *Parenthood and Social Reproduction: Fostering and Occupational Roles in West Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Greenhouse, Carol J.  
2003 Solidarity and Objectivity: Re-Reading Durkheim. *In Crime's Power: The Anthropologist and the Ethnography of Crime*. Philip Parnell and Kane Stephanie, eds. Pp. 269-291. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gueyié, Jean-Pierre, Ronny Manos, and Jacob Yaron  
2013 *Microfinance in Developing Countries: Issues, Policies and Performance Evaluation*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ;New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Guyer, Jane, and Pauline Peters  
1987 Introduction: *Development and Change* 18:197-214.
- Harden, Brenda Jones, and Jessica Vick Whittaker  
2011 The Early Home Environment and Developmental Outcomes for Young Children in the Child Welfare System. *Children and Youth Services Review* 33(8): 1392-1403.
- Hart, Keith  
1973 Informal Income Opportunities and Urban Employment in Ghana, *Journal of Modern African Studies* 11: 61-89.
- Hastrup, Kristen  
1993 *The Semantics of Biology: Virginité*. *In Ardener, Shirley, ed. Defining Females: The nature of Women in Society*. Oxford: Berg Publishers.
- Hauser-Schaublin, Brigitta  
1975 *Gender Roles among the Iatmul of Papua New Guinea*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Basel, Switzerland.
- Hentschel, Jesko, Jean Lanjouw, Peter Lanjouw, and Javier Poggi  
2000 Combining Census and Survey Data to Study Spatial Dimensions of Poverty: A Case Study for Ecuador *The World Bank Economic Review* 14(1):147–166.

Hilson, Gavin

2012 Poverty Traps in Small-Scale Mining Communities: The Case of Sub-Saharan Africa. *Revue Canadienne d'Études Du Développement* 33(2):180; 180-197; 197.

2003 The Socio-Economic Impacts of Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining in Developing Countries. G. Hilson, ed. Netherlands: A.A. Balkema, Swets Publishers.

Hilson, Gavin, ed

2002 Small-Scale Mining and Socio Economic Impact. *United Nations Sustainable Development Journal* 26(1):3-13.

Hinton, Jennifer, Marcello Veiga, and Christian Beinhoff

2003 Women and artisanal mining: Gender roles and the road ahead. *In* Gavin Hilson, ed. *The Socio-Economic Impacts of Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining in Developing Countries*. Netherlands: A.A. Balkema, Swets Publishers.

Horne, Christine, F. Nii-Amoo Dodoo, and Naa Dodua Dodoo

2013 The Shadow of Indebtedness: Bridewealth and Norms Constraining Female Reproductive Autonomy. *American Sociological Review* 78(3):503-520.

Hove, Elizabeth and James Hlongwana 2015 A Step into the Male-Dominated Mining Sector: Women's Participation in Mining, The Case of Kwekwe District. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 20(7):99-104.

Huber, Ruth, and Betty Pryor Orlando

1995 Persisting Gender Differences in Social Workers' Incomes: Does the Profession really Care? *Social Work* 40(5): 585.

Huefner, Jonathan, Robert Pick, Gail Smith, Amy Stevens, and Alex Mason.

2015 Parental Involvement in Residential Care: Distance, Frequency of Contact, and Youth Outcomes. *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 24:1481-1489.

International Federation of Agricultural Development (IFAD)

2012 IFAD Support Programs to Help Women

[https://www.ifad.org/newsroom/press\\_release/past/tags/y2012/1903708](https://www.ifad.org/newsroom/press_release/past/tags/y2012/1903708)

Imoh, Afua Twum-Danso

2012 From Central to Marginal? Changing Perceptions of Kinship Fosterage in Ghana. *Journal of Family History* 37(4):351-363.

2011 Searching for a Middle Ground in Children's Rights in Ghana. *Journal of Human Rights* 10(3): 376-392.

IRIN News

2013 Women Dig into Zimbabwe Male-Dominated Small-Scale Mining Sector.

<http://www.irinnews.org/news/2013/10/29/women-dig-zimbabwes-male-dominated-small-scale-mining-sector> accessed April 5, 2017.

- Isiugo-Abanihe, Uche  
1985 Child Fosterage in West Africa. *Population and Development Review* 11(1):53-73.
- Jashim Uddin, Mohammed  
2015 *The Micro-Politics of Microcredit: Gender and Neoliberal Development in Bangladesh*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Juul, Kristine, and Christian Lund, eds.  
2002 *Negotiating Property in Africa*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Kabeer, Naila, Sudarshan Ratna, and Milward Kirsty, eds.  
2013 *Organizing Women Workers in the Informal Economy: Beyond the Weapons of the Weak*. London: Zed Books.
- Kalinoe, Lawrence Kuna, and James Leach  
2001 *Rationales of Ownership: Ethnographic Studies of Transactions and Claims to Ownership in Contemporary Papua New Guinea*. New Delhi: UBS Publishers' Distributors Ltd.
- Kambewa, Daimon M.  
2007 *Access and Control to Wetlands in Malawi: An Analysis of Social and Power Relations*. PhD Dissertation, Bunda College of Agriculture, University of Malawi.
- Kevane, Michael, and Leslie C. Gray  
1999 A Woman's Field is made at Night: Gendered Land Rights and Norms in Burkina Faso. *Feminist Economics* 5(3):1-2.
- Kahn, Hilary E.  
2003 Traversing the Q'eqchi' Imaginary: The Conjecture of Crime in Livingston, Guatemala. In *Crime's Power: Anthropologist and the Ethnography of Crime*. Philip Parnell and Kane Stephanie, eds. Pp. 33-54. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kelan Elizabeth  
2010 Gender Logic and (un)Doing Gender at Work. *Gender Work and Organization* 17(2): 174-194.
- Kenyon, Gail L.  
2003 Why Does He always Get to be the Boy? Examining the Gender Income Gap in Social Work. *Canadian Social Work Review/Revue Canadienne De Service Social* 20(2):185.
- Kippenberg Juliane  
2013 *Mercury Treaty: Hope for Child Gold Miners? How the Japanese Town of Minamata is Clinked to Efforts to End Exposure to Mercury Everywhere*.  
<http://thediplomat.com/2013/10/mercury-treaty-hope-for-child-gold-miners/> accessed October 4, 2015.



- Kishindo, Paul  
2004 Customary Land Tenure and the New Land Policy in Malawi. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 22(2):213-225.
- Koeske, Gary F., and William J. Krowinski  
2004 Gender-Based Salary Inequity in Social Work: Mediators of Gender's Effect on Salary. *Social Work* 49(2): 309.
- Koomson, Elizabeth  
2011 Mining Communities in Ghana: Reflections on Nature and Type of Work for Female Miners and Non-Miners. *Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping* 17(3):52-59.
- Kowalsky, Sharon A.  
2009 *Deviant Women: Female Crime and Criminology in Revolutionary Russia, 1880-1930*. Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press.
- Kuba, Richard, and Carola Lentz  
2006 *Land and the Politics of Belonging in West Africa*. Boston: Brill Publishers.
- Lane, Shannon R., and Theresa D. Flowers  
2015 Salary Inequity in Social Work. *Affilia* 30(3):363.
- Laslett, Barbara, and Johanna Brenner  
1989 Gender and Social Reproduction: Historical Perspectives. *Annual Review of Sociology* 15:381-404.
- Lastarria-Cornhiel, Susanna and Zoraida Garcia-Frias  
2005 Gender and Land Rights: Findings and Lessons from Country Studies. *Gender and Land Compendium of Country Studies*  
<http://www.fao.org/docrep/008/a0297e/a0297e05.htm>
- Leach, Edmund Ronald  
1961 *Pul Eliya, a Village in Ceylon; a Study of Land Tenure and Kinship*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Leacock, Eleanor  
1981 *Myths of Male Dominance*. New York: Monthly Review.
- Lentz, Carola  
2010 Is Land Inalienable? Historical and Current Debates on Land Transfers in Northern Ghana Africa. 80(1):56.
- Lesthaeghe, Ron.  
2014 *The Fertility Transition of Sub Saharan Africa into the 21st Century*. PSC Research Report No. 14-823.

- Lewis, Arthur, W.  
1954 Economic Development with Unlimited Supplies of Labor. *The Manchester School* 22(2):139-191.
- Lincoln, Yvonne and Egon Guba  
1985 *Naturalistic Inquiry*. California: Sage Publications.
- Linebaugh, Peter  
1981 Karl Marx, the Theft of Wood, and Working Class Composition: A Contribution to the Current Debate. In *Crime and Capitalism: Readings in Marxist Criminology*. F. Greenberg David, ed. Pp. 79-97. Palo Alto: Mayfield Publishing Company.  
<https://woodsquat.files.wordpress.com/2010/01/peter-linebaugh-karl-marx-the-theft-of-wood-and-working-class-composition-a-contribution-to-the-current-debate.pdf>
- Linger, Daniel  
2003 Wild Power in Post-Military Brazil. In *Crime's Power: Anthropologist and the Ethnography of Crime*. Philip Parnell and Kane Stephanie, eds. Pp. 99-125. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Linstead, Stephen, and Alison Pullen  
2006 Gender as Multiplicity: Desire, Displacement, Difference and Dispersion. *Human Relations* 59(9):1287-1310.
- Little, Kenneth  
1973 *African Women in Towns: An Aspect of Africa's Social Revolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.  
1972 Voluntary Associations and Social Mobility among West African Women. *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne Des Études Africaines* 6(2):275-288.
- Lloyd, Cynthia and Anastasia Gage-Brandon  
1993 Women's Roles in Maintaining Households: Family Welfare and Sexual Inequality in Ghana. *Population Studies: A Journal of Demography* 47(1): 115-131.
- Logo, Patrice, and Elise-Henrietta Bikie  
2003 Women and Land in Cameroun: Questioning Women's Land Statudd and Claims for Change. In *Women and Land in Africa: Culture, Religion, and Realizing Women's Rights*. Lynne Muthoni Wanyeki, ed. Pp. 31-67. London: Zed Books.
- Long, Rachel, Elisha Renne, Thomas Robins, Mark Wilson, Kenneth Pelig-Ba, Mozhgon Rajae, Alison Yee, Elizabeth Koomson, Codi Sharp, Jing Lu and Niladri Basu  
2013 Water Values in a Ghanaian Small-Scale Gold Mining Community. *Human Organization* 72(3):199-210.
- Lorber, Judith  
2012 *Gender Inequality: Feminist Theories and Politics*. Los Angeles, Calif.: Roxbury Pub.

- Lund, Christian, ed.  
2002 Negotiating Property Institutions: The Symbiosis of Property in Africa. *In Negotiating Property in Africa*. Kristine Juul and Christian Lund, eds. Pp. 11-43. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Maccoby, Eleanor and Carol Jacklin  
1987 Gender Segregation in Childhood. *In Advances in Child Development and Behavior* Vol. 20. H. W. Reese ed. Pp. 239 –287. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Mader, Philip  
2015 *The Political Economy of Microfinance: Financialising Poverty*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Malinowski, Bronislaw  
1926 *Crime and Custom in Savage Society*. London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Manuh, Takyiwah  
1997 Wives, Children, and Interstate Succession in Ghana. *In African Feminism: The Politics of Survival in the Sub-Saharan Africa*, ed. Gwendolyn Mikell. Pp. 77-96. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Martin, Patricia Yancey  
2003 Said and done Versus Saying and Doing: Gendering Practices, Practicing Gender at Work. *Gender and Society* 17(3):342-366.
- Marx, Karl  
1842 Proceedings of the Sixth Rhine Province Assembly. Third Article. Debates on the Law of the Theft of Wood. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Collected Work
- Mattei, Ugo, and Laura Nader  
2008 *When the Rule of Law is Illegal*. 1st ed. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.
- Mbugua, W.  
1992 The Structure and Dynamics of Family Formation in Africa: A Review and Synthesis of Current Evidence. *Structure et dynamique de la formation des familles en Afrique* [Structure and Dynamics of Family Formation in Africa]. Union Pour L'Etude de la Population Africaine. Dakar: Union Pour L'Etude de la Population.
- McAuslan Patrick  
2000 Only the Name of the Country Changes: The Diaspora of European land law in Commonwelath Africa. *In Evolutionary Land Rights, Policy and Tenure in Africa*. London: IIED/DFID.
- McDermott, Sarah  
2017 "I disguised myself as a man to work in a mine" BBC World Service May 2017 accessed May 15, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-39705424>

Meagher, Kate

2010 The Empowerment Trap: Gender, Poverty and the Informal Economy in sub-Saharan Africa. *In* The International Handbook of Gender and Poverty. Kate and Meagher Silvia Chant. Pp. 472-477. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited  
[http://www.wiego.org/sites/wiego.org/files/publications/files/Meagher\\_Gender.Empowerment.Trap\\_.pdf](http://www.wiego.org/sites/wiego.org/files/publications/files/Meagher_Gender.Empowerment.Trap_.pdf)

2007 Introduction. Theme issue, "Informal Institutions and Development in Africa," *Africa Spectrum* 42(3): 405-418.

Meekers, Dominique

1992 The Process of Marriage in African Societies: A Multiple Indicator Approach. *Population and Development Review* 18(1): 61-78.

Merry, Sally Engle

2016 *The Seductions of Quantification: Measuring Human Rights, Gender Violence, and Sex Trafficking*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Mikell, Gwendolyn

1997 *African Feminism: The Politics of Survival in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Mills, Mary

2003 Gender and Inequality in the Global Labor Force. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 32:41-62

Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection

2014 Ghana's First Progress Report on the Implementation of African and Beijing Platform of Action and Review Report for Beijing +20.  
:<http://www.mogcsp.gov.gh/reports/Beijing%202020%20Report.pdf>. accessed December 5, 2015.

Mkhwanazi, Nolwazi

2014 An African Way of Doing Things: Revisiting the Dynamics of Early Childbearing in South African Townships. *Culture, Health and Sexuality: An International Journal of Research, Intervention, and Care* 16(9):1084-1096.

Moore, Henrietta

1988 *Feminism and Anthropology*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Mortimore, Michael, and Frances Harris

2005 Do Small Farmers' Achievements Contradict the Nutrient Depletion Scenarios for Africa? *Land use Policy* 22(1):43.

Nader, Laura

2003 Crime as a Category: Domestic and Globalized. *In* *Crime's Power: Anthropologist and the Ethnography of Crime*. Philip Parnell and Kane Stephanie, eds. Pp. 55-76. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Nayaran, Kirin  
1993 How Native is a “Native” Anthropologist? *American Anthropologist* 95(3):671– 686.
- Nash, June C.  
1979 *We Eat the Mines and the Mines Eat Us: Dependency and Exploitation in Bolivian Tin Mines*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- N.A  
2008 *NASW Code of Ethics (Guide to the Everyday Professional Conduct of Social Workers)*. Washington, DC: NASW. <https://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp> assessed March 27, 2017
- Naylor, R. T.  
2002 *Wages of Crime: Black Markets, Illegal Finance, and the Underworld Economy*. 1st ed. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Nelson, John  
2004 A survey of indigenous land tenure in sub-Saharan Africa, Land Reform, Economic and Social Development Department  
<http://www.fao.org/docrep/007/y5407t/y5407t0d.htm>
- Nentwich, Julia and Elizabeth Kelan  
2007 All Said and Done? The Understanding of “Doing gender” and its Discontent. Paper presented at the Gender, Work, and Organization Conference, Keele UK, June 25-27.
- Nordstrom, Carolyn  
2007 *Global Outlaws: Crime, Money and Power in the Contemporary World*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- Nukunya, G. K.  
1969 *Kinship and Marriage among the Anlo-Ewe*. London: The Athlone Press.
- Okoth-Ogendo, H. W. O.  
1989 Some Issues of Theory in the Study of Tenure Relations in African Agriculture. *Africa* 59:6.
- Olivetti, Claudia and Barbara Petrongolo  
2008 Pay or Unequal Employment? A Cross-Country Analysis of Gender Gaps. *Journal of Labor Economics* 26(4):621-654.
- Ortner, Sherry B.  
1996 *Making Gender: The Politics and Erotics of Culture*. Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press.  
1989 Gender Hegemonies. *Cultural Critique* (14):35-80.  
1974 Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture? *In* Rosaldo, M. and Lamphere L. eds. *Woman, Culture, and Society*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

- Parnell, Philip ed  
 2003 Introduction. *In Crime's Power: The Anthropologist and the Ethnography of Crime*. Philip Parnell and Kane Stephanie, eds. Pp. 1-32. New York: Palgrave Macmillan
- Philip Parnell and Kane Stephanie eds  
 2003 *Crime's Power: Anthropologist and the Ethnography of Crime*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Pence, Alan and Nsamenang, Bame  
 2008 A Case for Early Childhood Development in sub-Saharan Africa. Working Paper No. 51. The Netherlands: Bernard van Leer Foundation.
- Peters, Pauline E.  
 2009 Challenges in Land Tenure and Land Reform in Africa: Anthropological Contributions. *World Development* 37(8):1317-1325.
- Peters, Pauline E., and Daimon Kambewa  
 2007 Whose Security? Deepening Social Conflict Over 'customary' Land in the Shadow of Land Tenure Reform in Malawi. *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 45(3):447.
- Platteau, Jean-Philippe  
 1996 The Evolutionary Theory of Land Rights as Applied to Sub-Saharan Africa: A Critical Assessment. *Development and Change* 27(1):29.
- Platteau, Jean-Phillip, Anita Abraham, Frederic Gaspart and Luc Stevens  
 2005 Traditional Marriage Practices as Determinants of Women's Land Rights: A Review of Research. *Gender and Land Compendium of Country Studies*  
<http://www.fao.org/docrep/008/a0297e/a0297e05.htm>
- Poggio, Barbara  
 2006 Editorial: Outline of a Theory of Gender Practices. *Gender, Work and Organization* 13(3):225-233.
- Posner, Richard A.  
 1972 *Economic Analysis of Law*. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Pullen, Alison, and David Knights  
 2007 Editorial: Undoing Gender: Organizing and Disorganizing Performance. *Gender, Work & Organization* 14(6):505-511.
- Purkayastha Bandana and Mangala Subramaniam, eds.  
 2004 *The Power of Women in Informal Networks: Lessons in Social Change in South Asia and West Africa*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books
- Rattray, R. S., and Diedrich Westermann  
 1932 *The Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland*. Oxford: The Clarendon press.

- Renne, Elisha; N. Basu; E. Gager; E. Koomson; B. Lee; S. Lee; A. Leeth; D. Manigault; R. Mozhgon; A. Sajjad; M. Smith; A. Yee  
2011. Women's work, health and the environment in a small-scale gold mining site in northeastern Ghana. *Women and Environment International Magazine* 86/87.
- Renne, Elisha  
2015 Small-Scale and Industrial Gold Mining Histories in Nangodi, Upper East Region, Ghana *Journal of West African History* 1(2):71-94.  
2003 *Population and Progress in a Yuroba Town*. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press and Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, for the International African Institute.
- Reynolds, Marylee  
1995 *From Gangs to Gangsters: How American Sociology Organized Crime, 1918-1994*. New York: Harrow and Heston.
- Richards, Paul  
2005 To Fight Or to Farm? Agrarian Dimensions of the Mano River Conflicts (Liberia and Sierra Leone). *African Affairs* 104(417):571.
- Rolston, Jessica Smith 2013 The Politics of Pits and the Materiality of Mine Labor: Making Natural Resources in the American West. *American Anthropologist*. 15(4):582-594.
- Sanday, Peggy Reeves  
2002 *Women at the Center: Life in a Modern Matriarchy*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Sandborg, Kirsten  
1993 Malay Dress Symbol. In Broch-Due, Vigdis, Ingrid Rudie, and Tone Bleie, eds. *Carved Flesh/Cast Selves: Gendered Symbols and Social Practices*. Oxford: Berg Publishers.
- Scalise, Elisa  
2012 *Indigenous Women's Land Rights: Case Studies from Africa*. Minority Rights Group, State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples. <http://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/old-site-downloads/download-1117-Indigenous-womens-land-rights-case-studies-from-Africa.pdf>
- Schneider, Jane, and Peter Schneider  
2008 The Anthropology of Crime and Criminalization. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 37:351-373.
- Scott, James  
1985 *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Seekings, Jeremy

1996 The "Lost Generation": South African Problem in the Early 1990s. *Transformation* 29(1):103-125.

Shah, Alpa

2010 *The Shadows of the State: Indigenous Politics, Environmentalism, and Insurgency in Jharkhand, India*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Shipton, Parker

1994 Land and Culture in Tropical Africa: Soils, Symbols, and the Metaphysics of the Mundane. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 23:347-377.

Sinnott, Meagan

2004 *Toms and Dees : Transgender Identity and Female Same-Sex Relationships in Thailand*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Solheim, Jorun and Tordis Borchgrevink

1993 A Rotten Text? Gender, Food, and Interpretation. *In Purkayastha Bandana and Mangala Subramaniam, eds. The Power of Women in Informal Networks: Lessons in Social Change in South Asia and West Africa*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books

Sossou, Marie A.

2006 The Meaning of Gender Equality in Ghana: Women's Perceptions of the Issue of Gender Equality: Implications for Social Work Education and Practice in Ghana. *Women in Welfare Education* 8:37-54.

Strathern, Marilyn

1981 Culture in a net bag: The manufacture of subdiscipline in anthropology. *Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 16(4):665-688.

Sudarkasa, Niara

1973 *Where Women Work: A Study of Yoruba Women in the Marketplace and in the Home*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan.

Symonds, Patricia V.

2015 *Calling in the Soul*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Takyi, Baffour K., and F. N. Dodoo

2005 Gender, Lineage, and Fertility-Related Outcomes in Ghana. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 67(1): 251-257.

Takyi, Baffour and Stephen Obeng Gyimah

2007 Matrilineal Family Ties and Marital Dissolution in Ghana. *Journal of Family Issues* 28(5):682-705.



- Tedlock, Barbara  
2013 Native Anthropology, *Native Anthropologist. In Theory in Social and Cultural Anthropology: An Encyclopedia*. R. Jon McGee and Richard Warms, eds. Pp 583-585. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Therborn, Goran  
2006 Africa Families in a Global Context. Research Report No. 131. Nordiska Afrikaninstitutet.
- Toulmin, Camilla, and Julian Quan eds.  
2000 Evolutionary Land Rights, Policy and Tenure in Africa. London: IIED/DFID.
- Toulmin, Camilla  
2003 Review of Henry Bernstein, David Hulme and Philip Woodhouse, African Enclosures? the Social Dynamics of Wetlands in Drylands. *Africa* 73:141.
- Tsikata, Dzodzi, and Pamela Golah  
2010 Land Tenure, Gender and Globalisation: Research and Analysis from Africa, Asia and Latin America. New Delhi: Ottawa: ZUBAAN ;International Development Research Center.
- Twumasi, P. A.  
2001 Social Research in Rural Communities. Accra: Ghana Universities Press.
- Ubink, Janine  
2008 Negotiated Or Negated?: The Rhetoric and Reality of Customary Tenure in an Ashanti Village in Ghana. *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute* 78(2):264-287.
- Verhoff, Heidi  
2005 A child Has Many Mothers: Views of Child Fostering in Northwestern Cameroon. *Childhood* 12(3): 369–390.
- Walker, Judith-Ann  
2014 Mapping Early Marriage in West Africa: A Scan of Trends, Interventions, What Works, Best Practices and the Way Forward.” Ford Foundation.  
<http://www.gsdrc.org/document-library/mapping-early-marriage-in-west-africa-a-scan-of-trends-interventions-what-works-best-practices-and-the-way-forward/>  
2012 Early Marriage in Africa — Trends, Harmful Effects and Interventions. *African Journal of Reproductive Health / La Revue Africaine De La Santé Reproductive* 16(2):231-240.
- Wanyeki, Lynne Muthoni, ed.  
2003 Women and Land in Africa: Culture, Religion and Realizing Women's Rights. London: Zed Books.

- Werthmann, Katja  
2009 Working in a Boom-Town: Female Perspectives on Gold-Mining in Burkina Faso. *Resources Policy* 34(1-2):18-23.
- West Candace and Zimmerman Don  
1987 Doing Gender. *Gender and Sociology* 1(2):125-151.
- Westoff, Charles  
2003 Trends in Marriage and Early Childbearing in Developing Countries. Calverton: ORC Marco.
- Whitehead, Ann, and Dzodzi Tsikata  
2003 Policy Discourses on Women's Land Rights in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Implications of the Re-turn to the Customary. *Journal of Agrarian Change* 3(1-2):67-112.
- Woodhouse, Philip  
2012 Foreign Agricultural Land Acquisition and the Visibility of Water Resource Impacts in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Water Alternatives* 5(2):208.  
2003 African Enclosures: A Default Mode of Development. *World Development* 31(10):1705.
- Woodhouse, Philip, Henry Bernstein, and David Hulme  
2000 African Enclosures?: The Social Dynamics of Wetlands in Drylands. Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press.
- World Bank Report  
2003 Sustainable Development in a Dynamic World: Transforming Institutions, Growth, and Quality of Life. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/262521468337195361/World-development-report-2003-sustainable-development-in-a-dynamic-world-transforming-institutions-growth-and-quality-of-life>. accessed January 18, 2007.
- Worsley, Peter  
1956 The Kinship System of the Talensi: A Evaluation. *Man* 56:9-10.
- Yakovleva, Natalia  
2007 Perception on Female Participation in Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining: A Case Study of Birim North District of Ghana. *Resources Policy* 32(1):29-41.
- Yngstrom, Ingrid  
2002 Women, Wives and Land Rights in Africa: Situating Gender Beyond the Household in the Debate Over Land Policy and Changing Tenure Systems. *Oxford Development Studies* 30(1):21-40.

## NOTES

---

<sup>1</sup> Ghetto boys and gangs are used interchangeably for male work teams.

<sup>2</sup> A blade is a measure for gold. The weight of one blade is 0.8g. Buyers determine measure the weight of gold using a scale. Some of the scales calculate the price and weight at the same time.

<sup>3</sup> The miners refer to crushed rock as load, chipping, or smooth. Miners use these terms interchangeably. The words refer to rock ore from which the miners extract gold, but the miners sometimes use one of the terms depending on the stage of production. Miners use load to refer to the broken pieces of the rock ore underground. The miners take the load to a crushing machine to grind the rock ore into fine grains. At this stage, the miners refer to the product as chipping, even though some of them continue to call the crushed rock as load. Shankers sift the load to separate the powder from the particle and regrind the rough particle into a powder in a milling machine. After sifting (shanking) to separate the rough from the smooth product, they call the product shanking load or chipping. The final product is often referred to as smooth, but some of the workers continue to refer to it as chipping.

<sup>4</sup> Ghanaians refer to any community that one traces her/his ancestry as hometown. As a patrilineal society, a Talensi identifies with his/her father's ancestral town as hometown.

<sup>5</sup> When rock ore is sample, it means it has a high gold content. Miners determine the content of gold by either sight or taste. In sample, tiny gold nuggets are usually visible in the rock. On the other hand, rock is waste when it has a low gold content.

<sup>6</sup> Shovel, hammer, and chisel are some of the tools used in digging pits. Other digging tools include pick-axe. These tools are regarded as working tools for men.

<sup>7</sup> Ghana is geographically divided into North and South. The North comprises three of the ten regions –Northern, Upper East and Upper West. The rest of the regions are collectively referred to as South.

<sup>8</sup> Kejetia has four rock crushing machines. The miners refer to these machines as crushers. With no electricity in the mining communities, the machines use diesel engines. The sound from the crushers is so loud that shankers hear it from any part of the community. Shankers listen to the sound of the crushers to know where they can get work to do. They rush from one crusher to another looking for work. Some of the women go to sit at the crusher to wait until there is work available.

<sup>9</sup> The currency used in Ghana is Ghana cedis (GH¢) and pesewas (p). Since the currency fluctuates regularly, for the ease of conversion from Ghana cedis into dollars, I use 3.5: 1 as the exchange rate throughout the study; that is, GH¢3.50 is to one dollar.

---

<sup>10</sup> Fire outbreaks are common in the northern part of Ghana, especially during the long dry period that usually runs from November to the end of April. When I met Sanpan, I advised her to contact the District Planner (whom I interviewed) in the Talensi District Assembly to find out if there is any program for women who encounter these kinds of disasters. Later, Sanpan informed me that she did not receive any assistance.

<sup>11</sup> Shankers are always running around looking to work for an employer, because they are not organized into work groups. As described in chapter two and also later in this chapter, a shanker's physical presence is the only way she would get work to do for the day.

<sup>12</sup> Among the Talensi, there are both household guardian spirits and individual spirits. The household spirit is passed on from grandparents to the next two generations, but the spirits differ for males and females. Firstborn sons and firstborn grandsons receive *nawone*, or god, from their parents/grandparents. *Nawone* guards the household against evil spirits that may intend to harm any of the household members. Females, on the other hand, receive *buare* from their parents and grandparents. *Buare* perform similar functions as *nawone* but *nawone* is regarded as more powerful than *buare*. In fact, *buare* usually act in consultation with *nawone*. There are also individual spirits known as *korpare*. These individual spirits are in the form of dwarfs. They follow the individuals to the mining site to support them in the gold production. They are also useful in providing directions. Since gold itself is regarded as a spirit, these personal spirits lead the miners to discover the gold. Miners may deal with their *korpare* in different ways, but they mostly rely on *korpare* in times of need. *Korpare* is most useful when miners are digging the pits. The pits are dug vertically until the rock is reached. Since the rock is so large, miners have to determine the "face" of the rock that is closest to the gold. At this point, they dig horizontally around the rock. Since ghettos work close to each other and the rock covers a large portion underground, several ghettos dig around the same rock at different "faces." The gang digs different pits on the surface but extract gold from the same rock underground. At each level, miners find gold, but until they reach the "face" of the rock that contains large quantities of gold, they do not earn profits. Digging to the "face" is expensive and may take a long time. According to one of the *ghetto* owners, he worked in the same pit for twenty-seven years before reaching the rock "face." To facilitate reaching the "face," the ghetto owner usually turns to his *korpare* to help him dig in the right direction. In the earlier story about the woman who probably became disoriented when she climbed up the pit, the women who told the story indicated that her *buare* realized the danger she found herself in and came to her rescue. Men also tell stories about when they became disoriented and their *korpare* came to their aid. These beliefs are so pervasive that women would tell these kinds of stories over and over again.

<sup>13</sup> In October 2014, there was a gold find in Obuasi. The miners encroached and worked on land in Obuasi without obtaining a license from the Ghana Minerals Commission, the government of Ghana's agency that is responsible for issuing license for mining. Two months later, there was an accident. Mine accidents always bring mining activities to a halt, especially when the mining is "galamsey," illegal, or not covered by a license. The police came to occupy the whole community for a couple of days and ensured that the pits in the area where the accident occurred were refilled. Even when work resumed in the concessions in January, mining activities were slow because miners had to participate in the funerals of the workers who had died.

---

<sup>14</sup> Boger originates from burger. Burger was the nickname used to call people who traveled to Germany in early times and came back behaving like Europeans. Boger earned the nickname because according to his friends, he behaves like a “burger” from Germany.

<sup>15</sup> Builsa is a neighboring district to Talensi. It is one of the districts in the Upper East region.

<sup>16</sup> Prestea is one of the large-scale mining communities in Ghana. Scholars mention that large-scale gold mining in Ghana began in Prestea and Tarkwa areas.

<sup>17</sup> The division three is one of the procedures male miners use to share their load. It is a common share system in Ghana. The detailed process for sharing load among men will be given in Chapter 5.

<sup>18</sup> When I met Sanpan, she had sold her plot of land to a veteran living in Accra, who is originally from Tongo. After selling the plot of land, she saved the money in her rural bank account. She had acquired a household land to build a shop in her village. Women’s access to household land will be discussed in Chapter 5.

<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately, Buriah’s sister informed me that her son had been involved in a robbery case in Accra and was serving a five-year jail term but no family member has had the courage to break the news to her. Later on, when her son did not show up at the festival, Buriah was very worried and she stopped shanking for a few weeks. She left Kejetia to spend some time with her mother in Tongo. When she returned to work, she was drinking excessively, which affected her work.

<sup>20</sup> The mining communities have several sources of water because of the scarcity of water for the most part of the year. Water is very important to small-scale mining because the miners use large quantities of water during sluicing in gold processing. The main source of water for household activities is the stream referred to as kolaa (Talensi word for a large source of water). Women look for alternative sources of water to sell when the stream completely dries up in the dry season or when the heavy rains wash mud from the slopes into the stream. During these times, the water from the stream is not good for household use. Water vendors start looking for water to sell very early in the morning. Water pumped out of the mining pits is not used for household activities but it is good for washing gold.

<sup>21</sup> Work-to-pay is a wage system that is used by men. It is an alternative to the division three. In the work-to-pay system, as soon as chiseling is complete, the sponsor and concessionaire enter into the pit to take as much of the load as they want (enough to cover the production costs). The ghetto owner takes his turn to collect his load. Moyermen, chiselers, and blastmen take their turns. Finally, the locoboys and security men also have their turns. During this time, there is looting and theft by people known as “quarter boys” who are not part of the male work team, *ghetto* boys, or gang. Blastmen and moyermen may request for more load from the *ghetto* owner when they are not satisfied with what they have. Many employer-employee negotiations go on at this time between the men. Chiselers may continue to work in the pit for extra load.

<sup>22</sup> Trust in this sense is linked to stealing. A lot of “stealing” takes place during the gold production process. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

---

<sup>23</sup> Wage payment for shankers is also explained in Chapter 2.

<sup>24</sup> I explained in the previous chapter how Lopo regards Sanpan as a “sister” through marriage.

<sup>25</sup> Over is the residue of chipping after the gold extraction. According to a student from the University of Mines and Technology in Ghana, mercury is able to remove about 30 percent of the gold. After extracting gold from chipping, miners sell “over” to Mossi men who live in the mining communities (Mossi are foreign nationals from Burkina Faso). There are rumors that Mossi use cyanide for extraction. If the rumor is true, then the Mossi are likely to remove more gold than the miners do. However, there is no way to ascertain this rumor since the government of Ghana has banned cyanide use in small-scale mining. According to the miners, the Mossi buy the chemical in Burkina Faso.

<sup>26</sup> Yanton is not the real name of the mine, but I use Yanton to refer to the mining company owned by a Ghanaian in partnership with a company from China. The miners generally refer to this mine as Chinese mine because it is the first jointly owned mine in the area.

<sup>27</sup> Small-scale gold mining activity existed in the area a long time ago. Young people would dig the land searching for gold nuggets. However, the people did not mine on a commercial basis until the government of Ghana demarcated the area for small-scale mining.

<sup>28</sup> New entrants refer to young men who married and brought their wives to live with them in their father’s compound. The head allocates a portion of the household land to the new couple who may request land to plant their crops besides that of the household farm for income.

<sup>29</sup> Sheets used to roof house in the Talensi area are usually flat, aluminum plates. Houses used to be roofed with straw, but it is becoming difficult to get because of long periods of dryness, and it also requires annual replacements or reinforcement.

<sup>30</sup> Ajala’s rights to use the land to build her house are vested in her children through the land tenure system.

<sup>31</sup> Women construct the walls of the mud houses before men roof them.

<sup>32</sup> Farming is seasonal and all the members of the household farm at the same time, making it difficult for women to access their own portion of the land. It does not mean that women cannot access land for personal farms; rather, their right to farm on the same piece of land depends on several factors, including land availability and continuing use of the land.

<sup>33</sup> I make this very rough comparison using the information I gathered from the women in the Talensi mining communities. This assertion is only an estimate since the data I collected from the Talensi mine is not a comprehensive study of women’s earnings.