Bulletin de l'APAD

20 (2000)
Genre et développement

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Référence électronique
Rosemarie R.N. Mwaipopo, « Gender and Power in the Use and Management of Coastal Space and Resources in Saadani Village, Tanzania », *Bulletin de l'APAD* [En ligne], 20 | 2000, mis en ligne le 05 avril 2006, Consulté le 26 juin 2016. URL : http://apad.revues.org/252

Éditeur :
http://apad.revues.org
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Document accessible en ligne sur :
http://apad.revues.org/252
Document généré automatiquement le 26 juin 2016. La pagination ne correspond pas à la pagination de l'édition papier.
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Rosemarie R.N. Mwaipopo

Gender and Power in the Use and Management of Coastal Space and Resources in Saadani Village, Tanzania

"Mwanamke Shughuli" [1]

1 A recent approach to understanding local uses of the environment proposes to look at the environment as "a context through which cultural constructions of both environment and gender are created and recreated" (Leach 1992 :76). This paper examines the various ways in which women in particular participate in the construction and reconstruction of the coastal environment, influenced by individual understandings of power. Through these understandings, women modify local discourses and meanings to transcend socially defined gender boundaries. To demonstrate these experiences, I draw on ethnographic material to illustrate the range of meanings of power that have been derived from women's interactions with coastal space and resources in the coastal village of Saadani in Tanzania. I find my evidence from Saadani corroborates that of other analysts who have claimed that fishing along the Swahili coast on which Saadani village is located is masculinized (DSU-2 1995), and that men's lives are privileged over women's (Byashemererwa 1994 ; Caplan 1989) [2] However, I also demonstrate how women have been able to derive a kind of power, which is different from the standard form of male power linked to fishing and control of coastal space. Women have tried to modify the spatial landscape of gender and power through subjective evaluations of work. The analysis also illustrates that through individual perceptions and actions, women's participation in coastal resource utilisation is continuously being socially negotiated (Cole 1991).

2 Leach (1992) has argued that the study of gender should be linked to agency-based approaches and thus "dynamize" what have tradition ail y been static approaches to the study of gender and the environment. She perceives the environment as a space whose understanding and mapping "speaks about social relationships" (Ardener 1981), a space that is sometimes expressed in the way in which we give spatial metaphors to social relationships in our everyday language. But, she argues, to limit the study of the environment just to existing socio-structural relationships may deny a full comprehension of the way in which gender is instantiated, created and recreated. Leach thus applies a set of interpretive concepts, which are, performance, event and action which according to her, signify the relation of an active agent to the source or reason of an individuals' action in an environment, and through which" [gender] relationships come to be seen not as static, but as fluid and negotiable" *(ibid* 1992 :77*).*

3 Individual agency, as my analysis will illustrate, cannot, however, be understood through performance and actions alone. It should be simultaneously problematized as a meaningful development of social experiences and interaction within localised social relations. These localised social relations, that to a great extent define what are allowable as performances and actions of women within that social environment, also provide the space where women can "actively construct their own identities within the material and discursive constraints of their lives" (Askew 1999 : 18). The difficulty in recent approaches to gender and the environment arises from their failure to clearly demonstrate the relationship between material conditions and the kinds of genderised meanings that individuals attach to natural resources in changing circumstances (Leach 1992 ; Rocheleau *el al* 1996). New experiences lead to new kinds of understandings of the environment (Berry 1993), and of gender realities. To women, these realities recognise a dynamic environment which although can be dominating, it also offers possibilities for their emancipation from male dominated practices (Sawicki 1991). Following Foucault (1980), active construction would not mean that individuals acquire control of the processes determining relationship to resources, but may indicate the ability of an individual to have the choice to engage in the type of relationships an individual wants to, according to

individual understandings of that type of engagement. Having and acting on the choice is in itself a dimension of power relations, and of practices and discourses that sometimes challenge or embrace local meanings adopted for collective usage.

4 In the case of Saadani, historical processes and economic necessity have effected changes that have been very consequential with respect to women's material lives. Opportunities for income generation have opened up possibilities for women to negotiate their participation in previously male-dominated spheres. And as the discussion demonstrates, changes have also developed within the cycle of marriage. Several examples below illustrate that as partners mature together, they allow each other to take on new and different roles or perform new and different activities.

Saadani village : an historical overview

5 Saadani village is located on the north-east of the Tanzania mainland coast in Bagamoyo district. The village lies within an ecosystem that is endowed with a rich natural resource base that could provide a range of livelihood activities for local people. The natural resources found there include a lucrative fishing ground, a coast allow and forest and mangroves. In addition, the wildlife including the sandy beach and Saadani's rich historical connections have made Saadani an attractive tourist destination (IRA-UDsm 1996). However, local people have been compelled to be almost entirely dependent on the fisheries because of specific government-initiated natural resource management processes in that particular area as I explain below. The fishing activity itself was conducted in the inter-tidal zone and within 100 - 150 metres from the shore. The major technique was by using the gill net in which two people enter the sea each holding one end, and fish by dragging the net backwards, which requires a person to have sufficient strength.

6 According to local oral history, the sexual division of labour in Saadani developed from the gender responsibilities and identities constructed over time, and which came to create the primary basis from which current gender-based utilisation practices of coastal resources have been shaped. The development of gender-based spatial distinctions was also an integral part of this division of labour. Archaeological sources indicate that Saadani village might have started as a fishing camping site that accommodated seasonal fishermen from inland. It may have later developed into a fishing/farming settlement similar to many others in the East African coast, whereby permanent homes where established near the coast (Chami 1994). When it was still a fishing camp site, men from neighbouring Uzigua areas used to leave the settlements and would come to Saadani to camp and to fish and to took the food back to their homes. They would sometimes stay for weeks and camp along the Indian Ocean coast especially during major fishing seasons. Women were left back home to cultivate and maintain the homes. Fishing thus developed into an activity conducted by men, and the sea became their work environment. Developing from the division of labour, when Saadani grew into a permanent settlement it continued to be understood that a man's responsibility was to provide relish *(kitweleo)* in this case, finfish, daily for his household. Young unmarried men were also expected to bring *kitweleo* home if they still lived with their parents. Through fishing, men were able to establish their gender identities by fulfilling their roles as providers of *kitweleo* for their households.

7 Gender related definitions of work and social status also became reinforced when Saadani later mushroomed into a coast al township as part of the Swahili coastal civilisations, which grew as a result of the historic Indian Ocean trade between the East African coast and Arab and Portuguese traders between the 2nd BC and 18th AD (Koponen 1988 ; Mpangala 1992). The introduction of the Islamic religion became a major aspect in the consequent settlement of Arab traders in the village. Islam together with the slave trade influenced or cemented certain forms of gender relations. Men's obligation to bring the relish of the day *(kitweleo)* was reinforced by some practices such as women's seclusion. The subsequent social and economic differentiation among households also came to determine the nature of interaction with natural resources. Women in richer households were confined to home surroundings, while house hold-based activities such as collecting water and fuel wood, and cultivation were performed by male and

female slaves. Women in poorer households cultivated in addition to their daily household maintenance activities. With the advent of Islam a dress code deemed appropriate for women was also introduced. These influences articulated with traditional cultures so emphasising the division of tasks and obligations between men and women.

8 European colonialism from the 1880s also had several implications on how local people utilised natural resources as prescribed by gender and class definitions. Firstly, European colonialists abolished slavery on which the economy under Arabs had relied so much. Secondly it introduced compulsory cash crop production (Mpangala 1992) and a poil tax in which every able-bodied male had to pay. With the abolition of slavery, even members of well-off households, both men and women, came to be compelled to practice cultivation since the y could not entirely depend on fishing. Women were more reliant on cultivation since they did not participate in fishing.

9 In 1969, the Saadani Game Reserve (SGR) was established and its establishment led to the subsequent prohibition of cultivation in the area that was demarcated as reserve land (Mpote 1994). The establishment of a boundary for the SGR left the village with virtually very little land, the main hamlet (Saadani central) having less than 1sq km., Uvinje hamlet with an area of 300 metres by 3 kilometres, and a small cultivators settlement called Marumbi (Saadani-l 1998). The prohibition of cultivation increased the importance of fishing as the major source of livelihood for local people. Local livelihoods also came to be predominantly dependent on cash obtained from the sale of marine resources. Even basic staples for household consumption had to be purchased. Local women were deeply affected when cultivation was prohibited and their reliance on men for general household maintenance increased. This is because their ability to supplement household food supplies was dropped. The SGR also regulated access for exploitation of the coastal forest for local needs that included fuel wood for salt making and timber for construction. Activities that were permitted were collection of dry wood for household energy. The collection of raffia palm used for making mats *(majamvi. mikeka),* food covers *(kawa)* and fans *(vihangaisho)* had to be allowed by verbal permit although it was not always the case that local people adhered to this regulation.

10 From 1973, Saadani was designated as an Ujamaa fishing village under the Tanzanian Ujamaa villagisation programme whose aim was to promote social and economic development for the people (Nyerere 1967 ; Kikula 1997). Under the Ujamaa programme, ail adult able-bodied persons had to participate in the major production activity of the village, which in this case was fishing and women were also mobilised into fishing. This measure had in mind "empowering women" by involving them in direct practice and benefits of local production processes.

11 The unfolding of communal production under the Ujamaa ideology coincided with an increase in the demand of prawns in the world market and the firmer institution of the SGR's prohibitions on cultivation. These developments together had several implications as regards access to resources and gender relations at household level. Firstly, finfish declined in importance as a major income earner and came to be regarded as a "by-catch" by fishers who were more interested in prawns and shrimp. Secondly, women felt that their workload had been doubled. Hence, their involvement in fishing came to be short-lived because according to them, fishing was hard work and they still had to perform their household obligations in addition to fishing. They thus slowly disengaged themselves from communal fishing and reverted to their traditional income generating activities which included petty trading such as the sale of fried fish, cooked food and items made from raffia palm. Some women had small garden plots on which they raised vegetables, while others sometimes worked as [seasonal] daily paid labourers in the nearby Coastal Salt Works Company. In the late 1970s Ujamaa principles disintegrated in Saadani after gross mismanagement by the village government of that time. Some women found themselves fishing to top-up their household's income, but again, they did not last long since the y demanded to work according to terms that were not only favourable financially. When the liberalisation of prawn marketing from the 1980s allowed the participation of private entrepreneurs, some local men found a niche in the broader prawn dealing economy, but women were not able due to a number of constraints, one being the

hassles involved in conducting the business, but also because they could not accept it wholly as their type of work.

Working on the sea

12 The perceptions towards work had both common tendencies and differences. Both men and women generally perceived work *(kazi)* according to several criteria, such as the time and labour spent on it ; the cash income it generated ; and the social status or identity it bestowed upon an individual. Most local men regarded fishing as meeting ail these criteria. In 1997, during the period of my study, fishing was the major activity and dominant source of local livelihoods. Men occupied it by 98 %. Fishing did not only give men an income, fishing also gave them the basis for claims to masculinity in their households. In cash terms, men's earnings form fishing in 1997 declined to a weekly average of TShs 5000/= in the major fishing seasons, and in many days for rest of the year, they got nothing. In the early to mid 1990s fishers were able to get TShs 100,000/= a week. Fishing also gave men a basis for claims to identity and difference from their inland neighbours who were predominantly cultivators. Other activities which men did included salt making and trade in marine products. Most men however regarded these other activities as secondary. Moreover, other activities which people placed less reliance on such as daily paid employment with the SGR, were referred to as *"shughuli ndogondogo tu"* (lit : merely petty activities) and were meant and understood only for supplementary income or as a pastime.

13 Yet women did not share the same convictions related to fishing. They too regarded the activities they engaged in as work, and understood them as carrying the same prestige as men's tasks, even though they did not fish. *Mwanamke shughuli,* an idiomatic phrase which implied that a woman's worth can be judged from the activities she engages herself in, was a phrase many women liked to use when they talked of the importance of their petty income-generating activities. Any activity that brought some income to their household was highly regarded, not only because it ensured the woman a daily living in its literal sense, but also because it gave an individual a sense of identity and personality. To women, it was autonomy in pursuing one's choice of activities, and controlling the proceeds from those activities that amounted to what one called work. With this understanding, women sometimes resisted and sometimes accommodated local discourses on work and gender depending on the how these local discourses impacted on their understanding of autonomy, which I now turn to.

14 Firstly, fishing in Saadani was socially constructed as men's activity by certain taboos and by the use of local terminology that spelt out the gender differences within sea-based activities. Most of the taboos were gradually being eroded by social and economic changes although a few were still observed in a subtle manner. One of these taboo regarded women's menstrual blood as a source of pollution to the marine environment and was believed to chase fish away. Fishermen even avoided greeting women by hand when they were on their way to fishing trips. In 1998, one of my local informants commented that "you cannot offer your hand to a woman when you are going to fish, because you do not know in which condition she might be in. She may give you bad luck". It was also regarded as taboo to perform sexual activity before a fishing venture since as Nicolaisen (1983) noted in another community, "women's sexuality was seen as destructive because it distracted men from their social [and religious] duties" (1983 : 5).

15 However, these ideas about the relationships between fishing and social relationships came to be one of the contexts within which the conditions regarding use of coastal space were encountered and challenged. This encounter manifested itself in several ways. One was when women were mobilised by government-driven Ujamaa co-operative production. By making women enter the waters to fish, this programme had challenged the understanding that women were the causes of pollution to the marine environment. Moreover, men also struggled to contain the conviction that sex had negative implications on their fishing. One fisher commented that, "abstaining from sexual activity for fishing purposes [especially if one was married] was a sacred achievement which very few men could attain". He also said that it was very difficult to adhere to such a provision, especially in the current circumstances

where fishers stayed together with their wives even during peak fishing seasons. At the same time, an aspect of women's sexuality challenged this gender discrimination based on taboo. Some women understood that they could use their sexuality for productive ends and several of them employed their sexual potentials to ensure them a livelihood. In both cases, therefore, the temptation to engage in sexual activity which disrespected fishing times and seasons was very high for both men and women.

16 Secondly were the meanings given to the description of the fishing activity. As regards local discourses, fishing was generally described as "an activity in which resources from the sea were taken" *(uvuvi).* However, local people did not regard ail people involved in taking resources from the sea as fishers. In local people's language, fishing was given only a male identity, and except for one woman, ZM, local people did not regard the few women who fished as fishers *(wavuvi).* These women usually engaged themselves in fishing during major fishing seasons. Women's traditional activity of catching small shrimp *(ushimba)* was not regarded as fishing either. Both men and women would say that, *"mwanamke sio mvuvi, anatanda ushimba tu"* (lit : a woman is not a fisher, she just catches small shrimp), implying that the activity women performed in the sea environment was not really fishing [3]. Using the same words, catching small shrimp was also regarded as an activity of lower category in relation to fishing for finfish and prawns, and men had never been known to participate in catching small shrimp.

17 According to local oral sources, the number of women engaged in catching small shrimp was gradually declining over the years. During the period of my study, only three women were regular in catching small shrimp *(ushimba).* Two of them were single and the third was married to an old man who guaranteed little income. Thus they engaged in any income generating activity that they believed would sustain them. They normally caught small shrimp in the intertidal area during high tide *(bamvua),* in the early hours of the day. Before going into the waters, the women scouted the sea along the beach to locate signs of jumping small shrimp. When the shrimp were sighted, the women waded into the sea in twos, with pieces of old mosquito netting or cloth, which they manoeuvred below the surface. Then, each holding one end of the net, they scooped the shrimps as if using a large strainer. Sometimes women used an old piece of *khanga* [4] for such purposes. They caught small shrimp in small quantities. The average catch per day during my stay in the village seldom exceeded 1 kilogramme per woman, a quantity that had little significant market value. A tea mug full was sold at TShs 100-200/= (1998 prices), and was usually sold at the village market or sometimes, in front of the women's houses [5]. Catching small shrimp therefore generated very little income and on many cases, the whole catch was not sold at ail and therefore had to be consumed at the women's households. Hence, catching small shrimp was regarded as an activity for the domestic sphere that was only significant for household sustenance and not for the competitive public enterprise as fishing for finfish and prawns was, which was men's arena. It nonetheless had a particular value as part of women's work that was understood to be crucial, but of a different order from men's work.

Women in fishing

18 As I have mentioned earlier, the Ujamaa villagisation programme attempted to revolutionise the gender repartition of tasks in fishing by encouraging and mobilising Saadani women into fishing. The co-operative principles introduced by the Ujamaa villagisation programme provided opportunity for equal participation by ail adult men and women in major local production processes which in this case was fishing. This principle of equal participation was initially taken as an obligation and later several households incorporated it as a means to increase household income. The programme also made communal access to the process of production easier under the administration of the village government, which in Saadani involved establishing communal rights to the use of fishing equipment and rights of access to sea space. This provision enabled both adult women and men to have access to fishing grounds and to the instruments of production (fishing nets). These interventions had several implications on conventional understandings of the division of tasks. Some of the se implications managed to influence a certain degree of change especially in facilitating women's acceptance in fishing. Some women recalled how their husbands had actually encouraged them

to fish so that the y would add to the overall communal income. Women thus fished with fellow women, and participated in the sorting of prawns, which during Ujamaa was also communally performed.

19 Yet many women resisted to be transformed into fishers *(wavuvi)* as described in local Saadani expressions. They demanded to participate in fishing according to terms that were favourable to them, which incorporated a lesser workload. Women who fished were still required to perform other household responsibilities and many still practised gardening for vegetables. But, Ujamaa obliged women to enter into those (men's) arenas, without obliging men to enter women's arenas in order to equally spread out the use of labour. Women also felt that working as fishers as they were compelled to under Ujamaa principles, reduced their traditional ability to control an independent income. Therefore, by assuming that women would attain [social and economic] power through participating in what was locally defined as the dominant arena of power, the programme failed to recognise that women themselves did not need to subscribe to a kind of power that was identified as men's. Women demanded to express and pursue their own individual discourses and practices of power. The fact that, after the disintegration of Ujamaa co-operative principles in the early 1980s, some women continued to fish and to contribute to individual household incomes did not mean they had succumbed to men's identities. Women claimed that during this period, they participated in fishing under different circumstances. They were more willing to fish on an individual basis since they understood that the matrilineal principle of control of domestic resources gave each, men and women, specific powers to control resources independently of the other's influence (Caplan, 1975). But they also soon realised that they could note cope with the workload either.

20 Ujamaa and men's encouragement, important as they were to open up new production possibilities for women, did not go totally unrewarded. A limited number of women took up fishing as a livelihood endeavour when the participation of the rest declined in the early 1980s. This number was small despite the fact that women themselves recognised that new types of work that gave them further access to an independently controlled income were welcome, and, many women strove to achieve this independent status. *"Kazi ni kama mume"* (lit : work is like a husband) was a common phrase often used by women. The phrase implied that work could replace the traditional responsibility of a man as the main provider for a household. According to some women, engaging in one's own income-generating work reduced one's dependence on a man. As one lady told me, "a man cannot trouble me if I have my own income". Yet some of them explained that there were other reasons apart from their inability to cope with the physical work involved in fishing or with the dual responsibilities the y had then to perform as a consequence. The work arrangements involved in fishing meant that, in order to be successful, one had to maintain a certain time schedule that could not interfere with the domestic work demands many women were obliged to meet. They also required that one had to match one's fishing partner's zeal to fish, which several women could not do. And because men regarded women as too slow at the work and unable to endure fishing for long periods of time, women fishers were obliged to take other women as partners, once the y had been taught by men how to handle gill nets. Even women's short lived enthusiasm with gill net fishing during the late 1970s to early 1980s was regarded by men as only an influence of something one man described as *maendeleo,* [6] and that, otherwise, women would not have been able to participate in fishing, as one man said,

> "Modern ways of fishing have made it easier to fish, not only for women, but also for other people who are newcomers in the fishing enterprise. But fishing using traditional techniques is like the way people used to hunt for game meat. You have to know how to make a fish trap *(dema)* or fish fence *(uziolwando).* You have to know the rules and skills of the trade to be successful. You have to know where to place the fish trap or fence, how to place them and in what season. Women did not know ail of these things".

21 Women also understood that the prawn fishing industry as it was conducted in Saadani, bonded an individual into a gill net lending and prawn marketing chain. This bond would not have allowed them to be autonomous producers, as they were used to in the predominantly women's activities, most of which did not need a middle-person to sustain. In Saadani, fish net owners

distributed fishing nets to local fishers on the agreements that the fish net owner would be the sole purchaser of the fishers' prawn catches. This arrangement which was meant to be of mutual reciprocity usually compelled the fisher to abide by the agreement or risk the net to be withdrawn. However, women knew that fish net owners regarded them as unproductive to maintain in a net-lending contract. During my stay in the village, I repeatedly noticed that women fishers managed to haul the nets in only thrice per day on average compared to the minimum of four times that able bodied men 'dragged' the nets. It was thus more likely that fishermen got a larger quantity of prawns than fisherwomen, and were therefore worth more to fish net owners. Hence fish net owners usually by-passed giving nets directly to women. The fish net owners also claimed that women did not know how to mend nets, and were therefore expensive to maintain in a contract because contracting them demanded paying for the services of another person to mend the net. And most of the few young women who knew how to mend fish nets did not want to fish. Women who wanted to fish had, therefore, to depend on male kin to request fishing nets on their behalf from fish net owners, or requested the men to act as their brokers in fishing contracts. Some women were then entered into the same type of contract as men, and had to sell the prawns the y caught to the same fishing net owner from whom their male relatives received nets. The arrangements of prawn fishing and marketing in Saadani hence reinforced some of the traditional understandings of the division of labour that excluded women from effective participation in fishing. However, in a few cases, male relatives gave women some of their worn-out nets to fish with, through informal arrangements. These men would then sometimes sell the prawns the women caught, on their behalf to fishing net owners, or women could sell them directly to prawn traders. This was because the women in these arrangements were not tied to any fishing net owner and were producing as their men folks' subcontractors.

22 Being a fish net owner would have meant less hassles of going into the waters to fish, but still, women felt that fishermen were very difficult to deal with, especially when one was a female trader. One of them said :

"If you become a local fish net owner you will be required to follow 'your' fishers wherever they go or they may cheat you and sell the prawns to another person, and you may not be able to confront them. If they can sometimes cheat their fellow men, to a woman it could be easier".

23 However, although women al ways mentioned that the various structural constraints of time, strength, mobility and workload that were part of gill net fishing were responsible for putting them out of fishing, they insisted that they remained outside of those activities primarily by choice. For women who had previously under Ujamaa been able to demonstrate their ability to participate in fishing alongside men, the fact that the y now regarded themselves to have the freedom to be able to choose the type of work they wanted to do, came to be more important. Moreover, women felt that the local prawn fishing and marketing chain was complicated for them to benefit directly, unless under the arm of a man which reduced their autonomy. The fact that the few women who fished often had to attach themselves to a fish net owner or prawn dealer through a man acting as proxy, simply to ensure fair transactions with prawn dealers, made women feel weak. It was thus necessary for women to decide on certain kind in which their autonomy would be safe guarded. Often the choices of work women made were influenced by individual desires and abilities. These choices were perceived in diverse ways. To some women the choices entailed gaining men's acceptance by proving gender fitness required for any type of activity (Musolf 1992). To other women work was any activity that one could pursue independently even if it meant crossing gender work boundaries.

24 The following case study illustrates how a woman established her power based on, her own perceptions of individual power within what was conventionally seen as men's domain. With the support of her husband she won the acceptance among men by, proving her own equal ability to work in what was normally regarded as a masculine' way. Yet she was also able to retain her feminine qualities.

Case Study 1 : Gender fitness

"ZM was about 50 years old in 1998 and lived at Saadani Chumvi hamlet with her husband, Mzee JSM in a household of nine members. Mzee JSM taught ZM how to fish using a gill net after their fourth child was born, and by 1988, ZM had become a full-time fisher. She normally fished in partnership with her husband and side by side with other fishers. She could, like ail other fishers, fish for the four stages of fishing conducted in one day which was also the minimum number of times men 'dragged' the net each fishing day. I came to learn that ZM was the only woman whom ail people within the village, inc1uding seasonal fishers, acknowledged was a fisher. Indeed she was known locally as a *mvuvi,* the local term used only to describe men who were regular gill-net fishers working the local coast line from the shore almost every day. This was because ZM had taken to fishing the way in which men had. She went fishing every ideal fishing day. The only difference was that she did not go far from home and did not camp along the beach. Neither did her husband. To her, fishing was like any other activity that an individual did. Fishing is a kind of work, ZM said. when she was expressing her views on fishing. She then explained that, "work is any activity you do" that you depend upon for subsistence. I am proud of my abilities as a woman, and I am proud of my physique because I am able to engage in any kind of activity. And that is why I can cook and can also fish". ZM was also responsible for her own house's daily maintenance duties. However, according to her, household activities were not work, they were just women's daily responsibilities, and she said she always had time to perform them, just as any other woman could.

ZM was also a devout Muslim believer and understood that a dignified Muslim woman was not supposed to expose her body by indecent or revealing wear in public. During our first discussions together, she even did not allow me to take a photograph of her, explaining that photographs of people encouraged idolatry, which was against her : religion [7] But she did not want religion to be a hindrance to her work and explained that, God blesses everything that one does in good faith. She of course recognised that the type of fishing conducted at Saadani Bay required her to go into the sea, sometimes with water up to her neck. Men, she pointed out, were able to fish bare-chest and wearing short pants only, but a woman could not. And she realised that she would have to cover herself properly. Therefore, on a fishing day, ZM put on heavy short pants with a T-shirt or blouse, over which she wore a loose fitting gown that reached below her knees. She also wrapped a *khanga* (cloth) on her head to coyer herself and to shade her head from the sun. She adopted this heavy attire to obscure her bodily features when she got wet, a practice which, she told me, complied with the Islamic provision of unrevealing dressing for women. Mzee JSM on the other hand was quite proud of his wife's distinction as a woman fisher, and proudly claimed, "I have, myself, taught her [how to fish]" He also said that, "I was not happy with the way in which the proceeds from fishing had to be distributed between two fishing partners who were from different households, which was the common system in Saadani. So I thought it would be wise that my household benefits from ail the prawn sales rather than that I should distribute the takings between me and a partner from another household".

ZM recalled that, although she had earlier tried to fish with other women when still at Saadani main hamlet in the early 1980s, Mzee JSM has been the only reliable fishing partner she has had. She also said that fishing with the women was a trial and error kind of fishing, which took advantage of the abundance in prawns during the 1980s. But this experience was brief. ZM also fished briefly with three other women at Saadani Chumvi at another period. This was when Mzee JSM's health was not good. ZM taught the women how to fish until they were able to fish together. But that period of fishing was short-lived as the other women were not particularly skilful nor were they keen to work as fishers. These women decided later to trade in fried finfish, rather than do the fishing themselves. By the beginning of 1999, ZM started to fear that her participation in fishing might later become hampered by her husband who was ageing and slowly losing strength. She feared for her future as a fisher because she had yet to find a partner as committed as her husband was. But Mzee JSM said that he would never allow ZM to fish with any other man. He explained with authority but in a humorous way, that, when the time comes that he is no longer able to fish for health reasons, only then would he allow his children or other women to fish with her, but not another man, even his own relatives".

25 The case of ZM illustrates how the sexual division of labour as regards fishing can he overcome by individual definitions of work and by individual performances that deny any claims to natural gender differences. It was ZM's resourcefulness that enabled her to be called *mvuvi,* and thus gain the recognition accorded to men. People actually acknowledged her by the saying "that is a woman !" implying that she was a woman who has been able to do what was not usually expected of women in that area. Some theories on gender would argue that by being called *mvuvi* ZM was being masculinised, hut the y fail to illustrate the ways in

which subjective experiences and understanding allow a person to challenge dominant ideas on relationships and at the same time to maintain one's individuality. ZM emphasised her femininity as a Muslim woman, a wife and mother even when working in men's arena, and was able to challenge and modify gendered uses of natural resources without having to compromise her dignity. Sawicki (1991) ponders on such practice when she questions, using Cameron's words, that in, order to succeed in a male dominant world, whether "women elect to use modes of, expression men can. understand because it is the best way to get men to listen" (1991 : 2), or whether they are the authors of their own practice. In ZM's case, it was her husband : who initiated her participation by encouraging and supporting her to overcome the, exclusion. But she complemented her husband's encouragement by proving her ability to fish 'as men did'. In addition, ZM was very much aware of the possible contradiction between her religious ideals and the nature of the work she was involved in. But she : modified her approach to the work by wearing clothes that were fit for a Muslim woman even while fishing. In addition, despite her successful engagement in fishing, ZM did not claim to have the equivalent power to that of her husband.

26 A few other women also fished periodically but only during the peak fishing seasons. In Uvinje hamlet, Mama J, her daughter and two daughters-in-law were regular participants in fishing during these seasons, whereby they usually fished for just ten to, fifteen days each season, and only when the average catch was significant. These : women also made sure that they dressed appropriately for the task, and were always encouraged by Mama J's two sons and a son-in-law who fished in the same grounds. However, the y claimed that the y fished only because "life had become tough" and therefore they had to fish for income. To these women, fishing was seen as an unacceptable imposition due to changing social and economic circumstances, somehow similar to the 1970s mobilisation under the Ujamaa villagisation co-operative, production. ZM, on the other hand, perceived her fishing as simply another activity which was part of her life.

27 Other women held a different perception towards fishing claiming that the way fishing was conducted in Saadani was onerous, and they preferred to capitalise on other opportunities such as to trade in fried fish which came to be a lucrative income-generating activity for women, as Bi K expresses below. Bi K, who, in 1997, was one of the most prominent fried fish traders in the village, had previously fished with her female relatives in the early 1990s. She stopped fishing, she said, after she realised that trading in fried fish was a more lucrative and less onerous venture. She said :

> "Why should I be inconvenienced by getting wet from fishing and sunburnt from long hours under the glaring sun only to realise a small amount of money, when I can earn even more from selling fried fish, and with less trouble ?".

28 Although her argument that gill net fishing brought in less income was only realistic since the mid 1990s when prawn catches per fishing pair started dropping significantly, many women concurred with her view. Women claimed that it was possible to participate and benefit from the fishing activity without being physically involved in the process of fishing. Long-distance sale of fried finfish, and operating small eating-places called *'hoteli'* [8] which were popular during major fishing seasons, were examples. Other types of local trading businesses which women conducted, such as selling locally produced spirits also thrived during major fishing seasons.

29 The *hoteli* were local eating places run by women and which sold a range of cooked food. In 1998 there were six permanent *hoteli* where one could buy snacks or proper meals throughout the day. These six *hoteli* were operated in permanent settings similar to the way small conventionally established restaurants were. The seasonal *hoteli* business flourished during major fishing seasons as women in various locations in the village also set up one. Most of them were set up in the sites of the women's homesteads where the women could provide service to *hoteli* customers while at the same time attend to their household responsibilities. Usually a few chairs, sitting benches and tables were placed outside their houses under the shade of the veranda. The food was served at this area. Other *hoteli* sprouted up at several places along the beach during major fishing seasons where fishers congregated after fishing or within the vicinity of fishing camps since it was more likely to get customers.

30 Operating a *hoteli* meant several commitments. Many of the women who ran such *hoteli,* usually took foodstuffs on credit from the village shops to start the season and paid back their debts during the course of their enterprise. The *hoteli* business was particularly active during certain periods of the day depending on the timing of the fishing periods which were influenced by the tides. The seasonal *hoteli* were hence operational during the times when the fishers went down to sea or when they returned from fishing trips. If the ideal fishing time was in the early hours of dawn, *hoteli* operators made sure that tea and snacks were available for the fishers before they went in sea. It was only men who ate at these *hoteli.* Even married fishers ate at these *hoteli* because they could not rely on their wives if they had to leave early in the morning, except if the wife was one of those *hoteli* operators who served tea and snacks early in the day. Full square meals were then prepared for the afternoons as the fishers came hack. Male fishers (mostly seasonal) and even SGR staff visited these *hoteli* to eat. Women who fished never ate at these *hoteli.* They took their meals at home. Sometimes the women fishers would even prepare snacks which they would send to a colleague's *hoteli* to be sold, and they would collect the money later in the day.

31 Conducting the *hoteli* business thus meant a lot of hard work and regular commitment. Similar to fisherwoman ZM's experience, the women who ran the *hoteli* had to combine their *hoteli* business activities with their daily household responsibilities. Although the profit margin from *hoteli* was often low compared to what men earned from their prawn sales, women in Saadani were quite proud of their *hoteli b*usinesses because it enabled them to gain an independently controlled income which otherwise the y would have had to depend on men. The preparation of the food was also labour intensive and absorbed a significant part of the women's day. But women were assured of at least some income throughout the fishing seasons, and they were proud of it. Moreover, they recognised that by running a *hoteli,* they became linked to the benefits realised from the local major production activity, which was fishing, albeit in a secondary process of selling food to fishers. As one Saadani woman said, "We both live from prawns. When men are successful in fishing, our businesses become successful 100. If the y don't get much prawns, then we also lose".

32 The long distance sale of fried finfish was another major income earner for many women in Saadani. The social significance of this trade to Saadani people was not only its related material benefits but also because of its implications in the pattern of gender relationships. I now discuss this trade to illustrate the way in which utilisation of the same resource came to acquire a gendered significance in the process of changing social and economic contexts.

Men’s fish and women’s fish : sun-dried fish and fried fish

33 Many local women were involved in the long distance sale of fried finfish *(samaki wa kukaanga).* Local oral sources explained that this activity mushroomed in the mid 1980s when finfish and prawns were in abundance and every household was able to satisfy its needs for cash and for relish derived from finfish. By then, it was easier for local people to find a market for large species of fresh finfish in Bagamoyo township or in Zanzibar white there was no market for juvenile fish and smaller species of finfish. Yet they were harvested in great quantities, until it reached a point where smaller finfish would be thrown away because they could not be preserved or sold in the village. Men from the village who used to travel inland to sell salted sun-dried finfish *(ng' onda)* were the ones who encouraged local women to conduct the business after they saw how women from other villages engaged themselves in selling fried fish to travellers on stations which were along the Ruvu-Mnyusi railway line. [9] Once back in Saadani village these men influenced and encouraged their women to join the business. Three single women joined the trade initially, and their successes inspired many other women in the village who then ventured into the business. Since that time, the long distance sale of fried finfish has become Saadani women's major income generating activity.

34 Trading in fried finfish had two basic features. Firstly, it involved travelling to various locations away from Saadani until ail the fish was sold. One fish was sold at an average price of between TShs 100/= - 300/=. But sometimes, the fried fish market was so poor that the traders had to come back to Saadani with their fish, where they would give it away or sold it for very

low prices. Secondly, the trade involved staying at the same place (the market) for the whole day, sometimes for up to a week or more. Therefore it needed patience. This was because fried fish were bought in small quantities by individual households and not in wholesale as were men's salted sun-dried finfish. To pass the time, women took raffia palm cuttings *(ukili)* for making mats *(majamvi)* and plaited them throughout the day as they waited for customers. Some of these items would also be displayed for sale and others were brought back to the village to be sold or used in the women's houses. Hence, unlike the men who were almost completely preoccupied by fishing, Saadani women were able to combine time efficiently by engaging in more than one type of trade at the same time. Hence women exhibited more flexibility in allocating their time among alternative undertakings than their men.

35 Men did not have the patience to conduct the long distance fried finfish business, and although several of them indicated interest in venturing in it, the length of time involved in waiting until their wares would have been sold discouraged them. To women, the organisation of the trade in fried fish was almost the same as the petty businesses they conducted within their home surroundings, which involved retailing foodstuffs in limited quantities. The only difference was the change in location. Men were thus more comfortable trading in salted sun-dried finfish which could be sold at wholesale than the way in which women sold fried finfish. Sun-dried and salted finfish *(ng' onda)* whose preparation had long been conducted by men, was another masculinised activity (its skills having been handed down through generations to the present). According to local oral history, camping fishers used to dry a lot of fish by the beach before returning to the hinterland to their families. The fish were dried mainly for preservation and some for subsequent domestic consumption. But they also fetched a significant income from sales in the hinterland. The process of salting and drying finfish for *ng'onda* was later shifted from the fishing camps to the surroundings of the village residences, as Saadani settlement grew and it was no longer necessary for fishers who lived in the village to remain for long periods in fishing camps. Its preparation continued to be done by men and boys only. A fisher usually selected larger-sized fish for drying and the rest, ail smaller, he gave to his wife for household consumption. Boys worked with their fathers, de-gutted the fish and applied a lot of salt before putting the fish out to dry in the sun. The fish were put out to dry on a small platform built of poles, which during 1997, almost every house in Saadani had in the front or at the backyard. Women and girls were not involved in preparation of *ng'onda* for sale, because as one person said, "the preparation of *ng'onda* is a man's job and has been so for ages". Some women sometimes dried small sized finfish on mats or on the roofs of their houses to preserve them for later use as relish for their own households, but women were generally not involved in the sale of *ng'onda.* When the *ng'onda* were ready for sale, local men would travel to settlements inland and sell them wholesale. Usually such business trips took around three days.

36 The fried finfish trade had several implications as regards local gender relationships. Firstly, fishermen husbands or male partners who had long supplied fresh fish to their women as an obligation in their relationships started taking ail smaller sized finfish the y used to discard in the past to their wives or partners for their fried finfish trade. Other products such as prawns and shrimp continued to be sold to fish net owners and prawn dealers, and bigger sized finfish were sold by the male fishers themselves or were salted and sun-dried for sale. Sometimes, on the eve before a fishing day, women would request fish from male relatives who were -not married, and on some occasions they were given the fish without any costs. But often, single men preferred to sell their fish to other unrelated women rather than give them for free to their female relatives. This was because they understood that these women wanted them for the fried finfish business and not for relish. Thus, giving fish freely remained obligatory for husbands and male partners only. Women who were not married or who did not have dependable kin, had to buy fresh fish at an average price of TShs 20/= each. Yet this trade enabled many single women to obtain an independent income and to reduce their dependence on men, especially through relations of affection.

37 Secondly, the trade necessitated temporary shifts in the tradition al conceptions of women's space which in Saadani, was understood as the kitchen or cooking place. This was because

in the cases where women travelled from home husbands took over the responsibility of daily household upkeep. They cooked, fetched water and had to take care of young children. The following case study of M and his wife Bi K, illustrates the way in which the latter's involvement in the fried fish trade generated a periodic re-organisation of activities related to their household's sustenance activities.

Case Study 2 : Shifting domestic boundaries

> "M and his wife Bi K, lived in Uvinje hamlet and had four children, the oldest, who was a teenaged boy. The two older children stayed at Saadani with relatives where they attended the village primary school, and the younger two stayed with M and Bi K at Uvinje. Bi K was known as one of the most active long distance fried fish sellers at Saadani. With or without a colleague, she travelled by bicycle or train to wherever her mission took her. She would travel to Miono and to stations along the Ruvu-Mnyusi railway line and other settlements (see map). She was usually away once in two months, and, during the peak fishing seasons she used to travel at every opportunity when she had enough fish to make a trip worthwhile. When she was away, M, took over the responsibility of cooking food and taking care of their two younger children. This was in addition to his own daily fishing activities. This kind of intra-household arrangement was one that several other long-distance fried finfish trading women claimed to experience, particularly if there was no older girl in the house". M did not complain. He even encouraged his wife to continue in the business. He supplied her with her requirements of fresh fish from his own fishing activity. But he was unable to give his wife the money to buy other required ingredients such as cooking oil, because he did not have enough money for its purchase. Bi K therefore usually obtained cooking oil worth TShs 800/= a litre on credit from one of the shops in the village where many women were able to do so, always on the understanding that payments would be made immediately on return from fried fish selling trips. The village shopkeepers said that such women were reliable people, and they did not mind giving them Ingredients on credit. Whatever M earned from prawn fishing was used to maintain the family upkeep. He also said that he was responsible for providing school uniforms and food for his house, responsibilities that he could not always meet. M thus complied with Bi K's frequent demands to travel for trade, while he cooked and fetched water and fuel wood for his household. M also used to take Bi K by bicycle to Mvave railway station or to Miono (see map 1) whenever she left on a business trip. After she had sold her fish, Bi K would sometimes send a message to M requesting him to come and collect her at these locations on her way back. Through her business, Bi Kwas able to purchase valuable items for the house including a bed and mattress, a set of living room chairs, and a number of other items for household use which M had never been able to afford. Comprehending his situation, M said, "married life these days is like a mouse chewing a person's toe. *Unauma na kupuliza* (lit : you bite and soothe) at the same time. You make your wife work for you, sometimes at home and sometimes for income generation, while you attend to her various needs and responsibilities al home. So does a woman. She leaves you with household responsibilities but what she brings back is reasonable" .

38 This type of understanding was not common within many households. Some married men did not allow their wives to engage in the long distance trade. It was thus mostly single women who were prominent in the trade. Other married couples, such as . M and Bi K, felt that the monetary benefits for the households were worth the temporary rearrangements of daily responsibilities. And although the profits varied from one trip to another depending on the personal maintenance costs involved in each trip, on average, women were able to earn a net income of TShs 10000/= and 20000/= per trip, which usually extended over a period of ten days and two weeks at the most. This amount was exclusive of production costs such as transportation and fare, subsistence at the market location, and the price of cooking oil. Women were able to make such business trips once a month, during the major fishing periods, and about once in every two to three months for the rest of the year.

39 The poor communications infrastructure of Saadani also generated another gender-related implication. During my study, women travelled to places which could only be accessible by road since the competition for markets in the stations along the railway line was very high. In circumstances were there was no public means of transportation by road, women traders had to negotiate for their travel needs with men who owned bicycles. Transport by bicycle was arranged by the woman or her husband or partner. Women whose husbands or partners did not have bicycles had to hire one for TShs 2000/= or 3000/= to Miono (see map), which is the nearest location from Saadani which was about 48 kilometres inland, and where road transportation by vehicle was available to other inland parts of Coast region. The costs of

hiring a bicycle to Mvave railway station (see map) was TShs 500/=, if one decided to go that route. Women who had no husbands or partners had to incur more costs compared to women with partners, but the advantage they had was the freedom to travel without being limited by the demands of a man. Married women on the other hand had to depend on their husbands' willingness for them to participate in the long distance fried finfish trade. MT, the wife of a local fish net owner *(tajiri wa nyavu)* told me that her husband did not even allow her to establish a *hoteli* at the centre of the village which would have attracted more customers, let alone allow her to travel with her cousin sisters who were long distance traders in fried finfish. Yet, as M did, many husbands came to be compelled to allow their wives to participate in this trade because of its value to household sustenance.

40 Although income from fried fish trade became the most dependable of the various sources of income in many households, women understood clearly that their income was less compared to what men got from selling prawns. But a monetary comparison between men's and women's incomes was not the only criterion to influence what a woman chose to do. Moreover, both women and men understood that what men earned from prawns was very erratic, depending on fishing successes.

41 Women also wanted the convenience and ability to organise an independent productive enterprise, albeit within certain genderised parameters, unlike the way in which prawn fishing and marketing was organised. Autonomy was often therefore of paramount importance to women. Its achievement in productive enterprise was also understood as realisable through certain forms of property holding, which I discuss below. Indeed, the distribution of property ownership, which clearly expressed gender divisions, also influenced the ability of individuals to utilise coastal resources in Saadani.

Ownership and access to property and resources

42 The ownership of or access to fishing nets and sea craft was regarded as the most secure form of local property ownership by local people since these equipment ensured access, to utilisation of natural resources. In this section, I demonstrate that the primary concern for women was not the material value attached to such ownership of property, which was the way men viewed it, but rather the social value of being able to be part of the coastal production enterprise and thereby able to use the exploited resources for their subsistence.

43 Ownership of any type of property in Saadani could be achieved through several means. Individuals could achieve property through inheritance, through purchase, as gifts or through divorce. A range of social issues also determined the ownership patterns between women and men. For inheritance, many households usually adhered to the, provisions for inheritance of the Islamic religion that gave a woman a share that is only half that of a male heir (Landberg, 1985). In the case of individual purchase or gifts, women and men often received or purchased items that were in accordance with locally ; prescribed genderised positions in Saadani. Moreover, the ownership of potentially productive and income generating goods and resources such as a bicycle, *fishing* nets : and sea craft were normally given to men. This was also because sea craft and fishing , equipment were seen as related to local definitions of activities which men performed.

44 Women often received consumer items such as clothing and household furniture. Other items regarded of high value in the village such as a house or a plot of land were given to both men and women if available in the estate.

45 Individuals also received property as gifts given by male or female parents or relatives. Several women were able to own property which was *given* to them as gifts from their husbands, such as goats. However, and as one woman said, "it is not always that women received property from a husband, nor did women al ways rely on the' provisions of the Islamic religion to demand or expect a share of property". This was, because women perceived men as 'unreliable' and, therefore, married women believed' that they should plan independently for their future, just in case their marriages did not :, last. In the case of parents giving gifts to their children, often the principle of giving 'masculine' items to males and feminine items to women prevailed as it were through inheritance. This was the case even if the gifts were items from the mother's

estate being distributed as assets to her children. In one case, a single mother gave some of her savings to her sons to enable them to purchase a dugout canoe *(ngalawa).* She also said that she believed her daughters understood that they did not have any claim to the canoe , because they were not fishers. And even if the girls themselves occasionally engaged in ' prawn fishing, they only fished for immediate income generation. The girls, she said, could expect other things from her, including a share of her house and household furniture.

46 This woman's actions are an example of the way many women internalised the gender categorisation of roles that they extended to property ownership. As a single woman at the time she gave money to her sons, the woman was able to retain her independence from the clutches of marriage and out of the control of men in disposing of resources. Yet, even for a woman who is able to stay out of control of men, when she got the chance to distribute her as sets she gave those with the highest productive value : to her sons and not her daughters. Even her ideas on property distribution illustrated the way in which local people regarded fishing equipment as being of high value as house but with different gender implications. A house could be given to women and men, while fishing nets were to be given to men. This case also illustrated the persistence of the power of patriarchy that is linked to the matrilineal principle of male control pf material resources.

47 However, exceptions occurred in rare cases, especially when parents or a husband decided to give a woman property which would normally have gone to a male heir. Such was the case with fishing nets. Only two women claimed to me that they owned fishing nets. One of them had been given the net by her father. She was the eldest daughter and was divorced and living with her parents. Her father wanted her to earn her own living and decided to give her a fishing net, ignoring the general attitudes towards giving women property of this nature. Her two brothers, who had their own homes, also received fishing nets. The other woman acquired the net from what was left to her as part of her deceased husband's estate. This woman did not have children of her own and took care of her husband's two daughters by another wife, and their children.

48 One of this woman's grandchildren was a four year-old boy, and the woman knew that the net would have depreciated in value by the lime the boy grew up and was able to use it Hence, the household did not have a grown up male member who deserved the net. In neither case had the women used the fishing net for fishing purposes since being given the nets. In the first case, the woman said she that her brothers may need to use the fishing net one day. Since she often did receive fish for relish from them, she did not see why she should not let them use the net. But since the brothers had their own nets, hers was left to lie idle. The net of the other woman was also left idle. Hence both nets stopped being of any use as productive assets. Moreover, in both cases, the women thought of linking the net to a male relative in order to secure the benefits from it. Otherwise, they understood that on their own, they could not handle the demands of managing a fishing net if given to another person they were not related to.

49 As regards the purchase of fishing nets, many women told me that they did not have enough cash to purchase fishing nets or other fishing equipment. I later realised that their primary concern was the difficulty of interacting with men within the fishing and marketing processes as the other two women who had inherited fish nets felt as I have mentioned above. However, most women agreed that fish fences (*uzio*) would be relatively easier for them to work with or use since they could be handled by one person. Fish fences also produced finfish which women needed more for relish or for their fried finfish trade. And finfish did not need a fish trader to market. But they understood that fish fences also required frequent cleaning, mending and checking of the catch. Hence the y demanded daily interaction with the sea, which many women could not undertake. Women regarded this pattern of interaction using fish fences did not correspond well with the patterns in which they managed their livelihoods. Fishing by using fish fences sometimes involved irregular if not odd hours of the day for cheeking the fences, because the times of the tides were tied to lunar cycles, while women's daily cycles were tied to the times of the sun.

50 To many women then, the need for and drive towards an independent and reliable source of income thus did not accommodate a desire to purchase a fishnet, in this case even a fishnet used to erect fish fences. This was because of the difference between the two kinds of cycles and

realities, one which was the fishing cycle which related more to men's ways of working, but was against women's work and life realities which were' tied more to the sunrise-sunset cycle.

51 Yet, through individual initiative it was possible for a woman to transcend these, limitations. The following case study illustrates how one woman pursued an' individually-designed strategy to participate in fishing through purchasing a fish net. Her experience illustrated the possibility of transcending gender-based boundaries of types of work.

Case Study 3 : Transcending gender-work boundaries ?

> "MM was a middle-aged divorcee who was cohabiting with Mzee N, a local Saadani person employed by the SGR as a Game assistant. She was previously employed by the Forestry Division, for six years, at Kibaha township, the Coast region's headquarters. In 1995, she was retrenched during the mass redundancy exercise of civil servants conducted by government and parastatal institutions in Tanzania. She thus returned to Saadani, her father's home village, and soon thereafter started living with Mzee N. MM started out doing part-time jobs with the SGR at Saadani. From her savings and the redundancy package she received. MM managed to construct a very good house by Saadani's standards. Her daughter from her previous marriage came from Mkange to live in the house with her child. In late 1998, Mzee N proposed marriage to MM but ; MM declined, arguing that she was not yet ready. Some village gossips claimed that one of the reasons that made MM decline Mzee N' s wish to pay bridewealth for her was that she wanted to maintain her independent control over her own property and to manage her life without a man's interference. After ail, Mzee N was already married to another woman with whom he had eight children, and MM was not ready to become a junior wife.
>
> In his free time, Mzee N managed a fish fence erected on the sea bed right in front of the house in which I was staying, in the area local people called *bichi.* Sometime in 1998, Mzee N showed MM how to cheek and harvest fish and also how to mend and erect the fish net. Since that time, they went down to the sea together when : the water ebbed, checking and cleaning the net together. In February 1999, MM requested me to purchase a fishing net for her when I was going to Dar es Salaam. She gave me TShs 20,000/=. She said, "I have thought of what to do and realised that I could put up a fish fence of my own. After ail, it is not much hard work". She also told me that she had consulted Mzee N and he had approved. She added that she had done so : because she did not want to tarnish her relationship with Mzee N by showing too much independence by purchasing a fishing net. She said, "it is important that you understand your [husband] man and know if he is likely to let you own something of your own, because some men feel threatened if they see you owning valuable property such as " fishing nets or a house. Otherwise he May think that, since you have valuable property, I then you are a woman who cannot be controlled. Therefore, *unatumia akili yako kichwani* (lit : you use your head)".
>
> I bought the net from Tanzania Fishnet Company in Dar es Salaam for TShs 14,000/=. It was loft by 3ft in size. I also made them write a receipt including MM's full name and address, assuming that somebody might come to claim the net later. This was because of my own understandings that people in Saadani regarded the ownership of fishing nets to be rightfully men's. In order to secure MM's rights to ownership of a property she personally acquired, I resorted to formal measures. However. on giving her the receipt, MM assured me that nobody would take 'her net' from her. Neither would she give it to anyone. She said was going to use and handle it by herself'.

52 By using the phrase, unatumia akili yako kichwani, Bi MM implied that a woman had to balance her individual desires and her gender ascribed status in society. In her case. the need for an independent and reliable source of income did not mean that she should sacrifice her commitment to her relationship with Mzee N by challenging him. However, the way in which she brought to question the issue of owning and handling a fish fence was in itself an act of political discourse. Such revolutionary perceptions relating to ownership of property and resource use were not very common among women in Saadani. MM's case illustrated the way in which women, through their actions, could modify local discourses to transcend gender-defined boundaries. MM became the first woman in Saadani to demonstrate the intention of erecting a woman-owned fish fence. MM's courage May have developed from her previous experience of working with men when she was employed in Kibaha which, unlike the experience of most of the women in Saadani had exposed her to close interaction with men in the same space. And she wanted to control what men controlled, understanding that her emancipation could only be successful through such independent control. However, like ZM (case study 1) she also admitted that she still was a Saadani woman, and her relationship

with a Saadani man was still influenced by ideas about appropriate gender relationships among couples. And while she May have been driven by material needs, her perception of autonomy did not mean that she had to severe relationships that she understood as basic to her person.

Continuity and change in understanding gendered spaces and natural resources use.

53 Saadani women, as my data illustrates, were not very keen to acquire the kinds of power that men in Saadani had. And they understood that even without being directly involved, they shared the experiences of fishing their men went through in various ways. In daily conversations among themselves, women expressed different emotions according to daily or periodic incidents related to fishing or to the marketing of prawns. Women would praise and spread word about a fisher who took a significant catch. They also conversed, with much humour, about the exploits of any fisher who squandered his money in luxurious entertainment after being paid for a successful catch.

54 The hassles and disappointments the fish net owners or prawn dealers (who were their husbands, male relatives, friends and neighbours) frequently endured in the prawn trade were also a source of much disappointment to women. Wives, mothers, and sisters related to each other and to neighbours on how "so and so's load of prawns went bad because "so and so" left with his boat without giving him transport", or "because he ran out of ice blocks for preservation". Others would say, "he was greedy and kept on buying prawns without thinking of the unreliability of transportation from Saadani". Fishing was thus central to the social and economic life of the women and men at both the private and public spaces, but it was interpreted and given meaning differently by men and women.

55 In addition, women came to learn that if they chose, the y were more flexible in transcending gender defined work and roles. Men however realised that one had to sacrifice masculine dignity to adopt what were locally defined as women's work. I draw on an example from the implications arising from the intensive engagement that gill net fishing demands. The onerous type of work involved which had discouraged women to continue to engage themselves in fishing, also forced old men and new corners to cross over to women's spaces, a situation women regarded with considerable ridicule. The sale of fuel wood by men is one example.

56 The collection of fuel wood for household usage was a task usually performed by female members and young children of both sexes. On average, fuel wood was collected once a week throughout the year except during peak fishing seasons and the period just before the Islamic holy month of Ramadhan. During peak fishing seasons women collected fuel wood twice a week to be used for cooking food for a *hoteli* business or for frying finfish for long distance trade. Before the month of Ramadhan, fuel wood was collected daily for a period of about three weeks and enough fuel wood was stocked up to last the whole period of fasting during Ramadhan. These were the two seasons that involved intensified collection of fuel wood. A group of women in one neighbourhood usually went together to the nearby coastal forest, which was the main source of fuel wood for people in Saadani. Since SGR prohibitions had denied men to obtain their needs for timber for house construction or furniture purposes from the coastal forest, the coastal lowland forest became almost exclusively a women's space.

57 Occasionally, some men also collected dry driftwood which they gathered on the beach or fetched logs of dry wood for the use of their households, as they came back from fishing trips. Very few however, joined their wives in fetching fuel wood in the coastal forest. Several reasons were given as to why these few men escorted women to collect fuel wood. Some of them said the y did so out of necessity because of the danger of wild animals, particularly buffalo which during the period 1998 to March 1999 had become a frequent menace to people. Other men claimed that they escorted their wives out of love. When I asked a group of women if it were out of love that some men escorted their wives to collect fuel wood, a young woman responded by commenting that, "jealousy (wivu) was the main reason behind a man who often accompanied his wife to collect fuel wood". She explained that men sometimes think that some women spend a long time in the coastal forest under the guise of fetching fuel wood while,

in fact, they used that time to meet their lovers. Thus their husbands accompanied them to prevent such meetings.

58 Most of them said that the degree of negotiations between couples usually influenced the behaviour of the man towards the woman. As one man said, that "it was necessary to assist your wife in collecting fuel wood because the amount of fuel wood collected by two people was more and could thus be used for a longer period, during which time is saved for the performance of other household activities by the women". This man explained that assisting your wife to collect fuel wood gives her enough time to perform other activities such as cooking and washing for the household. I however found that most of those who accompanied their wives to the forest to collect fuel wood together were elderly and middle-aged. At this age group only a few of them could engage themselves in several income generating activities at the same time and the y were freer to accompany their wives than the younger men. Altogether a majority of married men did not collect fuel wood with their womenfolk.

59 It was also generally regarded as inappropriate for married women to sell fuel wood since each woman was supposed to collect fuel wood for her own households' needs, as part of her ascribed activities. Women understood that selling fuel wood implied shifting their household responsibilities to the public arena. The few women who sold fuel wood were mostly single and they sold fuel wood from their homes to any customer. Single men were good customers of fuel wood. Other single women were contracted to supply fuel wood to some of the shop-owning households in which the women seldom went to fetch fuel wood.

60 From the early 1990s onwards, a few men began to engage themselves in collecting fuel wood for sale. Some collected and sold it as a joint business with their wives, and others sold it to any person in need as the women fuel wood traders did. The households in which men collected and sold fuel wood were mostly those of newcomers in the village who had not yet become accustomed to fishing, or of old people who could no longer fish for prawns any more to be able to earn themselves a cash income. This trend caused some women to mock about the few men who collected fuel wood for sale, describing them as those who were desperate for a living. One woman commented that :

> “A man would collect fuel wood only if he is unable to fish or has been unsuccessful in fishing. And because he has 10 eat. he resorts to selling fuel wood. This only happens because “*mwenye njaa ni kama kichaa*” (lit : one who is hungry is like a crazy person)".

61 *Mwenye njaa ni kama kichaa* was a commonly used idiom among Saadani people which implied that a person who was in a desperate state [in any situation] was likely to behave in a way that resembled the behaviour of a crazy person. By using this idiom, the woman implied that men's inability to succeed in 'men's activities' [in this case, fishing] was a cause of desperation and compelled them to take on activities which only women or slaves used to do. From their experiences and oral histories, local people understood that the only men who fetched fuel wood or water for a living were those who worked as slaves or servile labourers in the more affluent households. After the decline in slavery, local men refrained from selling fuel wood or water for a living since they did not want to be associated with slave labour or servility due to the stigma attached to it. Aged single men suffered much ridicule if they resorted to selling fuel wood and water because it was regarded as demeaning for a man to reach old age without a wife who could collect fuel wood for him. Widowers were regarded with some sympathy if the y resorted to selling fuel wood or water. But the y were still expected to seek out a new wife to do so for them.

62 Altogether, within the influences of changing social and economic circumstances, women described themselves as socially better-off than men because they were able to mould themselves into several spaces more easily than men did. Women felt so because of the general understanding that in whatever activity they chose to engaged in, they did not have to match up to men to be regarded as equal.

Conclusion

63 In this article, I make some basic assumptions on gendered power and autonomy through a discussion of individual and social experiences in the use and understanding of coastal

space and natural resources. The processes and practices I explore, illustrate that, changing circumstances have had varying implications on the way in which : Saadani women and men have come to understand themselves or new realities. In one way these experiences not only formed a basis for mediating between Saadani women's and men's spaces and social divisions, but also between the way in which individuals, valued, utilised and laid claims to coastal resources for their livelihoods. Yet at the same time, there was an apparent persistence in certain conventional forms of gender categorisation which both women and men strove to maintain.

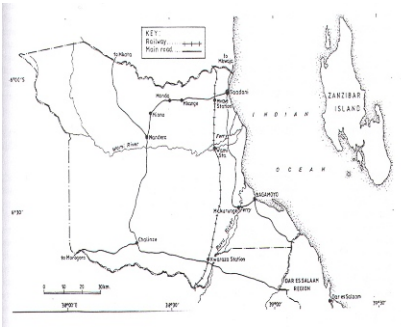
64 The experiences of new interventions such as the Ujamaa villagisation programme and the commoditization of prawns brought with them constraints and new opportunities to women in particular. Ujamaa had envisaged that women's empowerment could be achieved if they participated equally with men in major productive activities, and compelled them to fish 'as men did'. Most women however rejected operating under the Ujamaa communal principle since it did not consider women's cultural situation. The policy was based on a limited social analysis that failed to recognise the meanings of local divisions of labour and its implications to women's responsibilities. Other women resisted being tuned into pseudo-men through the adoption of masculine identities, which locally were based on the type of activity, that men did. In this case, local people understood that fishing was men's activity. In a similar attitude, later in the years, local men and fish net owners [who are men] still regarded women as less capable fishers. Yet women participated and integrated socially and emotionally in what prawn fishing brought to the village, without themselves wanting to venture into the physical work involved. Women's understanding that their relationship with natural resources could not compete with men's, did not allow gendered categorisation of activities and spaces to pose as a limitation on their part. Women regarded even the sea, for ex ample, although it was seen as symbolically associated with men and with male identities, as a source of livelihood for themselves. From the sea they got their food, cash income and self-esteem.

65 They also understood that fishing for prawns enabled men to realise significant amounts of income. Still, women in Saadani did not want to compete with men in fishing for prawns. Moreover, both men and women understood that the income from prawns was seasonal and men depended mostly on the major fishing seasons to get a significant income. During a large part of the year, men who did not have an alternative income generating activity such as salt making became almost completely dependent on their wives for sustenance. Women's income generating activities such as selling snacks, trading in fried finfish or operating a *hoteli* brought in small amounts of income some of it daily which was however very significant in terms of meeting daily household requirements.

66 My thesis follows Amadiume (1987) who criticised discourses on power which, demanded that for women to have power, they should take on the roles and activities : that are conventionally associated with the power they see as occupied by men. Following this logic, women become trapped by the symbols of power which rest with men rather than other ways of power. Therefore, for Saadani women to demand separate but equal kinds of power and separate but equal practices of power, was to avoid any kind of entrapment by what have been regarded as dominant systems of exercising power. Women understood that their income generating activities such as operating the *hoteli* or trading in fried finfish could not compare on equal basis with prawn fishing since the amount of money they realised was significantly less. Yet, they did not want to be measured in terms of the amount of money, but only by what the activities women did, could do for them. To women in Saadani, the value of getting any money from an individual activity meant that the woman was independent of using it and to exercise her autonomy in controlling the benefits. That women made claims to autonomy meant that

they rejected such principle of a material basis to claims to natural resources use in their environment the same way that men did.

Map 1 : Location of Saadani village along Tanzania mainland coastal area



Voir carte en document annexe

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Notes

1The words, *mwanamke* (lit : a woman) and *shughuli* (lit : business, occupation) have been coined to make up the idiomatic phrase *mwanamke shughuli* which implies that a woman's worth can be judged from the activities and kinds of work she is engaged in. *Mwanamke shughuli* is a common saying among women in Saadani. The saying also implies that a woman can self-actualise herself through the work she does. Other women also acknowledge with high regard the abilities of a fellow woman who is self sustaining from her own activities. I thank USHEPIA (University of Cape Town) and SAREC-Sida for their material support which made this study possible.
2The Swahili coast is the term used to refer to the stretch of Eastern African coast lying between Mogadishu in Somali a to Cabo Delgado in Mozambique. It is predominantly inhabited by maritime Swahili-speaking people (Middleton 1992).
3Even the word *kutanda,* which comes from the verb *tanda* meant spreading [in this case a piece of cloth over or under the shrimps to catch them] and not fishing as local people understood.
4*Khanga* is a brightly coloured printed piece of cloth which women use to wrap or cover themselves. It is a common attire among East African women.
5In 1998, US$1 was equivalent to TShs 700/=.
6*Maendeleo* is a generic term in the Kiswahili language used to refer to many processes or statuses including development, modernisation, and upliftment.
7A scholar on the Islamic religion, explained to me that Muslims believe that any form of idol may turn a person against worship of God 10 idolatry. They believe that the absence of any form of photograph : or picture of Prophet Muhammad was deliberate to avoid such idolatry (pers. comm. Jan 2000).
8The word *'hoteli'* is a corrupted version of the English word hotel. In Saadani, *hoteli* referred to small [and mostly informal] eating places.
9This railway line which lies about one hour's walking distance from Saadani is one of the major communications outlets for local people to other parts of the country.

Pour citer cet article

Référence électronique

Rosemarie R.N. Mwaipopo, « Gender and Power in the Use and Management of Coastal Space and Resources in Saadani Village, Tanzania », *Bulletin de l'APAD* [En ligne], 20 | 2000, mis en ligne le 05 avril 2006, Consulté le 26 juin 2016. URL : http://apad.revues.org/252

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Droits d'auteur

Bulletin de l'APAD