Anthropological Experiences in Rural Senegal, 1986 - 2003

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This book is dedicated to my colleagues Gerti Hesseling and Maurice Bergh. Without their aptitudes and enthusiasm our plan for a student research training in Senegal could not have been realized.

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I also want to thank my students for their courage in living alone in unfamiliar social and physical surroundings, for their enthusiasm and perseverance in the field as well as in the writing up phase of their theses, and for their sense of responsibility to their informants. All this made possible the continuation of the training over so many years and finally the writing of this book.

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Senegal and the value of its currency

Following independence in 1960, Senegal became a partner in the Communauté Financière Africaine (CFA), as did most other former French colonies. Subsequently their monetary unit, the franc CFA, was linked to the French franc.

In January 1994, the franc CFA was devalued by 50%.

In 2002, the franc CFA became linked to the euro.
(for more information, see Gerti Hesseling, 2007, Senegal/Gambia, Amsterdam, KIT Publishers, 89–91).

Rate of exchange of the franc CFA for Dutch florins and for euros:

before the devaluation: 1.000 frs CFA = fl. 7,20
after the devaluation: 1.000 frs CFA = fl. 3,60

since the linkage to the euro in 2002:
1.000 frs CFA = 1,5245 euro
1 euro = 655,9 francs CFA.

1

Introduction: 18 years of student research training supervision

During my career as assistant professor in cultural anthropology at Leiden University in the Netherlands, I had the opportunity to participate, as a teacher and coach, in the research training in eastern Senegal for our students in cultural anthropology and development sociology. This training had been set up, in consultation with me, by two of my colleagues, Mrs. Gerti Hesseling and Mr. Maurice Bergh (see photo's 1.1 and 1.2 at the end of this chapter), both of whom had many valuable contacts in Senegal after previous fieldwork there.

General aims of the research training

The research training included three phases: preparation (at home), fieldwork (in Senegal or in The Gambia), and writing up a thesis (at home). Correspondingly, the training had three general goals. One goal was to learn how to write up a research design, in which the reasons for the research are explained, the main concepts are defined and the approach in the field specified. The second goal was to undergo the experience of fieldwork, in which concepts and approach had to be confronted with social reality as it is felt locally. The third goal was to have the experience of writing up a research report or thesis, in which the research method followed is discussed and the data are analysed and presented in a clear and systematic way. Exactly what I mean by "undergo the experience of fieldwork" will be specified in the next chapter.

Organization of the research training

The training was an annual exercise for students who had finished the third year of their study and who wanted to specialize in Africa. Candidates had

to follow a practical preparatory course, they had to pass two examinations (one concerning anthropological literature about Senegal or The Gambia, the other a French or English language test), and they needed a research design approved by a staff member of our department, or of another department or university.

The fieldwork took three months, from June till September every year, on account of the fact that the training had to fit into the curriculum of our department. The students were, in principle, individually placed within an African family in the village or town quarter where they had to carry out their research.

The three coaches had to cover a longer period in the field, because one month of preparations was needed before the arrival of the students.
Organizer Bergh did the first month, roughly speaking, and Mrs. Hesseling the last month. So, I had the chance to be in Africa for two months per year.

Once arrived at the airport of Dakar, the first thing to do was to renew the arrangements for our Senegalese car (tax and insurance) and to make sure it was serviced. The Dutch Embassy in Dakar also had to be informed about the arrival of the group of students, and about the duration of their stay and their places of residence in Senegal. Next, a general permission from the national authorities and personal research permits for the students had to be obtained. Moreover, the selection of the research sites, and agreements with host families there, had to be made, and also a provisional selection of an interpreter for every student. Frequently, improvements to the homes and sanitary conditions for the students had to be carried out before their arrival.

In addition, a house for the staff, which also served as a drop-in place for students, had to be found and rented, and the connections for electricity and water arranged. Instead of living in a hotel, I preferred to use my daily allowance to rent a house and a watchman, so that there was always space to lodge students who needed to stay in Tambacounda for research purposes, or to recover or relax (see photos 1.3 – 1.8).

In the rural areas, students almost always lodged in a house in the compound of the village head. Every student was named after the family of the village or compound head, for example Mamadou Dembele or Diarra Keita. In this way, every villager automatically knew that the student belonged to a family who felt responsible for the student's well-being and, in particular, it provided

female students with some security. Of course, the presence of an interpreter and of a staff member also brought protection.

The students were supposed to eat what the family eats. In cases where a student could not tolerate the local food, solutions had to be sought and were always found, in consultation with the compound head, the student concerned and a staff member. In return for food and housing, each student, like every other child of the family, was obliged to contribute to the family welfare. The students did so by giving the compound head a 50-kilo bag of rice every month. In addition, depending on their financial means, students had to shop every two weeks for ingredients such as salt, peanut oil, maggi cubes, potatoes, vegetables, fish or meat, and not to forget tea and lots of sugar. Moreover, at the end of their stay, the students left the necessaries that they had bought at the start of their training to the host family or to other special persons of their own choice. This included things such as a mat, a colourful metal box, bucket and kettle, cups and bowls, and sometimes also a bed and mattress (see photos 1.9 and 1.10).

The interpreters were paid by the students at the end of each month. Their salary was equal to the legal minimum in Senegal. Modest financial advances to the interpreter were possible. The interpreters were on trial for some weeks and could be fired in cases of bad work or incompatibility. As this was a serious matter for the village or compound head, staff members had to be involved in the deliberations and in the final decision. In one case, in 1999, it became clear after a couple of days that the interpreter was a drug addict and I had to move the student to another village.

The students were free to choose their own research theme, provided they could find a qualified coach willing to supervise their research design and their final thesis. Subjects varied from religion and ritual to education, social stratification, healthcare and medicines, gender and intergenerational relationships, theatre, music, circumcision, fashion, etc. In addition, the three coaches, Bergh, Hesseling and I, offered themes related to their own research. For Mr. Bergh this was local governance and urbanization. For Mrs. Hesseling traditional and modern land tenure. Being specialized in economic anthropology, I was mostly interested in agriculture and agricultural innovation, and in the use and management of natural resources.

Every year, then, I had, to my great joy, several students doing research on one of my themes. Moreover, in 1986, four students made a series of slides about economic activities in three different villages under the title *Nakenato*.

In 1987, two students made a movie, *Sandji, water from heaven*, about the agricultural practices in the village of Netteboulou. Both these projects were supervised by another colleague, Mr. Steef Meyknecht, who, to this end, came to Senegal for a couple of weeks in 1986 and in 1987.

In the field, the supervision of all students was carried out, successively, by the three coaches, first by Mr. Bergh, then by me and finally by Mrs. Hesseling. Moreover, I also did research myself, at least in the initial years of the training.

History of the research training and implications for my work

After a preparatory trip to Senegal and the district of Tambacounda by Mrs. Hesseling and Mr. Bergh in 1985, the first research training took place in 1986. The last one was in 2003. Thus, I have had the opportunity to follow, from close by, developments in rural Senegal over a period of 18 years. Following Mr. Bergh's retirement and Mrs. Hesseling's appointment as Director of the African Studies Centre, Leiden, from 1996, I had to organize the training and the coaching of the students singlehandedly. The department of anthropology to which I belonged had no funds to take on another colleague to assist me. To my pleasure, this meant that my annual stay in the field was prolonged by a number of weeks. Happily, since 1993, my wife, Mrs Riet Kret, has been willing to spend three weeks of her holidays every year with me in Africa, making it possible for me to be available for the students for longer, especially at crucial moments in their research.

The first two trainings, in 1986 and 1987, took place in the district and town of Tambacounda in the east of Senegal. In 1988, we also had some students in the west of Senegal (near Thies) and in the north (region of Saint Louis). In that same year, I crossed the Gambian border in order to see whether it would be possible to extend our training to The Gambia, where English is the official language. So, students who did not master the French language, could do their training in The Gambia. With the indispensable help of the Dutch Embassy in Dakar, the Dutch consulate in Banjul and the later director of the Tanje Village Museum, Mr. Abdoulie Bayo, I succeeded in getting all necessary permissions. So, from 1989 onwards we also had students in The Gambia, in and around Basse Santa Su, in the Upper River Division. Basse was situated at a distance of about 110 km from Tambacounda (see map 1.1). The road between the two towns was good, 90 km of it had even been impeccably tarred, so that the supervision of the students in The Gambia could be effectuated from Tambacounda without serious transport problems.

In later years, we had some more students in villages around Thies, or in the flood plain of the river Senegal, and even three in Dakar. In the Gambia, in some years we had students in the Kombos, south of Banjul. In only one year, 1993, we had no students in the district of Tambacounda, and thus no staff house at all. As this proved to be a far from ideal situation, we decided to maintain Tambacounda as the centre of our research training.

Map 1.1

Senegal and The Gambia with the regional capitals Tambacounda and Basse Santa Su, (drawn by Nel de Vink)

In the meantime, Mr. Bergh had taken the initiative to create a stable institutional basis for our training in Senegal. His efforts resulted in an official agreement between Leiden University and the Cheikh Anta Diop University

of Dakar, signed in Dakar in June 1991 and in Leiden in November 1991. This general agreement to cooperation was followed by a supplementary elaboration, presented here as document 1.1. at the end of this chapter. This agreement made it possible to invite Senegalese researchers to the Netherlands, paid for by Leiden University, among them, Henri Lo (see photo 5.1) and Amadou Kante. Thanks to this agreement, our assistants, Papisto Keita and Saiba Krubally, could also come to Leiden in November 2000 to contribute to a symposium on intercultural communication, organized on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of our training by a group of former participants.

A similar institutional basis could not be achieved in relation to The Gambia, given the lack of a university structure there for many years. There was an incidental effort at cooperation at the beginning of our 1992 training. Then, Mr. Bergh, as a representative of Leiden University, and the National Council for Arts and Culture in Banjul, organized a course on the techniques of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). This course took place over four days in the village of Gillangel in the Upper River Division. Seven of our students and an equal number of young Gambian research assistants participated in this intensive course, given by anthropologist Karen Freudenberger of Wisconsin University (photos 1.19 – 1.22). Although all participants praised this instructive and successful course, it could not be continued in later years due to a lack of funds.

In 1999, the National Council for Arts and Culture in Banjul expressed a wish to continue the cooperation with our Leiden department (see document 1.2 at the end of this chapter). However, despite an exchange of e-mails, when I visited their office in June 1999, the responsible person was not available. Given a lack of time, energy and funds, I decided to let the matter rest, a decision presumably shared by our Gambian counterparts, who had also stopped sending me e-mails.

The number of students per training varied with the number of students specializing in Africa. In the early 1990s, our department asked Mr. Bergh, who had roots in Indonesia, to create a similar research training in that country. He did so with success, which resulted in a smaller number of participants in the research training in Senegal and The Gambia. In addition, the department allowed students, under certain conditions, to organize their own research experience in a non-Western country. So, the number of participants per training varied between maximally 19 (in 1989) and minimally five (in 2001). During the 18 years of the training we accompanied 231 students to the field,

which means an average of nearly 13 students per training. From this total of 231 students, 170 were female and 61 male; 77 of them did their training in the Gambia and 154 in Senegal. Seven of these 231 students left the field prematurely, and did not come back, on account of illness, nostalgia, or problems on the home front. Two more students fell seriously ill and went back home, but returned to the field, after their recovery, to finish their training on their own. Of the 231 participants, 22 students did not come from Leiden University: 14 were from Wageningen University and six from other universities (Nijmegen, Amsterdam, Utrecht). One was from Great Britain and another from Germany.

As part of the programme, the students were allowed to spend one week of relaxation somewhere in Senegal or The Gambia, at the end of July. In 1997, I had to put an end to this practice as some students, rightly or wrongly, had extended the leisure period for the whole group up to two weeks. From then on, I organized short trips, in consultation with the group, to, for instance, the National Park Niokolo Koba (see photos 1.11 – 1.14) or to the Dendifelo waterfall near Kedougou (photos 1.15 and 1.16), and to Netteboulou for a courtesy visit with a performance of the red masks (photos 6.7 – 6.14).

With the exception of the first years of the training staff members made regular use of local interpreters/assistants. For Senegal this was, from 1988 onwards, Papisto (officially Toumany) Keita, originally from the village of Netteboulou. For the Gambia, we first worked with Bakary Krubally from 1992 till 1997, and from then on with Saiba Krubally, both originally from the village of Kobakunda near Basse (see photos 1.17 and 1.18). Moreover, we got great help and good advice over the years from Mr. Nommez Ba Gahn and his wife Binta Sognane. He was a member of the medical staff of the regional hospital in Tambacounda.

In the initial years, staff members tried to integrate Senegalese university students into our research training. However, our efforts failed on account of unbridgeable differences of timetables and curricula between our department and the universities of Dakar and Saint Louis. At one point, I met a young, ambitious politician in Tambacounda who emphatically wanted to integrate Senegalese students; however, Senegalese friends cautioned me against involving a politician, for, as they said, he would send his often unqualified people (clients) to the training for reasons of political propaganda, and this, of course, would be paid for by Leiden University. Moreover, if the training would become affiliated with a certain political party or faction, we would

no longer be welcome to adherents of other parties or factions. Fortunately, I never heard back from this intrusive politician.

It is worth mentioning here that in 2000 a video was made by Mrs. Marian Wanders, a professional film-maker, who had just started studying cultural anthropology at Leiden University. Under the significant title, *What is your name? Who has sent you?*, the film shows short conversations with 11 students of that year in Senegal and The Gambia before, during and after their fieldwork. It presents a good impression of what it means for them personally to engage in anthropological fieldwork.

Spatial mobility

The supervision of students spread over diverse regions of Senegal and The Gambia, was only possible as a result of Mr. Bergh persuading the Faculty of Social Sciences of Leiden University to finance a car. Hiring a car was too expensive, and the use of public transport too time consuming. So, during the first six trainings, the staff had a Renault 4 at its disposal, followed by a Suzuki Samurai (with four-wheel drive) during the next eight trainings. During the last four trainings, I had at my disposal a very old Toyota land cruiser, bought in Germany with the help of the partner of one of my former students. After serious maintenance for a small price by another student's father, who was a garage owner, we drove the car to the harbour of Amsterdam, from where it was transported by ship to Dakar. All of this was financed by the Faculty of Social Sciences at the lowest possible price, but at the cost of a great deal of my time.

Having a car available created many opportunities for students; for instance, we could place a number of them, at their request, in current social forestry projects around Thies and in the region of Saint Louis as well as in faraway villages near the National Park Niokolo Koba in the south of Senegal. Moreover, it allowed us to extend our training to The Gambia.

However, owning a car also had its drawbacks. Possibly, it strengthened the belief of many villagers, who lived in poor material conditions, that the students and especially the staff members belonged to another social world, in which they had access to power and wealth, from which these villagers felt themselves excluded. This image might have had (unknown) effects on the expectations and behaviour of informants and on the process of information gathering.

Another problem was the guarding of our car in the period between the trainings when all staff members were absent from the research area. We found a Senegalese friend and his wife willing to take care of our car during these intermediate periods. This care implied driving the car periodically, on account of the fact that in the Senegalese climate the engine and the tyres could not stand still for months on end. This agreement ultimately led to improper use of the first two cars by family members of our friends. When, in the case of the third car, I took the decision to no longer entrust the car to them, this was taken as a serious motion of no-confidence and, unfortunately, it meant the end of a warm relationship. Subsequently, I trusted the third car during my absence to the garage of the Don Bosco technical school of the Catholic Mission in Tambacounda, in exchange for the carcass of the Suzuki, which they could use as a technical exercise object for their students.

Another drawback to be mentioned is that, after a number of years, the maintenance of the cars became problematic. Sometimes, spare parts were not available and had to be brought from the Netherlands by my wife or others, which sometimes led to problems with the customs at the airport. Misfortune in the form of a car crash hit me on 18 June 1995, during the starting phase of that year's training. Driving at a speed of nearly 100 km per hour on a straight road, I was surprised by four sheep suddenly crossing the road just in front of my car. As "a real European" (qualification by my Senegalese interlocutors), I tried to avoid the animals, however at the cost of my car. It could not withstand the sudden pressure on the front wheels and rolled, first to the right, and next to the left side. Fortunately, my assistant, Papisto Keita, and I were the only passengers on board and we were wearing our seat belts. Repairs in a garage in Dakar took about five weeks and I had to make use of public transport during that period (see photos 1.23 – 1.28).

Personal motivation for supervising the training

Another question is why I chose to become a staff member of the research training. After fieldwork in Ivory Coast and my doctoral dissertation on the basis of that research, I decided to participate in the coming research training in Senegal, because it seemed to offer the most favourable conditions for combining teaching and doing research: spending a number of months every year among African people with a possibility of longitudinal research; teaching and coaching young people, and gathering information myself, or with the help of students. Certainly attractive conditions and fruitful prospects! Moreover, it suited my personal situation well at that moment

(divorced; three children at secondary school, reason enough not to be absent from home for a long period).

However, the combination of coaching and doing research myself appeared to be quite tougher than I had thought. In the first few years I felt it was going well, until some students started to complain that I was not always available to them, and the department prohibited me from spending any more time on my own research. It gradually became clear to me that the research training was a year-round activity. Back from the field, I had to assist a number of students in analysing their data and in writing their theses, while the preparations of a new group had to be started up, and all this in addition to other courses that I had to give. In sum, most of my personal research results as well as numerous master theses of my students remained unelaborated in my files.

My research

In my personal research, I concentrated on the village of Netteboulou. Newly arrived in Tambacounda, in June 1986, my colleague Bergh presented me to the then young, dynamic director of the Niji hotel, Ansumane Signate. The year before, during an exploratory trip by Hesseling and Bergh, he had been very helpful and provided them with all kinds of information, for instance, regarding administrative regulations and conventions in Senegal, about villages and their physical and socio-economic situation, and about how to approach the village authorities in order to get their approval. He was originally from Netteboulou and was apparently an important member of the royal Signate family, who founded the village a century ago. He introduced us to his native village in June 1986, and was rewarded, that year, with three students for his village. One was placed at his own royal compound, and two in compounds of slave families. Thus, Netteboulou immediately appeared to be a very interesting village for anthropologists and historians. From the outset, our research training brought me into close contact with different layers of local society. Moreover, people were very friendly and inviting, and it was not difficult to find informants willing to talk with me. It is this combination of information and experiences that draw my attention specifically to Netteboulou, rather than to other, interesting villages.

Netteboulou is also the village where I found my assistant and interpreter, Papisto Keita, who was also an important informant. I met him for the first time in June 1988, on the recommendation of a student of the 1986 cohort. I did not meet him during the trainings of 1986 and 1987 because he was

attending a secondary school in Dakar. In the end, Papisto and I worked together for no less than 16 years, in the beginning occasionally but after some years structurally (see photos 1.29 – 1.33). His mother tongue is Mandinka, or Bambara, he speaks French, he is fluent in Halpulaar and Wolof, and is also able to manage in English. He was very respectful to people and knew how to evoke feelings of sympathy. Moreover, he has proven to be an excellent negotiator. He certainly saved costs for Leiden University. More importantly, however, he made me feel at home in Senegal and his poetic, lively and social mind brought me wonderful years. This view of Papisto has been shared by many students over the years.

Why write this book?

Some years after my retirement, per 31 December 2003, I felt a growing need to communicate the understandings that had resulted from my own research and that of my students, to others, anthropologists and non-anthropologists alike. I thought I had understood the feeling of powerlessness of so many rural people, not only in the system of patron-client relationships at village level, but also in the governmental agricultural policies regarding commercial cotton and groundnut cultivation. I thought I had understood the effects of the unreliable and capricious rainfall under such a clientelist system, which means a recurring and increasing seasonal food shortage for at least one third of the local population of Netteboulou, a vicious circle from which it is almost impossible to escape. I had felt people's hope for affordable irrigated agriculture, independent from the rainfall, and I wanted to show how my efforts to organize an interdisciplinary pilot study to this end, led to nothing on account of a cluster of vested interests. I think these insights are worth communicating.

I believe this book will be interesting for especially socially engaged anthropologists and policymakers in the domain of development cooperation. It contributes to the understanding of why so many young people want to leave their village and to emigrate. Finally, it fits perfectly well into the ambitions of the Dutch Anthropological Association (the ABV) "to promote the anthropological point of view into the secondary school education" and "to further a clearly visible and distinct public anthropology" (Newsletter ABV, March 2016).

Structure of the book

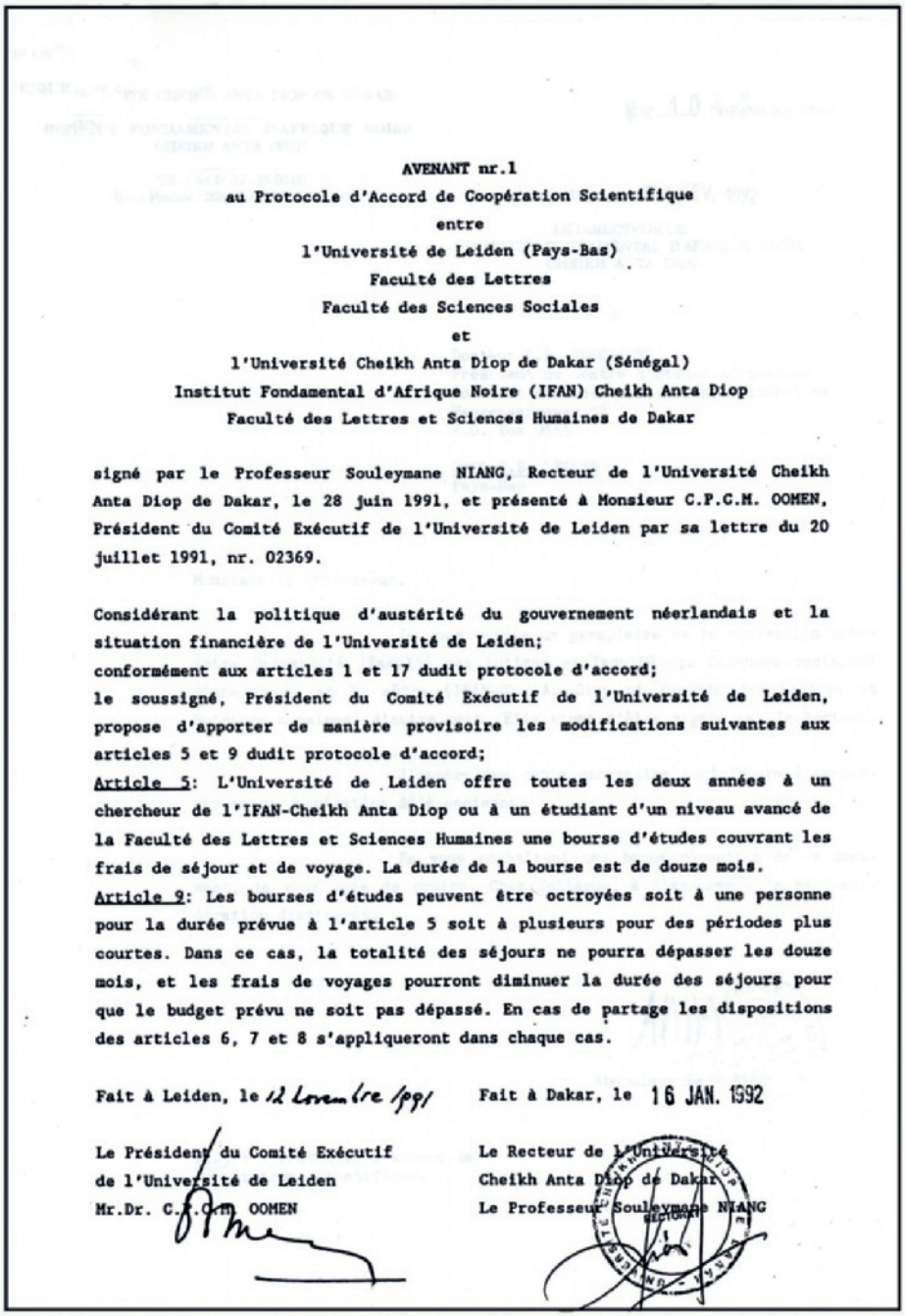
Apart from this current introduction, and from a retrospect at the end, the book has three parts. Part one is called 'Aspects of the research arena'. In my view (which I tried to pass on to my students), generally, research takes place in a political arena in which various partners (researchers, interpreters as well as informants and their families) have different interests in the research, and, therefore, in demanding, presenting or withholding information. This idea is reflected in four chapters.

In the first chapter, 'Learning objectives of students' fieldwork', I present the objectives of the research training and their realization in practice. Several social obstacles to doing research are identified. The following chapter, 'Personal experiences of communicating with Senegalese and Gambian people', is a reflection on my communication with Senegalese and Gambian people, farmers as well as officials: my thoughts on how I think they see me, and how I see them. Inherent to this communication was a multitude of requests to me to which I had to react positively or negatively. Both reactions have such social consequences that the metaphor of a 'political arena' is not misplaced for our research training. The third chapter, 'A socio-economic history of Tambacounda district', is an overview, on the basis of some written resources, of the history and long-term social processes in our research area, i.e. the former kingdom of Wuli and the later Department of Tambacounda. How did globalization came about in Wuli and into what kinds of projects has the population become involved in? Finally, the fourth chapter, 'Progressing globalization in Tambacounda during the research trainings', presents some of the major signals of the globalization process that I was able to observe in the research area during the 18 years of our training. The infrastructural conditions for work and life in the first years were quite different from those in the last trainings. Part one, then, is meant to give an impression of our research training at an intentional as well as a perceived level, and of the local socio-political context within which the student research unavoidably had to take place.

The second part contains five chapters about the Mandinka village of Netteboulou and my experiences there. The first chapter is about Netteboulou's social order in the course of time. In my view, the village was involved in a transition process from a society with hierarchically ordered, endogamous and interdependent social categories towards a clientelist society in which practically all participants are dependent on one patron who controls all social relationships inside and outside the village. The second

chapter treats the question of how people in the 1980s and 1990s made their livelihood in the village, and which limiting factors and structuring principles they had to take into account. On the one hand, they were faced with climatic constraints, in the form of a very short rainy season and an unreliable and capricious rainfall. On the other hand, they had to respect social conditions and rules, the household being the unit of production and consumption which once received land use rights from the noble founder's family. Then follows a third chapter about the seasonal food shortage and its socio-economic implications. According to my estimation, during the rainy season of 1989, about one third of the inhabitants, or more than half the number of households, was confronted with a seasonal food shortage with one of the consequences being that they could not optimally make use of the short rainy season because this shortage forced them to go out first to the farms of wealthier households to work for their food. The next chapter raises the question of why a project for irrigated rice cultivation, which could have been a fine solution to the seasonal food shortage, has failed. The initiating organization, on the one hand, and the farmers of Netteboulou, on the other, blamed each other for this failure. In the last chapter, I will reveal what happened when I had proposed a pilot research project to find out whether or not it would be possible to create a feasible irrigation system for Netteboulou.

The third part of this book contains two chapters in which I present two comparative studies of several students reports, under the title 'Student research on use and conservation of natural resources'. One is about the views of farmers in six villages near Tambacounda about the integration of commercial cotton cultivation into their farming system, on the functioning of the accompanying organizations, and on the role of the State. The other chapter is about the desired and the perceived interrelationship between nature conservation and rural development. It treats the views of organizations and farmers in five villages adjacent to the Niokolo Koba National Park in southern Senegal.



AVENANT nr.1
au Protocole d'Accord de Coopération Scientifique
entre
l'Université de Leiden (Pays-Bas)
Faculté des Lettres
Faculté des Sciences Sociales
et
l'Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar (Sénégal)
Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire (IFAN) Cheikh Anta Diop
Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines de Dakar

signé par le Professeur Souleymane NIANG, Recteur de l'Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar, le 28 juin 1991, et présenté à Monsieur C.P.C.M. OOMEN, Président du Comité Exécutif de l'Université de Leiden par sa lettre du 20 juillet 1991, nr. 02369.

Considérant la politique d'austérité du gouvernement néerlandais et la situation financière de l'Université de Leiden;
conformément aux articles 1 et 17 dudit protocole d'accord;
le soussigné, Président du Comité Exécutif de l'Université de Leiden, propose d'apporter de manière provisoire les modifications suivantes aux articles 5 et 9 dudit protocole d'accord;

Article 5: L'Université de Leiden offre toutes les deux années à un chercheur de l'IFAN-Cheikh Anta Diop ou à un étudiant d'un niveau avancé de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines une bourse d'études couvrant les frais de séjour et de voyage. La durée de la bourse est de douze mois.

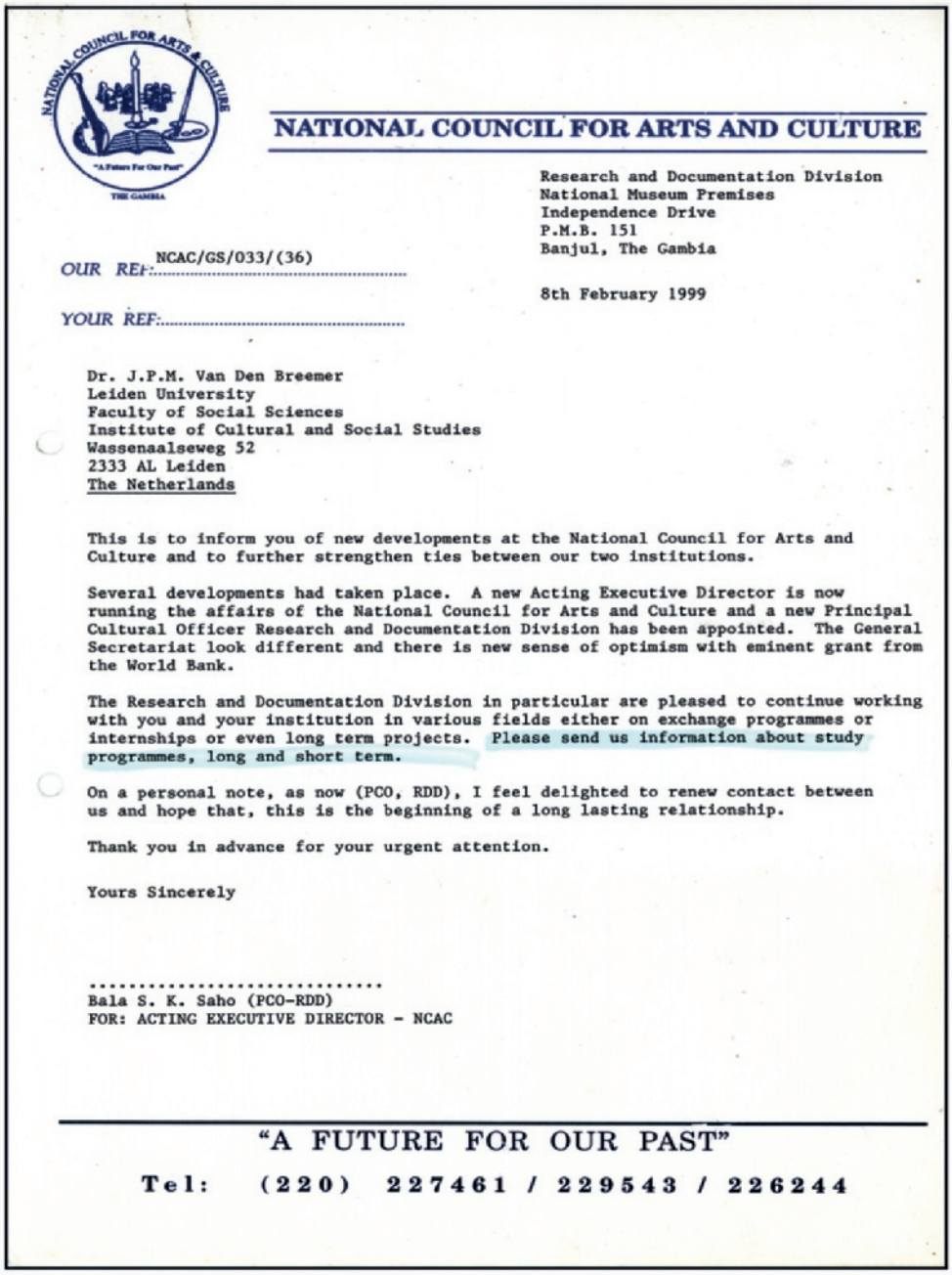
Article 9: Les bourses d'études peuvent être octroyées soit à une personne pour la durée prévue à l'article 5 soit à plusieurs pour des périodes plus courtes. Dans ce cas, la totalité des séjours ne pourra dépasser les douze mois, et les frais de voyages pourront diminuer la durée des séjours pour que le budget prévu ne soit pas dépassé. En cas de partage les dispositions des articles 6, 7 et 8 s'appliqueront dans chaque cas.

Fait à Leiden, le 12 November 1991 — Fait à Dakar, le 16 JAN. 1992

Le Président du Comité Exécutif
de l'Université de Leiden
Mr.Dr. C.P.C.M. OOMEN

Le Recteur de l'Université
Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar
Le Professeur Souleymane NIANG

Document 1.1
Specification of the agreement between the Cheikh Anta Diop University of Dakar, Senegal, and Leiden University in the Netherlands, 1991 and 1992



NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR ARTS AND CULTURE

Research and Documentation Division
National Museum Premises
Independence Drive
P.M.B. 151
Banjul, The Gambia

OUR REF: NCAC/GS/033/(36)

YOUR REF:

8th February 1999

Dr. J.P.M. Van Den Breemer
Leiden University
Faculty of Social Sciences
Institute of Cultural and Social Studies
Wassenaalseweg 52
2333 AL Leiden
The Netherlands

This is to inform you of new developments at the National Council for Arts and Culture and to further strengthen ties between our two institutions.

Several developments had taken place. A new Acting Executive Director is now running the affairs of the National Council for Arts and Culture and a new Principal Cultural Officer Research and Documentation Division has been appointed. The General Secretariat look different and there is new sense of optimism with eminent grant from the World Bank.

The Research and Documentation Division in particular are pleased to continue working with you and your institution in various fields either on exchange programmes or internships or even long term projects. Please send us information about study programmes, long and short term.

On a personal note, as now (PCO, RDD), I feel delighted to renew contact between us and hope that, this is the beginning of a long lasting relationship.

Thank you in advance for your urgent attention.

Yours Sincerely

.....
Bala S. K. Saho (PCO-RDD)
FOR: ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - NCAC

"A FUTURE FOR OUR PAST"

Tel: (220) 227461 / 229543 / 226244

Document 1.2

Invitation by the National Council for Arts and Culture at Banjul, The Gambia, to continue the co-operation with the Institute of Cultural and Social Studies at Leiden University in the Netherlands, February 1999

Photo 1.1

Gerti Hesseling with a women's group in Koussanar during the preparatory trip which she made with Maurice Bergh in 1985

Photo 1.2

Maurice Bergh with the first group of students on their way to Tambacounda, June 1986 (photo Louise Huijbens-Jellema)

Photo 1.3
Morning at the staff house, 2000

Photo 1.4
Morning at the last staff house, 2003

Photo 1.5

Students at breakfast in the staff house, 1999

Photo 1.6

Students at breakfast in the staff house, 2002

Photo 1.7

Students in the staff house, 2000

Photo 1.8

Watchman Djame Dembele from Netteboulou, cleaning the car, 2000

Photo 1.9

Shopping by students before departure to their research villages, with the help of my assistant Papisto Keita, 2001

Photo 1.10

Shopping by students before departure to their research villages, assisted by my assistant Papisto Keita, 2003

Photo 1.11

Entrance of the National Park Niokolo Koba at Dar Salam, 1994

Photo 1.12

Visit to the National Park Niokolo Koba, 1995

Photo 1.13

The challenge of the suspension-bridge over an affluent of the river Gambia in the National Park Niokolo Koba, 1995

Photo 1.14

A boat-trip on the river Gambia near the Hotel Simenti in the National Park Niokolo Koba, 2003

Photo 1.15

Visit to the waterfall of Dendifelo, near Kedougou, 2000

Photo 1.16

Swimming at Dendifelo, 2000

Photo 1.17

I myself with, on my right hand, my Senegalese assistant, Papisto Keita, and on my left the former Gambian assistant, Bakary Krubally, probably in 1993

Photo 1.18

My Senegalese assistant and the later Gambian assistant, Saiba Krubally, at Tanje village in The Gambia, probably in 1999

Photo 1.19

Initiator to the PRA-course, Maurice Bergh, and one of the participating students, before the common breakfast, 1992

Photo 1.20

Professor Karen Freudenberger, at the start of her PRA-course, and the German representative of the National Council for Arts and Culture. Gillangel, The Gambia, 1992

Photo 1.21
Some participants to the PRA-course, Gillangel, The Gambia, 1992

Photo 1.22
Some participants to the PRA-course, Gillangel, The Gambia, 1992

Photo 1.23

Our University car, capsized on the road, some kilometers from Koumpentoum, June 1995. (unknown photographer)

Photo 1.24

Damage to the left side of the car, 1995

Photo 1.25

The car during five weeks for reparations in a garage at Dakar, 1995

Photo 1.26

with consequently long waiting hours for public transport, here at the Gambian border, near Sabi, July 1995

Photo 1.27

Unimaginable public transport at the Gambian Border, 1995

Photo 1.28

Using public transport within Basse town, 1995

Photo 1.29

My Senegalese assistant, Papisto Keita, in 1988

Photo 1.30

Papisto Keita in 2000

Photo 1.31

Papisto Keita with his father and his eldest son, Netteboulou, 2001

Photo 1.32

Watchman Djame Dembele from Netteboulou, with Papisto Keita's wife and two of his children, Tambacounda, 2000 probably

Photo 1.33

Papisto Keita's mother, his eldest daughter and my wife, about 2003

PART I
Aspects of the research arena

2

Learning objectives of students' fieldwork

According to our department's study guide, current in the 1980s, the fieldwork training had two objectives: "to put into practice the acquired theoretical knowledge" and "introduction into other cultures and understanding of other ways of life" (my translation). The advantage of these rather general formulations was that they left me, as one of the supervisors of the training, enough room for a personal specification of the objectives. Over the years, I formulated four objectives for our training, four points of learning and reflection for our students.

Objective one: personal exposure to, and a degree of immersion in an other culture, which simultaneously makes the researcher aware of his or her own culture

I tried to achieve this, firstly, by placing students individually in a village during the three months of fieldwork, forcing them to communicate with the people around and not rely on or shelter behind others. This communication was usually mediated by an interpreter. However, in many villages there were young people who were able to speak French or English. This situation of optimal personal contact provided students with the opportunity to experience unfamiliar phenomena.

One of the first things for the students to do on arrival in the research village, was to learn how to greet people correctly in Mandinka, Pulaar, Soninke or Wolof, etc. Some of them already tried to learn this before their departure to the field, with the help of their predecessors. Generally, they had two experiences. One experience was that the greetings may be quite extensive and may take a lot of time (people first ask after the situation of the family and/or the household, then after each other's health and that of their father,

mother, son, daughter, etc.). This made many students aware of their Dutch purposiveness and their businesslike attitude. Secondly, many students were struck by the fact that the persons addressing each other always did so by using their family name (for instance: "good morning Signate", or Diaby, or Coulibally) and that they did not use first names (such as Djame, Hamadi or Daouda). Dutch students like to be addressed by their first name, while the villagers find it normal and seem to be comfortable and even proud when they are addressed by their family name only.

Another unfamiliar practice was related to the polygynous marriage. This raised all sorts of questions and conversation themes. Starting from our Western idea of romantic love between individual marriage partners, they wondered how a husband may divide his love or tenderness among his wives, sometimes of very different ages. How do these women manage to attract the attention of their husband? Are these women not each other's rivals, and do their children not grow up in relationships of jealousy and conflict? Students also perceived that young men and women used this argument against the polygynous marriage. The students were shocked by the arranged marriages in which young girls were married off to old men, which was disapproved of strongly by the other wives and children of the old man, albeit in vain. When I argued that such a marriage perhaps could be seen as a renewal of a long-standing interrelationship between families, that we had to come to terms with a social logic different from ours – rather than see it as an expression of greed by old men – I could not always count on the students' approval. Study of the marriage rules and practices would be needed. Interestingly, this classical anthropological subject has never been chosen by one of our students.

A next point of difference concerned gender, in particular the subordinate position and emancipation of women. This was regularly the subject of heated discussions between female students and young villagers. It was shocking for students to meet young men who were absolutely convinced that the man had to decide and the woman was expected to obey. Sometimes, they were accidental bystanders to the beating of a woman by her husband and were then confronted by the husband's behaviour being justified by other men and women. The theme of female circumcision also led to animated discussions. Who is responsible for this mutilation, as many students called it, and why is it maintained? One of the arguments of male discussants was that they could not withhold this operation from their daughters, because then they would never get married! A striking formulation, because it confirms the idea in the heads of many people, that uncircumcised women are unacceptable marriage

partners. Moreover, several informants declared that in recent years the age for female circumcision had been changed from adolescence to that of baby or toddler, and that the operation would take place in the hospital.

Another issue, difficult to understand, was the severe physical punishment of young children. Although mothers and fathers were generally very proud of their children, they could beat them very hard, according to many students, often without visible protest from other family members.

An outright source of irritation was the frequent use of the imperative tone in daily life, especially towards younger women and men, but also towards the student. Many students felt it necessary to re-educate their interpreter: instead of saying "do this", "come here" or "bring me that", the interpreter had to say to the student: "please, Mariama, would you like to…".

Students also heard about the frequent appeals by villagers, men as well as women, to *marabouts* (spiritual leaders, often with knowledge of the Koran) in order to protect themselves against the evil influences of their fellow villagers or close relatives. They learned that before important decisions in their life, and in cases of economic or social competition, people do not trust a personal or common force but take refuge with a *marabout* to protect or defend them with his supernatural powers. They also learned about magical objects (*grisgris*), worn to protect against illness or to ensure a successful marriage. Or, these objects were secretly buried in the soil of a farm to bring a good harvest, or even to inflict a bad harvest on a rival. These beliefs and practices were not limited to the village but existed also at the governmental level. Students were told that even ministers and highly educated authorities periodically went to consult their *marabout*.

Students also became aware that many people were looking for durable alliances with them, with a view to gaining some profit from it sooner or later. Many want a personal patron, a protector, who will help in case of emergency. For example, a Gambian fireman from Yundum airport once wrote to me, although we only met briefly: "I want you to be my father and your wife my mother". Quite a number of students were asked to take small children with them back to the Netherlands. Newborn babies were regularly named after the student, or after his or her father or mother, in the hope of creating future social interrelationships.

Finally, I recall an experience that I once had in Dakar. In a discussion about homosexuality and euthanasia, my interlocutor was astonished that

in Western society individuals hold a personal standpoint in these matters and that they do not worry about "the law of God as laid down in the Koran or the Bible". And, so my informant concluded, "what will be the fate of the world, when the individuals decide by majority what is good and what is bad? Democracy is not good". He was criticizing what he saw as "the haughtiness of the individual" in Western culture.

Briefly, the differences in ideas and customs could be overwhelming to the students. I do not even mention here the numerous ceremonies related to name-giving, initiation, marriages and funerals, including the public slaughtering of sacrificial animals.

A drawback of listing such differences is that it might create a rather negative image of rural society in Senegal and The Gambia, especially with regard to the position of women and religious beliefs. In fact, this is hard to avoid, because rural society is measured here according to our standards with precisely the purpose of highlighting differences. However, it must be remarked that the women in these rural and urban societies usually give an impression of liveliness and strength. Moreover, it was possible for most students to live in harmony with the family and the village, and to enjoy their stay. These differences notwithstanding, there was also room for fun. Furthermore, nine marriages have been concluded between former students and African partners, which may be seen as the unintentional summit of immersion in another culture. Finally, the fact that discussions about ideas and customs were possible, seemingly without serious problems, must be recognized.

Objective two: to make the students conscious of the importance of exploratory research

My second goal was to hammer into the students' minds that, whatever their research theme and design, they should conduct an exploratory research by combining certain appropriate research techniques. Their research must be exploratory because one has no idea in advance about the concepts and standards of the local people, or about the discrepancies and tensions between the ideal situation and reality as felt by people. Participant observation is the most appropriate technique for discovering these ideas, norms and discrepancies that the researcher has no notion of and which informants, for various reasons, do not easily put into words. The use of this technique may lead to situations in which the researcher has won the confidence of the people to such an extent that he garners information without having asked for it. This

technique, therefore, may deliver to the researcher unexpected observations and interpretations, leading to new questions and conversations. Hence this technique is very useful, not only in the starting phase but throughout the whole research. It is a necessary condition to keep an open mind for new information. It may lead to the discovery of interesting case studies. A characteristic of this technique is that the initiative is predominantly with the informants, and that the researcher is critically following the informants in order to learn from them. For some examples of participant observation and learning, see photos 2.1 – 2.16.

However, time is a scarce commodity in our Western culture, and therefore the researcher cannot wait until events happen. He or she, besides using participant observation, has no choice but to take the initiative after some time by asking direct questions to informants, selected according to criteria fixed by the researcher, about phenomena defined by the researcher. In this way, the researcher hopes to reach valid generalizations faster, while the risk of selective statements is taken for granted. Given the short duration of our training, this concession had to be made.

Unfortunately, not all students could adopt my strategy of predominantly participant observation plus case studies, and by way of concession the interview. Every year some students limited participant observation to the very initial phase of their fieldwork, after which began, as they formulated it, "the proper research". For some, this proper research meant one-off, mostly half-structured interviews with informants whom they had selected according to certain criteria fixed by themselves. Based on the questions asked, such as: "how many interviews am I supposed to do?" and "how should I take a random or stratified sample in my specific situation?", it is clear that these students almost obsessively prioritized the nonrecurrent interview. Indeed, students frequently declared that they were "finished with the research", because they had carried out the fixed number of interviews. In my conception of social research (a lasting communication process based on participant observation with repeated contacts with the same informants), research is never truly finished, and certainly not within three months. Sometimes, these students saw their research training more as an exercise in statistics, and worried less about the quality of their data. That said, I was able to convince students sometimes to undertake some case studies.

Objective three: confront the problem that data gathering is often a struggle for access to information

Future social scientists should realise that important domains of social life are frequently not, or not easily, accessible to researchers. Young students often assume that access to knowledge and information is, in principle, free, but in our training they may learn that this is often far from the case and that gaining access may be a painstaking affair. It was my task as coach and supervisor to listen to problems in this regard and, in discussion with the student, to work out strategies for overcoming such obstacles, if possible (see photos 2.17 – 2.20).

As the students usually lived in the compound of the village head, worked with an interpreter of that family and were seen as rich foreigners, members of other, competing families could be jealous, avoid being interviewed, or present diplomatic statements, half-truths or lies. On the other hand, the interpreter could try to prevent uncomfortable conversations, i.e. he or she could secretly canalize the contacts with other families, thus excluding informants from the research. It takes time for a researcher to become aware of the processes going on around him or her.

Another obstacle was informants not respecting appointment times due to their own priorities. This was an ongoing source of frustration for students, especially when it happened repeatedly. On the other hand, the training always took place during the rainy season when people go early to their farms and return tired, so it is perhaps unsurprising that they were not always keen to engage in a long conversation with sometimes strange or delicate questions.

Another recurrent problem was that many informants, with the exception of noble people, did not like to talk about the traditional hierarchy of status groups in their villages, and certainly not when it concerned the position of their own family in this hierarchy. Traditionally, there seems to be a taboo on speaking about "the origin" of slave people; indeed, this is even a punishable offence in modern law. Consequently, many people did not like to speak with foreigners about this subject. They often denied the existence and influence of this phenomenon and declared it to be something belonging to a finished past.

Another field in which it is hard to get information is that of the "*maraboutage*" and the transactions between the *marabouts* and their clients, who come

to visit their *marabout* in order to find a solution for personal medical or romantic problems, or to eliminate or weaken a supposed rival by means of supernatural powers.

The domains of local government, politics and trade may also throw up barriers. Politicians and traders travel a lot and are thus often physically absent, or they use their many obligations as a pretext to avoid a conversation. The research of one of our students about the participation of women in politics failed, mainly for these reasons. Another student, who did her research in Dakar on female fashion designers and their access to international markets, had great problems in getting valuable information on account of economic competition. A third student, for whose research it was important to know the budget and the real expenditures of a rural council, was kept dangling for a long time and finally confronted with a refusal by the responsible *sous-préfet*.

I recall a local shopkeeper's refusal to talk. I told him that I wanted to speak with him about the problem of seasonal food shortages, its causes, effects and solutions. I did not tell him that fellow villagers had told me that he used to buy grains at low prices immediately after the harvest from households that needed money, to sell them later, in the rainy season, at high prices to households confronted with a food shortage. He sensed that I wanted to talk about these matters and refused.

Right from the first training in 1986, we experienced cases every year of informants asking for money in exchange for information. In order to be able to continue our training for many years and to prevent the development of fake information, the staff had formulated the rule that researchers must never negotiate a price for information and were absolutely not allowed to buy information. This sometimes meant that students had to deny themselves access to possibly important information. What was permitted, was to give a small present, for example some kola nuts, after a valuable conversation, to thank the informant for his willingness to share the information. In such situations, the initiative to give something should always be with the researcher. Exceptions could perhaps be made for *griots* (traditional praise singers) and herbalists as these specialists are traditionally paid for their services.

Objective four: gaining experience in evaluating, interpreting and translating information

Information is almost never complete, and always selected on the basis of certain points of view. Moreover, in the case of our training the information is transmitted by an interpreter who must translate it into French or English, and who may silently guide the researcher in entering into or maintaining social contacts. The resulting concealment of information may be an unconscious effect, or it may be on purpose (for example to protect or to do damage to reputations; or to acquire a project for the village). The researcher can try to mitigate this selectivity by contacting other villagers who speak French or English and talking with them without the interpreter. Another path is to constantly compare the acquired information and seek out differences, contradictions or paradoxes, and to confront the interpreter and other key informants with the results of these comparisons.

The process of translating into French or English often results in the interpreter automatically explaining concepts to the researcher. These explanations may have their origin in the colonial period or even before, and they may be defective or at least selective. It is the researcher's task to re-examine the content of such notions. For example, must we speak of "castes", or can we better speak of "traditional, hereditary craft groups" or of "hierarchical, endogamous status groups"? And how must the concept of "*marabout*" be circumscribed? Is it "a Muslim spiritual leader and healer", or is it "an intermediary between man and the supernatural, who to a lesser or larger extent makes use of Islam and intervenes as healer or sick maker with magical means?" And what of the concepts of "*griot*" and "*griotte*"*?*. Must they be seen as "musicians and historians who sing the praise of important families or persons" or should we rather see them as "social relation intermediaries and public relation managers who have a range of means at their disposal to restore social order and cohesion, such as knowledge of the past, knowledge of ritual, and verbal and musical expression"? The same holds for other concepts such as *foro* (noble families) and *jongo* (slave families).

Thus, the research training could even be seen as a first challenge for every student to rethink the translations of the concepts used by the community under research or in the scientific literature.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have given an impression of my work as a teacher in the context of fieldwork: the learning objectives to be achieved as well as the problems that I encountered in the process.

The four learning objectives of the fieldwork, formulated in the pages above, are, in my view, an elaboration of the second general goal, mentioned in our departmental study guide, namely an "introduction into other cultures and understanding of other ways of life". I felt little or no attraction to the first mentioned general goal, "to put into practice the acquired theoretical knowledge". It seemed to me to be a formulation belonging to the tradition of social engineering: that is to say, objectively established knowledge must be applied to society in order to see whether or not social changes may happen as planned, or whether the existing theoretical knowledge is confirmed or falsified or must be refined. What interests me, above all, is to discover social logics different from ours, and not so much the testing of general theories in specific situations. More than once I encountered students who did not share my point of view, which sometimes made coaching a delicate matter.

Photo 2.1

Learning how to eat correctly with your right hand, Tambacounda, 1998

Photo 2.2

Learning to make tea, Hellakunda, The Gambia, 1997

Photo 2.3

How to pound rhythmically with three persons? Bassending, The Gambia, 2002

Photo 2.4

Helping to clear the farm, Hamdalaye Tessan, 1986. (photo Louise Huijbens-Jellema)

Photo 2.5

Operating the animal drawn plough at Madina Dian,1998, by the study-programme co-ordinator of our Leiden department

Photo 2.6

How to dance in the Mandinka way?; at the occasion of a courtesy visit to Netteboulou, 1998

Photo 2.7

Learning how to weed, Hamdalaye Tessan, 1996

Photo 2.8

How to get free access to a moped? Tambacounda, 1997

Photo 2.9

Learning how to draw water from the well, Dienkore Manfin, 1997

Photo 2.10

How to carry on your head a bucket filled with water?, Dienkore Manfin 1997

Photo 2.11

How to safely fix a baby on your back?, Dar Salam, 2003

Photo 2.12

How to make the first contact in a strange country? Tanje village, The Gambia, 2000

Photo 2.13

Playing with the children, Kobakunda, The Gambia, 2001

Photo 2.14

Taking care of the animals, Mansajangkunda, The Gambia, 2001

Photo 2.15

Learning the jembe rhythms, Tambacounda, 1998

Photo 2.16

Calmly chatting at the shelter (*bantaba*) in Sita Oule Bananding, 1997

Photo 2.17

Individual coaching, Ngaye Ngaye Allah (near Thies), 1993

Photo 2.18

Individual coaching, Badi, 2002

Photo 2.19
Individual coaching, Latrekunda, The Gambia, 2003

Photo 2.20
Individual coaching, Mansajangkunda, The Gambia, 2003

3

Personal experiences of communicating with Senegalese and Gambian people

In this chapter, I will reflect upon some characteristics, as I saw them, of the communication process between me, as a representative of a Dutch University, and the Senegalese and Gambian people I encountered during my work. I have met a great number of people, mostly men but also women, during the many years of the training. In both countries I have been involved in a process of communication with national and regional authorities in order to obtain, on time, research and residence permits for staff and students. I was also dependent on local people, mostly village heads, in order to complete the necessary preparations for students prior to their arrival, e.g. acceptable housing for every student in his or her village, and a good interpreter from the village concerned. I had to rent a staff house and to arrange water and electricity. I also had to negotiate regularly with garage owners for the maintenance and repair of the car. Occasionally, problems arose during the research training between the student and the host family, for which a solution had to be negotiated. In sum, I met a great many people during my trips and visits to towns and villages where I had placed my students.

In the course of these communications, over so many years, certain ideas gradually emerged in my mind, including general views on people, on their behaviour, aspirations and strategies, and views on how they saw me as a person and as a foreign university functionary. Herewith the programme for this chapter is clear. Firstly, I will present my view on them; how I learned to see them. Secondly, I will describe what I believe their view of me is, how I think that they saw me. Finally, I will reflect upon the possible implications of these supposed views for the communication and research process.

My general view of Senegalese and Gambian people

Throughout the years of our training, I was struck by a repeated pattern of behaviour by Senegalese and Gambian men and women towards me. After some years, I dared to summarize these experiences into three general statements, which were reconfirmed in later years:

They have a strong positive appreciation of extrovert behaviour

In rural Senegal and the Gambia, people engage in an extensive ritual of greetings during which the greeting partners enquire about each other's health and that of many family members. This ritual must always be respected, although less extensive greetings by strangers are accepted. I learned that, as a Dutchman, I sometimes began by asking questions without first giving the customary greeting. This may work in our society, but absolutely not in Senegal and the Gambia, where such a direct approach was deemed impolite. Instead, you must first establish or confirm a social relationship with the correct greeting and only then can you pose your question.

Moreover, as a stranger you are expected to be open. This means approaching people with a smile, taking the initiative to make contact and greet first. You must shake hands. They like to hear you talking, making jokes and being expressive, they especially like to see you dance. I have never danced as much as I did during my stay in Senegal and the Gambia. In short, you must show just how much you like to be in contact with them. "*Elle rigole beaucoup*" (she is always joking), was a great compliment for a student, expressing that her host father (IfraTalla) was very happy with her (see photos 3.1–3.8).

By contrast, introvert behaviour invites uncertainty, tension, and possibly even suspicion. In the course of 18 years, I was able to give good advice to several students who were too quiet and too reserved, by telling them to smile, to greet, to shake hands, to make jokes and to dance. Make them aware that you are there, and that you like being there.

When students returned to the Netherlands, after a three-month stay in Senegal or the Gambia, practically all of them had problems settling back into Dutch life. They continued to greet everybody around them, starting a conversation and showing extrovert behaviour. While this is highly appreciated in Africa, in the Netherlands such behaviour led to rejections

and critical glances, meaning "what do you want from me?". Indeed, this is something I experienced myself several times.

They use flattering words to facilitate communication

The Africans I met used to underline the importance of their (male) interlocutor often by addressing him with terms like boss, patron, grand, chief, doctor or professor. You are publicly placed on a pedestal in order to induce a mild manner. At the beginning of my stay in Senegal, I usually addressed the vice prefects with the term "Monsieur le Sous-Préfet" (Mister Under-Prefect). Then, an important politician took me aside and explained to me that it was better to say "Monsieur le Préfet" (Mister Prefect), because, as he said to me: "in Senegal one usually puts his interlocutor on a higher level than he or she has in reality, just to please him or her". One must please his or her interlocutor verbally thus inducing a good mood.

Another form of flattering speech includes formulating fine promises, and never saying "no" in response to a request. "No problem. This is easy to achieve". "You can rely on me, you know I am your friend". "We have known each other for so long, have I ever disappointed you?" Over the years, I heard endless variations of such phrases. That is why I advised my students to never refuse a request directly, but rather always to look for socially acceptable escapes. Personally, I cannot remember any refusal of a request of mine. My interlocutors always made fine promises, in order to show their good will and to keep me happy, thus smoothing the communication process.

However, whether these promises are kept is another matter. Here, I am referring to civil servants and village heads. In many cases, they did keep to the agreement, for instance to process research permits on time, or to prepare the house and the bathroom for the coming student. But in several other cases, their promises were not correctly kept, for reasons unknown to me. To be sure of any progress, I had to show up regularly in order to remind them discretely of their commitment. Sometimes, it would be revealed that a village head wanted more financial help to be able to carry out the house improvements, etc.

A particular example of promises being made and only partially kept concerned a high-ranking district officer from the village of Missirah. He was a very busy man, and an enthusiastic host to several students over the years.

With some knowledge of sociology, he used to surprise me and the student every time with promises of things he would do for the student. In this way, he not only showed me his capabilities, but he also successfully improved my mood and took away any frustrations I may have had with his earlier behaviour. Unfortunately, after my departure he seemed to have forgotten many of his nice ideas and left his student in uncertainty.

They must show respect for social and religious relations

Social solidarity, family and village solidarity, is heavily emphasized. On several occasions, people explained to me the importance of family and they praised the warmth of the family relations in Africa. They presented this in contrast to (what they called) cold, individualistic Western societies where people who live in the same building do not talk to each other, where people live in isolated nuclear families, and where the elderly are moved into special homes, removed from their family members who have no time to take care of them.

People are also expected to publicly demonstrate deep respect for religious leaders like *marabouts* and they constantly communicate to each other that God's will has to be respected by saying "*inshalah*". All acts and words are immediately judged according to their level of respect.

I was almost daily confronted with speeches praising my actions and expressing hope that the relationship would last for many years, even into subsequent generations. This was almost always sealed with a prayer and benedictions.

My view on how they generally saw me

From numerous verbal statements and social events, I gradually came to realize that, with a few exceptions, they generally viewed me as a rich, powerful and accessible stranger. And it was these three qualifications that allowed me to understand their behaviour towards me.

An approachable stranger

I did not speak any of the local languages, and had to communicate by means of an interpreter (my assistant) in French or English. With the exception of Netteboulou, I usually felt considered as someone who is "not from here" and "not fully understanding local relationships and customs". On the other hand, like all strangers, I could have hidden abilities, which could be advantageous to them. Moreover, I appeared to be a friendly and easily accessible man who was quite sensitive to their problems.

Villagers saw me as a rich man

Any white man of an advanced age, coming from western Europe and driving a car, bringing young university students, must be rich. This view was without doubt one of the reasons why I received so many requests for money, help or material objects. Every year, I was confronted with several demands for food (a bag of rice or millet because of the hungry season); house repairs (because of the approaching rainy season); money for clothing (because of religious feasts such as *Korite* or *Tabaski*); money for medicines, school fees; financial help to start a shop or a restaurant; requests to invest in poultry farming, cattle breeding, and horticulture as well as to help with bride prices or funeral ceremonies. I was also asked to bring objects from the Netherlands, including radios, video recorders, second-hand cars, and, more recently, televisions, solar panels and mobile phones.

Faced with so many demands, and given my task to keep relations workable, I used several strategies. The best one, without any doubt, was to respond with a joke and not take the request seriously, but often that was not possible. Another strategy, the one I applied most frequently, was to politely explain that I alone could not take all the problems of the whole of Senegal or the village on my shoulders, and that it would be unfair to others to make an exception for one individual. Frequently people responded by telling me that I was a wise man. However, although this argument might have relieved the pain, people still felt it as a refusal to share, or as a depreciation of their relationship with me.

I sometimes explained to really good friends that while, compared to them, I certainly had a nice salary, the society I belong to charges its members with "obligations that you here do not have". For example, we must heat our houses against the cold for months on end, which requires a lot of expensive fuel;

that we have the legal obligation to send all our children to school (not only some of them as they do), and that we must contribute to their study costs for at least 12 years per child; that our way of life and our work patterns demand the immediate availability of running water, electricity, a refrigerator and a car; that we can not function well without a personal computer, and that all these things are not for free; and, last but not least, that I, like all fathers, had many responsibilities and obligations at home.

Finally, in the case of a persistent request, I applied what I call avoidance behaviour: completely avoiding any contact for some time, or taking care to always meet the person in the presence of others so that he would be ashamed to repeat his request. Unfortunately, in some exceptional cases my reply had to be more explicit, namely, that I had to limit my help to my intimate friends, an answer that implied that the person in question did not belong to this circle.

An influential and powerful stranger

This conclusion is unavoidable, given the numerous requests for help to emigrate to The Netherlands, or to acquire a scholarship for Leiden University, or to find them funds from NGOs. Many people did not seem to understand that I had no relatives or friends in the Dutch immigration service, or in the university admissions committee, or at the Dutch Embassy. Even my argument that university candidates in The Netherlands had to adhere to strict and objective admission criteria, was sometimes met with disbelief and irritation. Once, in The Gambia, in the village of Sotuma Sere, I was invited by a villager to participate in the diamond trade and to provide him with contacts in the diamond industry in Amsterdam (the man purported to own a diamond mine in Sierra Leone). He simply would not believe that, as an academic researcher, I had no contacts in the world of diamonds, not least because of the proximity of Leiden to Amsterdam.

Implications for the communication process

So far, I have provided an experience-based reconstruction of how I viewed Gambians and Senegalese, and of how they saw me. According to these views, we can generalize that African partners like to see that the other, the stranger, is lively and open about his activities; they communicate in a way that induces a good state of mind in the stranger, and they want that

established social relationships should be respected and maintained, which requires communication or exchange. Add to this a stranger who seems to be accessible, rich and influential, and who, moreover, introduces a lot of young European strangers to your horizon. What a chance to realise your aspirations! Clearly, there was an enormous drive to communicate or exchange with me. However, let us examine what the outcome can be in two particular scenarios: rejection of a request and granting a request.

The rejection of a request for support, however politely formulated, was often still felt by people as a refusal to share my supposed wealth, or as a depreciation of the relationship, and perhaps even as missing the boat to prosperity, for instance in cases where people asked me to invite them to The Netherlands. Inevitably, such feelings remained bubbled under the surface of the continuing communication process. However, it could be balanced by their hope of new opportunities.

In cases where I responded positively to a request, there were various consequences. Granting a request for money to somebody, if it became known, sometimes led to a cool and even hostile attitude towards me from other families. The more so, when it concerned a paid job as an interpreter. I vividly remember a public quarrel in the compound of the chief (*seefo*) in the village of Kobakunda in The Gambia. It was a clash between the younger brother of the chief and his sister's son concerning the selection of candidates for the job of interpreter in some villages where competent interpreters were said to be lacking. Both of them had, without my knowledge, recruited candidates for these posts (on condition that a part of their salary would be for their recruiter). As I had decided in the meantime to work with the sister's son, the younger brother of the chief felt severely frustrated. In the midst of a nearly physical dispute between the two, suddenly the chief exploded and shouted at me that I had better leave the country instead of provoking conflict within African families. Finally, we reached a compromise: I continued to work with the sister's son and the son of the younger brother would serve as an interpreter for a student. As the student was not satisfied with the quality of his work, he had to be fired some weeks later. My relationship with the family of the younger brother was destroyed. Such a case illustrates just what a political arena our research training operates in.

The consequences for local people who receive a favour in the form of a gift or a job are even more serious. The person who has received your help or a job is often confronted with jealousy from fellow villagers. A clear example is my Senegalese assistant with whom I worked for 16 years. Apart from his

salary during four months per year, he regularly received some personal help during the rest of the year. This situation was difficult to accept for another family in his village (Netteboulou). Their jealousy rose to such a high level that they accused him of having prevented a younger son of their family from emigrating to The Netherlands, which was entirely untrue. Furthermore, when I decided not to hire a watchman from this family, they held my assistant responsible for this decision and they sent one of their brothers to a religious leader (marabout) to bring him misfortune. He, in turn, went to another marabout for protection against these threats.

Another incident took place in February 2004, after the final research training. A member of the same family publicly accused my assistant of stealing me from them (they said they were the first to have known me). My assistant asked me to write a letter to his assailant, also a friend of mine, in order to explain how we had got to know each other through an intermediary who did not belong to the accusing family. I did so in a letter of February 11, 2004. In other words, this family and several others were trying to appropriate me.

There is a last implication of the supposed ideas in the minds of my African partners. As previously mentioned, they must publicly show respect for social and religious relations by words and actions, while social solidarity and sharing are heavily emphasized. Notwithstanding these prescriptions, many people try to serve their own short-term self-interest. For example, I once gave a man money for a bag of rice to feed his family, who were said to be suffering from the hungry season (seasonal food shortage). It later became clear that he had used the money to buy a watch for himself instead of a bag of rice for his family. He then desperately appealed to me not to tell this to his brothers. Another example concerns a man to whom I had given a financial contribution to the bride price for the marriage of his younger brother. When I asked him a year later when the marriage ceremony would take place, it became clear that he had secretly used the money for personal ends. He was seriously ashamed, now that it had become public. Such examples reveal a tendency to hide selfish behaviour, just given the strong emphasis on solidarity. It seems to me that, in contrast to people in the Netherlands, rural Senegalese and Gambians are faced on a daily basis with the dilemma of choosing between the publicly approved moral order (sharing and solidarity) and the serving of short-term self-interests. In our society, it is permissible to serve our self-interests to a certain extent; indeed, we are even encouraged to do so. They like to do the same, I suppose, but because of this heavy emphasis on sharing, they feel forced to hide their selfish behaviour. The

implication for communication and research, then, is that there is often a lack of transparency concerning people's expenditure.

Final remarks

Notwithstanding the attractive social play and the constant invitation to communicate, which was a frequent source of cheerfulness and fun, the communication with Senegalese and Gambians was not always a delight for me. It was a pleasure as far as people are really warm-hearted and spontaneous, and they richly reward an outsider's initiative to communicate. Once a social relationship had been established, however, it was followed by many demands for (im)material or financial services, which I was unable to meet. Refusal to share has resulted in relationships cooling. And in cases where a request was agreed to, jealousy may trouble the relationship, between you and the non-receivers, and between the receiver and his fellow villagers. In sum, over the years, I felt myself increasingly involved in a political arena.

In the first years of our research training, I felt great enthusiasm for the idea of building a small house in the village of Netteboulou, where I felt I had good contacts. Such a house could serve as a base for future fieldwork, something that was highly attractive to an anthropologist! However, when, in the course of time, I became aware of the claims people made on me, and of the jealousy towards the persons with whom I preferred to work, I finally decided to abandon this idea. Clearly it had the potential to become a source of jealousy and conflict, rather than bringing me closer to the lives and minds of local people.

Finally, to counterbalance possible criticisms of a negative image of Senegalese and Gambian people, I want to say explicitly that I have no interest at all in offending the people who welcomed me in their midst, and that, as a scientist, I try to report honestly on what happened to me. Of course, these are subjective experiences. My examples are unavoidably selective, but they represent events that formed my ideas. Lastly, I would like to underline that there were several persons in both countries who gave me their support over the years without ever claiming any favour in return.

Photo 3.1

Mam Awa, the first wife of University professor and minister Serigne Diop, with the Senegal group of 1997. She offered to more than 12 incoming groups, on their first day in Senegal, food, shelter and, of course, dance

Photo 3.2

Dancing on Senegalese music with Mam Awa, probably in 1987

Photo 3.3

Shaking hands with my friend Ifra Talla in Koussanar, probably in 1987

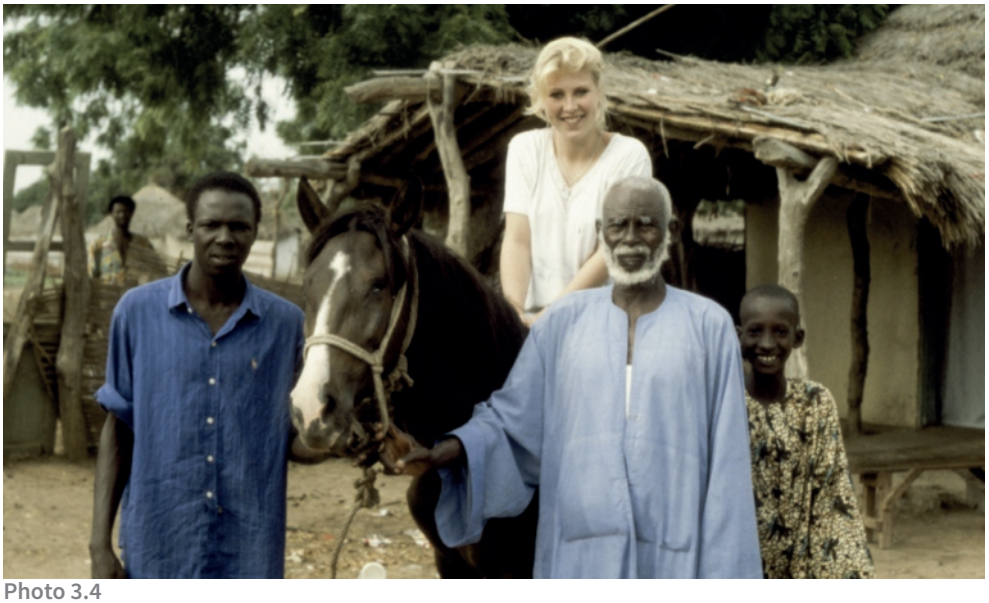


Photo 3.4

My daughter on her 18 th birthday at the compound of Ifra Talla in Koussanar, July 1991

Photo 3.5

My daughter dancing with women of Badari in The Gambia, during a work visit to my student there, 1991

Photo 3.6

“They want to see you dancing”, village unknown, 2000

Photo 3.7 & 3.8

Drumming and dancing at a party in Tambacounda , 2004

4

A socio-economic history of Tambacounda district

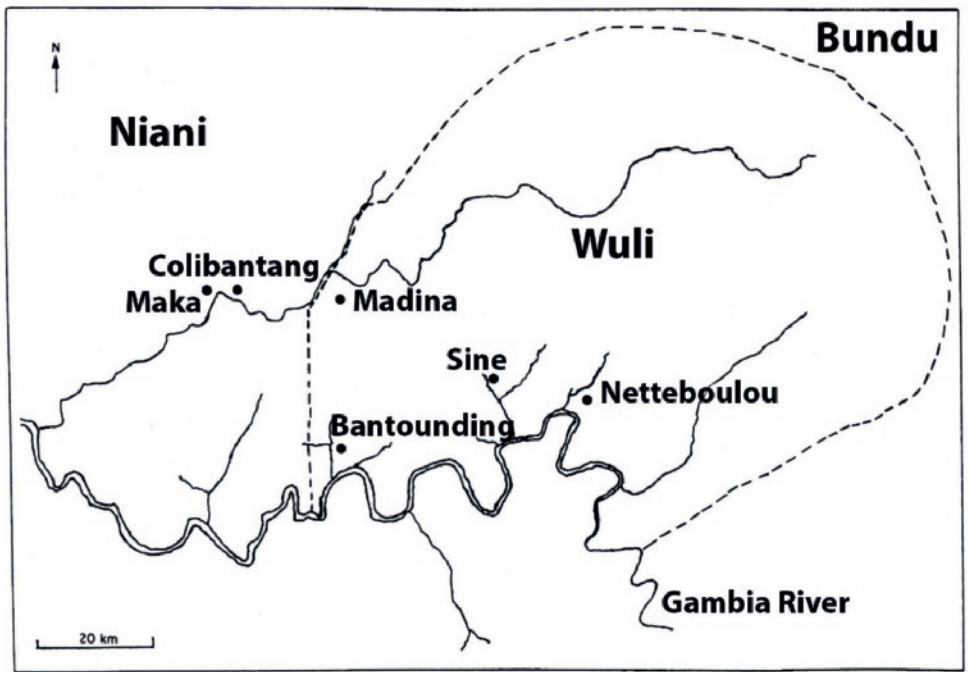
This third chapter of Part one (about "the research arena") concerns the social and economic history of the district of Tambacounda, the area where many of our students conducted their fieldwork. The district of Tambacounda more or less coincides with the northern part of the former Mandinka kingdom of Wuli. Hence this chapter not only shows aspects of the political arena within which the research was carried out, but also provides the necessary background for the chapters on the village of Netteboulou in Part two.

This chapter is largely based on the doctoral dissertation of Ed van Hoven, who presents in his book the results of a literature study and of an analysis of oral histories about the subject of this chapter (Van Hoven,1995: 19–68). He participated in our research training in 1987, in and around the village of Koussanar. Some years later, he carried out his doctoral research in the village of Pathiab, south of Koussanar, and in some neighbouring villages. Other sources used here are the (in my view, excellent) Master's theses of two former students, Paul Folmer (1993: 17–90) and Marieke Prins (1995: 4–30). What follows here is my selection from their reconstructions.

Pre-colonial Wuli

Wuli was one of the Mandinka kingdoms along the Gambia River. The political situation within and between these Mandinka kingdoms was often quite precarious. Wuli had a leading family, called the Wali, with the village of Madina as their capital (see map 4.1). This family produced the king (*mansa*). Although the king had ritual powers and exclusive access to the kingdom's guardian spirit (*jalango*), he potentially had to face rivals within the royal family. There was also a serious rivalry between the royal family and other noble (*foro*) families living in other villages of the kingdom, which

could also lead to coups d'état or secession. Moreover, the king had to make war with neighbouring kingdoms in order to obtain captives, who could be sold as slaves (*jongo*) to European traders in exchange for weapons, or they could serve as warriors in the king's army, or they could fulfil domestic tasks, and, eventually, if they were well integrated, they could be sent as his representatives, for instance to collect the yearly tribute from other aristocratic (*foro*) families. Slaves were also needed to be distributed by the king to other families in order to extend or reinforce his network. They were the main source of revenue for the king and his public servants, besides the revenue from issuing licences to European traders to establish trading posts.



Map 4.1

Some important sites in former Wuli kingdom (reproduced on the basis of E. Van Hoven, 1995, 22)

The other *foro* families in Wuli, for instance the Sane, Diatta and Camara, could also initiate wars without any obligation to share their booty with the Wali family (Van Hoven, 1995: 23). These other *foro* families could sell their prisoners of war or they could integrate them into their family. In the latter case, the slaves were usually given the name of their master's family and had to work mostly on the family's communal farm. In return, their master gave them clothes, food, shelter, protection, and paid their bride price. Later, the

master also had to pay taxes for them to the colonial government because they were living in his compound.

With regard to the social position of slaves, a *jongo* man was not allowed to marry a *foro* woman. A *foro* man could take a *jongo* woman as his fourth wife. Any children born of this alliance had *jongo* status (Van Hoven, 1995: 27). A well-integrated *jongo*, especially the king's *jongo,* could fulfil important public functions. In some exceptional cases, a *jongo* could regain *foro* status, for instance if he had captured at least two warriors for his master. There are even examples in precolonial Wuli of public discussions about the social position of persons or families.

Beside the families of noble origin (*foro*) and their slaves (*jongo*), there was the social category of people (the *nyamakalo*) who had the exclusive right to carry out special services. This category included blacksmiths (*numo*), leatherworkers and rope makers (*karankewo*), and griots (social intermediaries and praise singers, *jalo*). They all had special practical as well as ritual functions. Every *foro* family had its own blacksmiths, leather workers and griots, and each of these had a personal relation with his or her *foro* master. The *nyamakalo* have never been prisoners of war. If their *foro* master was defeated, they could join another *foro* family and keep their social status, in contrast to their defeated *foro* master (Van Hoven, 1995: 25; Folmer, 1993: 28–34).

So, the international slave trade was the main source of revenue for the Wali and other *foro* families. It seems, however, that a special group of traders, the *Jula* or *Dioula*, profited most from the slave trade (Van Hoven, 1995: 24; Folmer, 1993: 62–63). Among these Dioula, the Signate, the later founders of Netteboulou, had a prominent place. Coming from Boudou, they were allowed by the king of Wuli to settle in the village of Fodecounda (in present-day The Gambia), along the trading route from Boundou to the trading posts along the River Gambia. They had already been converted to the Islam before they arrived in Wuli, in contrast to the Wali family whose members were animists (Prins, 1995: 11). They had been welcomed by the Wali. As warriors, the Wali gave protection to the trade caravans of the Dioula, while these had to pay taxes to the Wali king. Their trade provided the Wali and other *foro* families with valuable goods, such as weapons and ammunition, horses, textiles, etc. Within this context, the Wali gave women for marriage to Dioula families, which meant that they were fully accepted by, but subordinate to the Wali: as the bride receiving party, they were required to deliver services to them. The Dioula were also allowed to have their own farms, including,

later, groundnut farms. There they used their slaves to do the work, after which they sold the groundnut produce to European merchants (Prins, 1995: 12–13), who had become increasingly interested in groundnuts.

European interests and rivalry

Since the first quarter of the 19th century, there was a growing demand for groundnuts, for industrial purposes, in Europe. This was also the period of the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade, which, until then, had been the most important source of revenue for the Mandinka kingdoms along the River Gambia. As a substitute for this source of revenue, the Mandinka kingdoms started to grow groundnuts on a large scale for the European market. Nkoi Wali, king of Wuli from 1827, even took the surname "*mansa senelaa*", meaning "king-farmer" (Van Hoven, 1995: 21; Folmer, 1993: 35–37). The export of groundnuts went hand in hand with the import of a variety of European products that were in high demand. The groundnut trade thus brought the European powers, the United Kingdom, and France, not only access to raw materials (groundnuts), but also an important consumer market. Consequently, there was strong competition for groundnuts and trade relations between the two. Another consequence was that the Wuli elite inserted as many slaves as possible into their commercial groundnut production.

Other (Muslim) competitors

Besides internal rivalries and conflicts, and external threats from neighbouring Mandinka and Wolof kingdoms, as well as the transition from the slave trade to commercial groundnut growing, since about 1860, Wuli had been confronted with increasing threats by Muslim warlords, among them *marabout* Simoto Moro. After he had been allowed by the Wali king to establish his own village, Toubacouta, some 15 kms south of Madina, he ultimately contributed to the devastation of the Wuli capital by the Wolof army of Saloum in 1876 (Folmer, 1993: 39). The king and part of his people moved eastwards and settled in the village of Sine, which became the new capital. At the same time, a younger brother of the king took the opportunity to split off the southern part of Wuli and to form his own kingdom, with the village of Bantounding (near the River Gambia) as its capital.

Some years earlier, Fodecounda, the village of the Signate, had been destroyed by another Muslim warlord, which led to the foundation, by the Signate and the (dependent) Cisse family, of a new village more eastwards, called Netteboulou, (Prins, 1995: 15).

In the 1880s, northern Wuli was again severely threatened by *marabout* Mamadou Lamine Drame. Netteboulou was taken by surprise and its population decimated. Finally, the king of Wuli decided to make an appeal for help to the French commander. The cooperation between the French army and the allied forces of the kingdoms of Wuli, Boundou, Fouladougou and Fouta Djalon, rapidly led to the defeat of the *marabout*, and in the same year, 1887, to the agreement on the French protection of northern Wuli (Van Hoven, 1995: 30; Folmer, 1993: 42–50). Netteboulou was rebuilt at a place not far from its original site. In 1894, Bantounding (southern Wuli) accepted British protection.

These Muslim warlords criticized the behaviour of *foro* families and did not recognize the legitimacy of the royal families. All men were created as equals by Allah, and this idea was regarded as incompatible with that of birthright. The French, in turn, saw the Muslim revival as the most serious threat to their interests. Thus, the royal Wali family, the other *foro* families of Wuli, and the French colonizers regarded the war *marabouts* as their common enemies.

The decline of northern Wuli and French intervention

According to Rançon, a French explorer, who visited Wuli in 1891/92, its territory measured 130 km from east to west and 70 km north–south (Van Hoven, 1995: 31). He describes the north of Wuli as being dry and less fertile than the southern part, where the vegetation was luxuriant and where the people cultivated not only millet, maize and groundnuts, but also tobacco, tomatoes and cotton in large gardens around the villages. The cotton was processed locally into textiles, and most of the groundnuts were transported southwards to the European trading posts along the River Gambia. Although the Mandinka formed the majority of the population, and were the owners of the land, Wolof and Fula (Peul) also lived in Wuli. Concerning the Mandinka, Rançon made a distinction between animist and Muslim villages, the first being poor and badly organized, and the second prosperous and well organized. He cited 16 animist villages, where he judged the situation as extremely deplorable. Among these villages was Sine, the seat of the Walis. In his view, the contrast with the Muslim villages could not be sharper: these

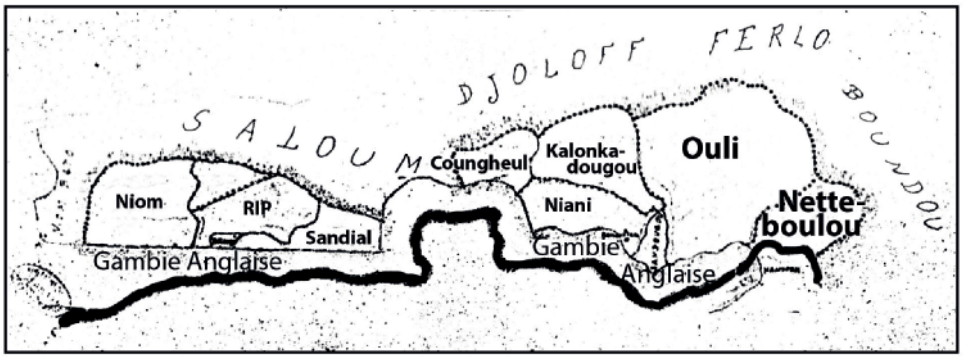
villages were clean and well organized, and people worked hard and produced a lot of groundnuts. When he visited the Muslim village of Netteboulou, he was struck by its degree of organization and its beautiful farms. There, he met a certain Sandian Signate, serious Muslim and prominent Dioula trader and groundnut cultivator. Sandian was very helpful and courteous to Rançon and showed his willingness to cooperate with the French. Rançon's report focused the attention of the French government on the Muslims of Wuli, and in particular on the qualities of Sandian Signate. The point was that the French government sought to establish alliances with all Muslim groups who appeared not to be opposed to the French (Van Hoven, 1995: 32).

One of the factors contributing to the decline of northern Wuli was the loss of control of the king and the other *foro* families over their slaves. Since the defeat of the Wuli army and the secession of southern Wuli in 1876, a large number of them had left for southern Wuli. For northern Wuli, i.e. the less fertile part of Wuli, this meant a decreasing labour force in the production and transport of groundnuts. It also implied, especially for the royal Wali family there, that several social and political functions could no longer be fulfilled correctly, for instance the tax collection. A lack of surveillance combined with a context of rivalry within the Wali family, led to fraudulent behaviour of administrative slaves with as a result decreasing revenues for the king (Folmer, 1993: 79).

Another problem was that many *foro* families were inclined to give priority to the commercial production of groundnuts at the expense of food crop cultivation. This happened to such an extent that they were unable to feed their slaves and that they had to buy food for them.

Towards a colonial administration

One year after Rançon's departure from Wuli, captain Roux visited Wuli and Netteboulou (Van Hoven, 1995: 33). He chose this occasion to declare the Signates independent from the Wali rulers. After heated discussions and protests by the Wali, a new administrative district, the *cercle of Niani-Ouli*, was established in 1897, with Maka-Colibantang as its chief town. This *cercle* was divided into several *cantons*, sub-districts. One of these was the *canton* of Netteboulou under supervision of the Signate family, another was the *canton* of Wuli (written as Ouli in colonial documents) under the Wali family (see maps 4.2 and 4.3).



Map 4.2

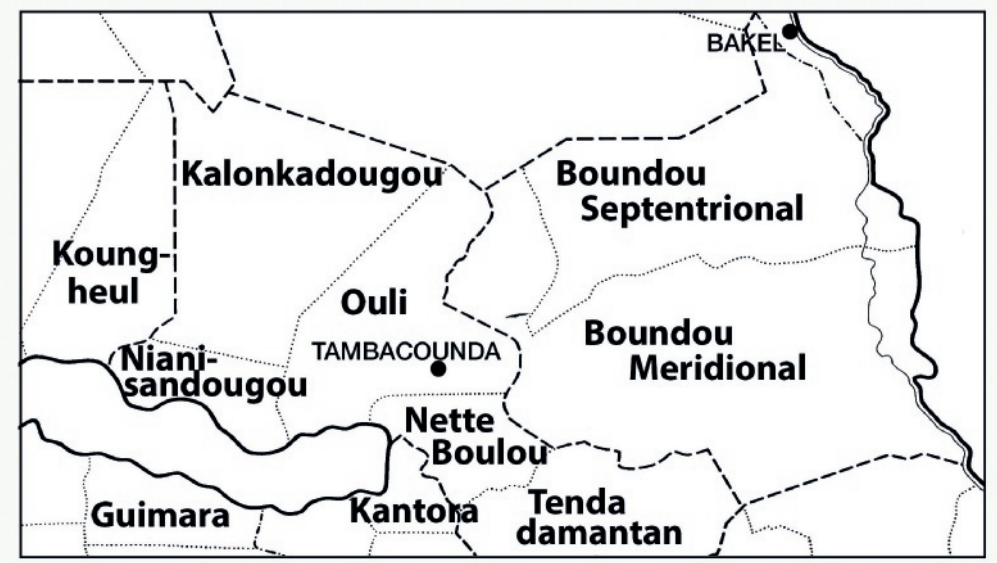
Overview of French cantons and protectorates to the North of British The Gambia in 1896, (reproduced from the national archives of Senegal, ANS, 1G217, and from A. Besse, Inheemse bestuurders en koloniaal gezag, Leiden, unpublished Master thesis, 1991)

For the French government, the Signate's of Netteboulou and the Wali's of Sine henceforth were on equal footing. This was in accordance with the general French policy to make vassals independent of their king with a view to reducing the power of the kings and transforming the former vassals into French oriented rulers (Prins, 1995: 20). For the Signate's this meant a promotion. For the Wali's it was a degradation, although their position as chief of the *canton* would bring them certain opportunities (Folmer, 1993: 82–83). Notwithstanding its critical view on the Wali's, the French government did not deprive them of their authority over the *canton* of Wuli, because the Wali's had supported the French army on several occasions elsewhere in Senegal, especially in the battle against the great war *marabout* Mamadou Lamine Drame. For his support, Yaka Sara Wali was honoured by the French government with a colonial medal (Van Hoven, 1995: 38). Some years later, in 1904, he was appointed as the second *chef de canton* of Wuli, a post that he held until his death in 1937. Moreover, in 1908 both *chefs de canton* were still fighting together in a war against *marabout* Fode Souleymane Bagaya, which brought them both a colonial medal (Prins, 1995: 20).

After Yaka Sara Wali's death, his youngest son, Kali Wali, was nominated *chef de canton* by the colonial government. With French support he could successfully face competitors from within the Wali family (Van Hoven, 1995: 39). In the 1950s, some of them joined the opposition movement of future president Senghor, while Kali Wali adhered to a French-oriented party.

The tasks of the *chefs de canton* included organizing a census from time to time, collecting taxes for the French government, and recruiting personnel

for (forced) public works as the construction and maintenance of roads, as well as men for the French army (Prins, 1995: 21–22). A certain percentage of the taxes was reserved for the *chef de canton*. To escape from forced labour or military service, many men moved to southern Wuli in The Gambia.



Map 4.3

The cantons of Wuli and Netteboulou in 1958, (reproduced from Atlas pour l'aménagement du territoire, Dakar, Les nouvelles éditions Africaines, 1977)

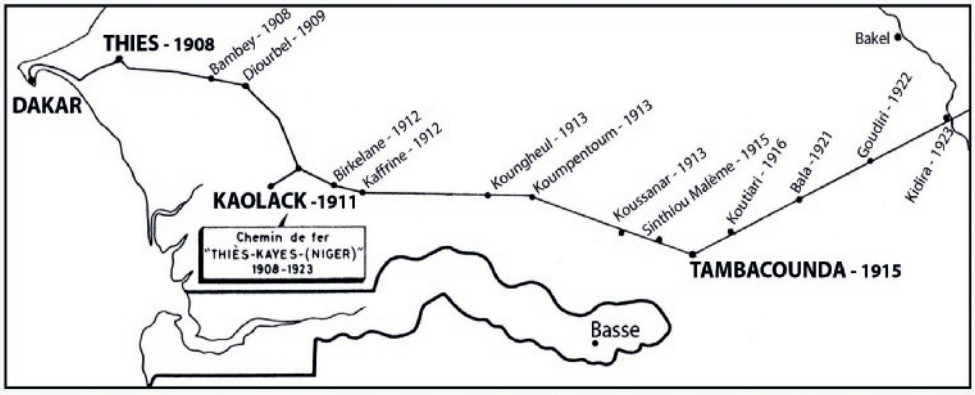
Part of the colonial taxation system was a tax on the number of persons living in a compound. Having many slaves, therefore, became a heavy burden for many *foro* families, who, in many cases, already had problems feeding their slaves. They decided to meet the wish of slaves to have their own compound, with less labour obligations, thus shifting their charges and obligations to the slave families themselves. These families were allowed to build their own compounds and to take responsibility for their own food production, until finally all categorical labour obligations were abolished (Folmer, 1993: 89).

Economic policy and administrative measures in the new colony

Having shown how the northern part of the Wuli kingdom had been transformed into two *cantons* within the French administrative context, the question now is what governmental plans and actions the farmers of Wuli and Netteboulou became involved in.

The colonial government was determined to increase the production of groundnuts. However, the quantity of the groundnut produce in former northern Wuli had remained very modest for a long time, due to less favourable natural circumstances, long distances to the trading posts along the River Gambia, and emigration of labour forces to the south (Van Hoven, 1995: 41). This was also the case in Niani and in other, more westward *cantons*.

In order to further the groundnut production and transport, and to stop the exodus of people and produce to The (British) Gambia, the French government decided to construct a railway from Thies in Senegal to Kayes in Mali, a project that was carried out between 1907 and 1923 (Van Hoven, 1995: 42; Folmer, 1993: 86). With the advancement of the railroad construction, several French trading companies established their posts along the railway, and new villages came into being (see map 4.4; photos 4.1 and 4.2). Tambacounda owes its very origin to the construction of the railway, in about 1915 (Dupon 1964: 179). The railway also facilitated the immigration of many seasonal labourers from Guinée and Mali. Several labourers decided to stay in the *canton* of Wuli, especially in the villages along the railway like Koussanar and Sinthiou Malème. Among them also Wolof from Sine Saloum, belonging to the Mouride brotherhood, who settled north of the railroad in Kalonkadougou *canton*. The Mourides were well known as hard and disciplined workers, and they did not disappoint the French authorities in this respect.



Map 4.4

The construction of the railroad Thies - Tambacounda – Mali in early colonial times, (on the basis of Ph. David, Les navétanes. Histoire des migrants saisonniers de l'arachide en Sénégambie, dès origines à nos jours. Dakar, Les nouvelles éditions Africaines, 1980, 56)

In 1920, the colonial government decided to remove the seat of the *cercle* from Maka Kolibantang to Tambacounda and to change its name into *cercle de Tambacounda*. (Van Hoven, 1995: 44). Kali Wali, *chef de canton* of Wuli since 1937, had, in the meantime, left the village of Sine to stay in Sinthiou Malème, along the railroad, and at a distance of 25 km from Tambacounda.

Another measure to involve local farmers in the groundnut production, and to diminish the drain of groundnuts to The Gambia where producers' prices were higher, was the introduction of a system of cooperatives, the so-called SIPs (*Sociétés Indigènes de Prévoyance, de Secours et des Prêts Mutuels Agricoles*). In 1912, a SIP was established in the *cercle* of Niani-Wuli (Van Hoven, 1995: 45; Folmer, 1993: 87–88). There, membership of the SIP and a financial contribution were obligatory from the outset, on account of the fact that the drain of groundnuts to the south was so voluminous. The administrative board of the SIP was composed of the commander of the *cercle* and the chiefs of the *cantons*. This board was responsible for the construction of storehouses, the digging of wells and the collection of the groundnut harvest. The *chefs de canton* were charged with collecting the SIP contribution in their *canton*.

Moreover, from about 1920 onwards, the French government pursued a policy of agricultural mechanization, in order to meet the still existing lack of labour and to increase groundnut production (Van Hoven, 1995: 46; Folmer, 1993: 87). They introduced animal-drawn ploughs, which the board of the SIP were instructed to lend to "intelligent farmers". According to Van Hoven, these farmers appeared to be mostly the *chefs de canton* themselves. Thus, the *chef de canton* of Netteboulou would have received 60 ploughs. The *chefs de canton* also enjoyed advantages in the distribution of groundnut seeds (earlier and more than other farmers). They redistributed part of the ploughs and the seeds to their clients, for instance to their *jongo* families, thus maintaining the traditional relations of hierarchy and interdependency.

Another political instrument in the hands of the *chefs de canton* was the redistribution of the communal profit of the cooperatives. In some villages, farmers received nothing at all. In others, this money was used by the *chef de canton* to restore or reinforce his relationships with certain *jongo* or *nyamakalo* families. Moreover, several cases of fraud and abuse, unreasonably high interest rates on the loans for seeds, and lower producer prices for the villages far from the railroad, led to much dissatisfaction among the population. The SIP could no longer fulfil its function of increasing groundnut production; it was finally dissolved in 1955.

Political and economic developments following Independence

After the country had been declared independent, under the presidency of Senghor (1960–1981), the price of the groundnut on the world market started to fall, provoking severe political unrest (Van Hoven, 1995: 50). In order to cope with this commotion, Senegal soon became a one-party state. However, in the 1970s, a mitigation set in, leading to the restoration of the multiparty system in 1981.

One well-known measure by the Senghor government with regard to agriculture was the establishment of the *Office National de Coopération et d'Assistance au Développement* (ONCAD) in 1966 (Van Hoven, 1995: 54). The government wanted to liberate the commercial activities from the influence of French trading companies, and so ONCAD was allocated the monopoly of the groundnut trade in the whole of Senegal. This state monopoly meant the abrupt end of all French trading companies, also in the district of Tambacounda. The state's control over the groundnut trade (the buying up of groundnuts from local farmers and cooperatives, the transport, storage and export) brought the government and the only party (the *Parti Socialiste*, PS) the opportunity to use the ONCAD for political ends. Thus, leaders of the religious brotherhoods and local leaders received all kinds of favours in exchange for the votes of their followers or subordinates. For instance, *marabouts* were allowed to nominate the president and weigher of local cooperatives, both financially interesting posts (regular wages plus illegal profits). They could also use ONCAD's trucks for pilgrimages by their followers (*talibe*) to holy places.

The internal organization of the cooperatives also left room for manipulation and fraud. So, the president of a local cooperative received an annual financial loan from ONCAD in order to be able to buy up the groundnut produce of the individual members. However, he was accountable only to ONCAD and not to the members of his cooperative. The same applied to the annual contribution that members had to pay to the board of the cooperative. Also, the profit-sharing and the distribution of credits (for agricultural material) among the members were far from transparent. Given the requirement for a cooperative to count at least 100 members, farmers were regularly from different villages, which could be a source of distrust. Unsurprisingly, serious dissatisfaction arose among local farmers. Many of them were confronted with corruption and with a defective delivery of groundnut seeds (too late and not enough). They reacted by withdrawing from groundnut cultivation, or by producing only for their own consumption and/or by transporting their

groundnuts to The Gambia. In the end, ONCAD was dissolved in 1980 (Van Hoven, 1995: 54, 58–60).

Economic liberalization and administrative reform

In 1981, Senghor resigned his presidency and was succeeded by Abdou Diouf. The reform that took place under his government can be characterized in general terms by the words "liberalization" and "participation" (or "self-management"). "Economic liberalization" implied withdrawal by the state from the agricultural production process, among others by abrogating state loans and subsidies. "Participation" aimed at the establishment of new administrative organisms, in which the local population would be better represented (Van Hoven, 1995: 52). At the local level, this meant the creation of municipalities (*communautés rurales*), governed by a rural council (*conseil rural*) with the majority of its members elected, and by state-nominated *sous-préfets* of the *arrondissements*. Although the creation of rural municipalities had already begun in some parts of Senegal in 1972, it started in the *Région de Tambacounda*, and thus in the former *cantons* of Wuli and Netteboulou, only in 1984, two years before our first research training.

Also in 1984, following international pressure, a new agricultural policy (*Nouvelle Politique Agricole*, NPA) was launched, according to which the state had to retire in favour of privatization. Thus, the National Bank for Agricultural Credit (*Caisse Nationale de Crédit Agricole*, CNCA) was privatized. This meant that credits to cooperatives and to Sonacos (*Société nationale de commercialisation des oléagineux du Sénégal)*, the organism which, after ONCAD, without having a monopoly, provided for the distribution of seeds, and the buying up, transport and export of groundnuts), were no longer a matter of course. Moreover, under this new policy, the local communities were regarded as units characterized by solidarity and mutual assistance. They were made responsible for their own groundnut, millet and maize seeds: they had to conserve them until the next rainy season, or to buy them with the Sonagraines. In cases of a lack of money, farmers were supposed to get a loan from more wealthy co-villagers or family members. In practice, however, many local families were unable to save seeds until the next agricultural season because of a shortage of food at the end of the dry season. And precisely in that period of food scarcity when prices are high, they did not have enough money to buy sufficient seeds, let alone fertilizer, etc., whereas local loans could only be obtained against very high interest (100 to 150%) to be repaid after the harvest. Lastly, the delivery of seeds by

the Sonagraines was often untimely, while the buying up of the groundnuts by Sonacos was frequently delayed by a lack of funds. Notably, in the *Région de Tambacounda*, farmers often had no choice but to sell to private traders, organized in so-called OPS (*Organismes Privés Stockeurs*), with sometimes remarkable financial losses (Van Hoven, 1995: 55–56, 61–62). So, withdrawal by the state had been felt by rural people as being abandoned by the state.

However, this idea of the state retreating and abolishing credits was not applied to all economic sectors. The cotton production, for example, was an exception. Being neglected by the colonial government, the cotton production has always been very important for the independent Senegalese government, given its policy of diversification of agricultural export production. The country needed other agricultural export products than groundnuts, the price of which, on the world market, moreover, was steadily declining. Therefore, the state did not withdraw from the cotton production by the local farmers and maintained credit facilities. The implications and effects of these governmental measures will be discussed in Chapter 11.

Conclusions

In my view, this chapter provides an illustration of the globalization process within a specific place and time, namely in the former territory of Wuli from the early 19th century till roughly the 1980s. The concept "globalization" refers to a process that has already been going on for centuries, under successive names, including "pre-colonial trade", "colonization", "incorporation", and more recently, with the advent of information and communication technology, "globalization".

On the basis of information presented in this chapter about the socio-economic history of Wuli, it seems justified to state that the main driving forces in this globalization process were the needs of several rival European countries to open up new consumer markets for their industrially fabricated products as well as to get access to natural resources at the lowest possible price. They, notably France and the United Kingdom, had found such a resource in the groundnut, cultivated in the area along the River Gambia. Other driving forces, on the African side, were the needs of the leading families for weapons and horses, among others, which they initially paid for with prisoners of war and later with groundnuts.

Another factor furthering globalization was the notion, on the European side, that the desired expansion of the groundnut production and of the market for western products is not compatible with warfare and its devastating effects. Unfortunately, the area along the River Gambia has been characterized by severe and structural political unrest. Rivalry and war within and between Mandinka kingdoms and other state formations were common. Their main source of revenue, the Atlantic slave trade, was even based on warfare. In the second half of the nineteenth century, this unrest was intensified by the military actions of several Muslim war *marabouts*, who were a real threat to the leading families in many kingdoms.

In order to advance trade, peaceful conditions were needed and warfare had to be ended. So, a number of European governments took measures, in the first half of the nineteenth century, to end the Atlantic slave trade, thereby also responding to the pressure of the anti-slavery movement in several European countries.

The Wali and other *foro* families reacted to the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade by successfully making the transition to large-scale commercial groundnut growing. However, they did so by inserting large numbers of slaves in the groundnut cultivation. Thus, the internal slave trade was not yet ended. Moreover, the military actions of Muslim war *marabouts* would continue for a long time. The prosperity of the Wali family came to an abrupt end in 1876, when their capital Madina, was destroyed, with the help of a war *marabout*, by a Wolof army. At about the same time, a rival branch of the Wali family exploited this situation by proclaiming an independent kingdom in the fertile southern part of Wuli, close to the River Gambia and the European trading posts there. Also, many slaves moved southwards, which resulted in a labour shortage and disorganization in northern Wuli.

In reaction to these devastating events in Wuli and in other Mandinka kingdoms, the rival European powers decided to safeguard their grip on the market and to prevent their competitors from gaining access to it. Their representatives made contact with the royal families, or with dissidents, and offered them military protection against their enemies in exchange for exclusive trade relations. Thus, Wuli was split into a northern (French) protectorate and a southern (British) one, in 1887 and 1894, respectively.

Regarding northern Wuli, the first thing the French military commanders tried to achieve was to construct an administrative infrastructure for the advancement of the groundnut production and trade. After several fact-

finding missions by French explorers, the northern part of Wuli was finally divided into two *cantons* within the *cercle* of Tambacounda: one canton under the responsibility of the Wali in Sine, the other under that of the Signate family of Netteboulou, who, as former vassals of the Wali and under protest by the Wali, had been upgraded by the French commanders.

The main objective for the French colonial government was to further their trade interests, notably the local production and export of groundnuts, and the prevention of what they defined as illegal transport of groundnuts to The (British) Gambia. It did so primarily with three drastic interventions: the construction of a railroad, the establishment of a cooperative movement (the aforementioned SIP), and the mechanization of groundnut cultivation by the distribution of animal-drawn ploughs. Aside from the fact that the railroad greatly facilitated the transport of groundnuts from areas at long distances from the River Gambia, it also brought many seasonal labourers from Mali and other parts of French West Africa as well as the establishment of many French trading firms and new villages along the railroad. The cooperative movement was meant to stimulate the production and purchase of groundnuts. Its obligatory membership was also meant to prevent the drain of groundnuts and people to The (British) Gambia. In the elaboration of these measures, the colonial government created, or tolerated, a privileged position for the local leaders (*chefs de canton* and their families and followers) at the financial expense of the majority of farmers. In 1955, the situation appeared untenable and the cooperative movement had to be dissolved.

After independence in 1960, the Senegalese government under Senghor soon felt the consequences of the exclusive concentration on the production and export of groundnuts. A steady decline in the world price for groundnuts had set in. This brought severe political unrest in Senegal. In response to these economic and political problems, the Senghor government chose to create a powerful state and decided, to this end, to abolish all political parties but one, the Socialist Party (PS). Moreover, the government wanted to strengthen its hold on the groundnut market and eliminated the French trading companies by allotting the monopoly on the groundnut trade in the whole of Senegal to a newly established state company, ONCAD. This monopoly soon enabled the government and the ruling party to abuse the decreasing means of this state company in exchange for votes, i.e. for political ends. As a consequence, the company was finally closed down in 1980, the second big governmental failure after the SIP. Both failed government attempts to stimulate the

groundnut production were coupled with the growth of a wealthy social layer, regarded as profiteers by many local groundnut producers.

In reaction to these governmental failures and to international pressure, the main principle of the governmental policy under Abdou Diouf was for the state to withdraw. Instead of power for, and interference by the state, economic liberalization for the individual entrepreneur and administrative reform with more participation by local citizens, became the leading ideas. In the domain of agriculture, these ideas led to a new agricultural policy. Local communities and farmers were declared responsible for their own agricultural production process and they had to organize their credit among themselves. This idea of self-help and mutual solidarity, however, did not match the social reality at the local level in many parts of Senegal. Farmers were said to feel abandoned by the state.

Fortunately for the farmers in the district of Tambacounda, the government, within the context of its policy of diversification of exports, became interested in another, so far neglected agricultural product, namely cotton. Notwithstanding the new agricultural policy, cotton farmers kept access to agricultural credit, which made the cultivation of cotton very interesting for farmers, at least initially. Chapter 11 of this book presents the results of student research on the farmer's views on commercial cotton cultivation.

Epilogue

Many of our students conducted their fieldwork in villages within the department of Tambacounda, divided over the former *canton* of Wuli, the domain of the Wali, and over that of Netteboulou, where the Signate were the leading family. The Signate always welcomed our students, from the very start of the research training till its end in 2003. Every year, we had direct contact with the Signate, not least because Ansumane Signate was the kind and helpful owner of the Niji Hotel in Tambacounda. His hotel served as a postal address for me and my students for many years, and as a meeting point for students, Signate family members and many others (see photo 4.3). Students could be called there by their relatives at home. Ansumane liked to refer to the historical importance of the Signate family, notably during the annual courtesy visits by me and the students to his home compound in Netteboulou (see photo 4.4).

For the Wali, and the *canton* of Wuli, the situation was totally different. Before the start of our research training I had read, of course, about the Wali and their defeat in 1876. During the first training, in July 1986, I had even made an exploratory trip to Madina and Sine, which appeared to be small villages, without many residents at that time. Different from the Signate, the Wali had no hotel, no meeting point. Moreover, the staff had other contact persons. On account of a long-standing relationship between my colleague Gerti Hesseling and the Ly family in the west of Senegal, we had a regular contact with their "uncle", Ifra Talla, who lived in the village of Koussanar. As an immigrant himself, he had become a notable person in this village. He gave us good advice and mediation when needed, as did the *sous-préfet* in Koussanar. However, for unknown reasons, they never brought the Wali family to the staff's attention. Finally, I simply forgot to officially make their acquaintance and ask for their consent for our research training programme. Of course, this was my own responsibility as a researcher and staff member, not that of others; however, I got the impression that they consciously ignored the Wali family and that I was dealing with a case of inconspicuously canalized communication.

Sometimes, I came across the Wali family by chance. For example, in 1986, I had a student in the village of Sinthiou Malème, lodged in the compound of the village head, Cheikh Danso. My student told me that he had heard that the village head was married to a Wali woman and that he was seen as the local manager of the Wali. This family had its residence in a small hamlet, called Guirigara, not far from Sinthiou Malème. My student had tried to make contact with them, but their representative had demanded money in exchange for information. So, my student had decided to reject this informant, in accordance with our training rules that information should never be treated as merchandise and should never be bought. Consequently, my student had only limited access to the agricultural history of Sinthiou Malème. Perhaps the request from the Wali for money was a consequence of the fact that we had not officially made acquaintance with them. Personally I had a really friendly contact with Cheikh Danso, but even he never suggested to me to make a courtesy visit to the Wali (see photo 4.5).

In 1988, I met Mr. Sara Wali, then member of the Assemblée Nationale in Dakar, a friendly man. When I told him that I would try to start a pilot research project for an alternative irrigation scheme in Netteboulou, he was less than enthusiastic. In retrospect, I think to understand why.

In 1990, we had placed a student in the village of Pathiab having been given the consent of the Wali village head. During one of my visits to my student, I found a number of men sitting on the *bantaba* in the public place. After the greetings, one of the men asked whether I had already been given an African name. At that moment, I did not realize the importance of family names, and I answered that in Netteboulou I had been called Hans Coulibally. A long silence followed, whereupon the man slowly said: "they are not kings". Silence again. I tried in vain to retrieve the uneasy situation by saying that in Basse, in The Gambia, the Krubally were the kings and fulfilled the function of chief (*seefo*). However, that message was the end of the short meeting. I felt judged by the measuring staff of traditional criteria and publicly classified. I experienced the power of the public discourse. It seems, moreover, that mere mention of the name Netteboulou resulted in frosty communications. That said, my student never reported any problems in his contact with the Wali there. Fortunately, we have the doctoral dissertation of Ed van Hoven (1995), based on later fieldwork in Pathiab.

Photo 4.1

The railroad and the national (asphalted) road, both blocked after heavy rainfall, 1993 (between Koungheul and Koumpentoum),

Photo 4.2

with, consequently, looking for the best passage, July 1993

Photo 4.3

A meeting at the Niji Hotel in Tambacounda, 1999, but first reading letters from home

Photo 4.4

The last courtesy visit to Netteboulou, 2003

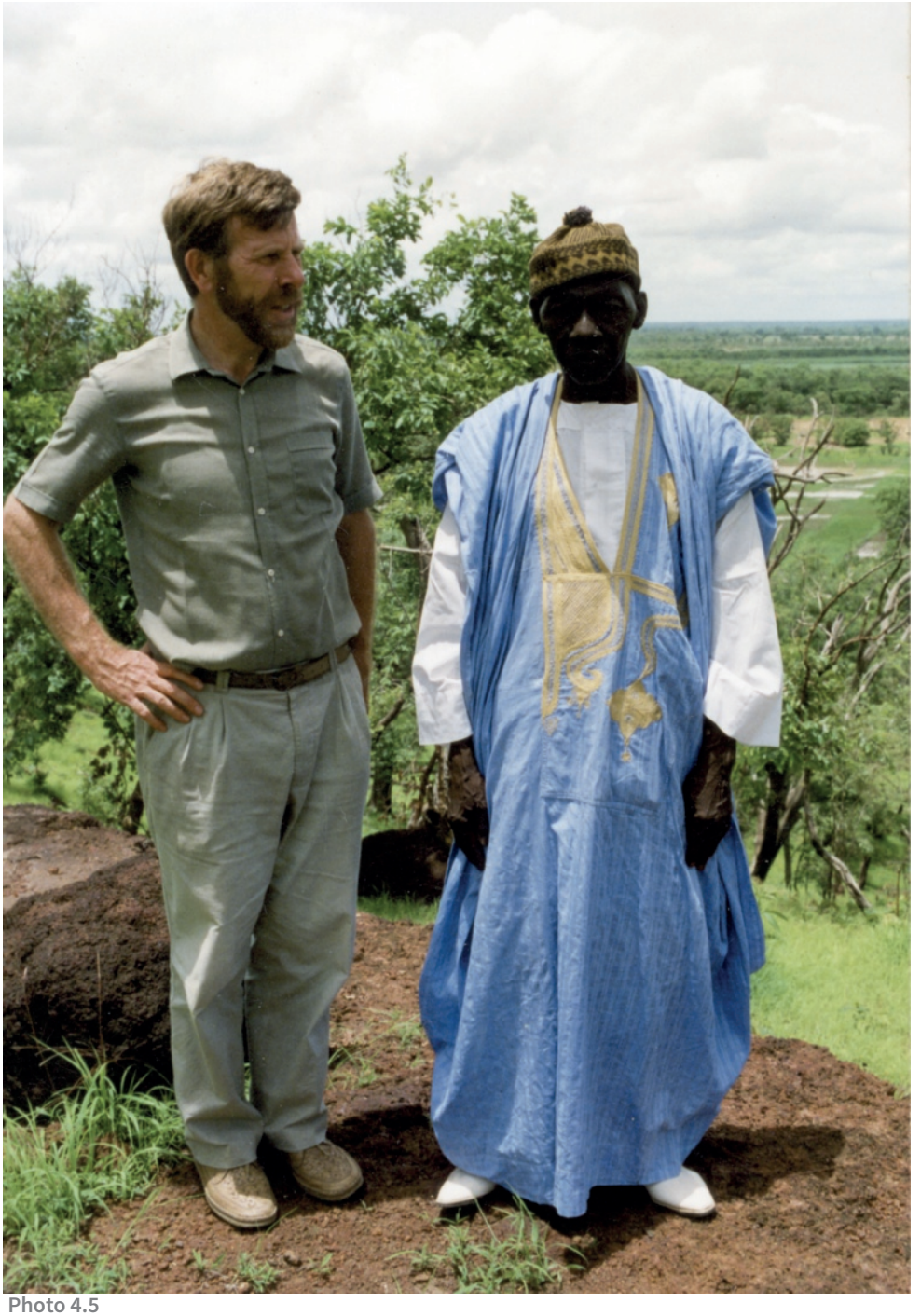


Photo 4.5

With my friend Cheikh Danso, head of Sinthiou Malème, who took me, in 1987, on an informal trip to The Gambia, ending up at Borokandekasse, where we were treated at a nice meal by the chief, a graduate of a British university

5

Progressing globalization in Tambacounda during the research trainings period

Central to the concept of globalization is the idea that it concerns a process of increasing circulation of people, products, resources, services or messages across national borders. At the different levels (global, national, regional, local), there may be demands for circulation of certain valuable items as well as for the material infrastructure to make this circulation possible. These demands may be different and situation-specific at each level.

Demands at various levels may reinforce each other and create a tight mutual dependence, for instance a local need for telephone or other social media, and international needs for access to local markets via these social media. To put it more simply, globalization may lead to fruitful collaborations as elements from one society may help to better achieve the goals of people in another society.

In other cases, the circulation desired at one level may provoke resistance or protest among others, or at least to a purposeful maintaining of local or ethnic traditions. On the global level, for example, the ideas of free market, competition and democracy are propagated and imposed by means of development projects, while at the national or local level people uphold other principles for the distribution of goods or power. This could eventually lead to counter-movements.

In this chapter, I will selectively show in retrospect, on the basis of my unfortunately incomplete diary, the signs of the ongoing globalization process that I observed in the town and district of Tambacounda during the years of our research training there.

The situation in 1986

When I came to Tambacounda for the first time, in 1986, the *route nationale* Dakar – Tamba (475 km long) had already been tarred. It continued as a piste (unsurfaced road), in the direction of Bakel (and Mali), in the direction of Kolda (and the Casamace) and in the direction of Kedougou (and Guinée-Konakry). This, in combination with the Dakar–Bamako (in Mali) railway, meant that Tambacounda was already the distribution centre for seasonal labourers, cattle and end products for the whole of eastern Senegal (Dupon, 1964: 179).

In 1986, Tamba already had electricity and telephone connections for a long time. Government services, as well as a number of private persons, had telephones. Those who had no private connection could call from the post office. So, for many years, students went from time to time to the post office to call their family or friends at home in The Netherlands. They could also call at the Niji Hotel, but that was more expensive than calling at the post office. For some students, their first call home was a strange and emotional happening, as they felt the differences between their situation and home were almost inexpressible.

In all villages there were numerous radio receivers that people used to listen to the messages and music of Radio Tambacounda, among others. During the first research training, I was interviewed about our work by a radio reporter. Subsequently, several people told me they had heard the conversation. I am not sure whether there were already TV sets working in Tamba town in 1986. I believe that the Niji Hotel got a TV set in 1987. So, students could follow the national and international news, see football matches and enjoy concerts. I do vividly remember the final of the European championship football between Russia and The Netherlands in June 1988, which the students and I watched in the house of Ibrahiman Tall in Tamba, a final that "we" won, to the great pleasure of our Senegalese hosts.

Back to 1986. Several families had sons studying at the University of Dakar or abroad, in Europe, the USA or Russia. In Tamba and surrounding villages, there were several veterans of the Second World War. Newspapers and magazines could be bought in a local shop stocking a mixed assortment. In the open-air cinema young people eagerly watched Western and Indian movies. Several students treated their interpreter or local friends to a visit to the cinema, as I did one time myself. It was nice to see that people regularly applauded after a pleasing action by the film hero and encouraged him or her.

1986 was also the year that I saw small cars from Marlboro driving across Tamba Town. Informants told me that they were distributing cigarettes for free.

Emigration to Dakar and to Europe was already in full swing. The emigrants hoped to find work there, and those at home hoped that they would send them money. Financial transactions could be arranged at the post office or at the bank. The students also had to go to the bank to change their traveller cheques for CFA francs. Sometimes, there were many clients at the bank, and then such simple transactions could take hours.

The population was predominantly Muslim, and belonged mostly to the Quadirya or the Tidjane brotherhoods. In most villages, one or more persons, men as well as women, had made the pilgrimage to Mecca, the *hadj*. The Roman Catholic mission was a noticeable presence in Tamba (three posts with churches and a nunnery), serving especially Christian Bassari and Serer immigrants in and around Tambacounda. The Catholic Mission managed two large primary schools and a technical school in Tambacounda. There also was a Protestant Mission with a small temple.

Also present was the government with its several services, such as healthcare, urban planning, statistics, land registry and taxation, and, of course, the Sonacos, one of the organizations for purchasing and exporting groundnuts. The regional hospital was under construction but had not yet opened its doors in 1986. Highly visible among the governmental services were those for primary and secondary education. With the increase of educational facilities, and given the lack of employment in Tambacounda, emigration to Dakar and Europe was unavoidable.

Already before 1986, there must have been a campaign for population planning and birth control, because two men from Netteboulou with whom I regularly talked about this subject, appeared to be well-informed about this Western idea to limit the nuclear family. However, when I spoke with them many years later, they both had two wives and a great number of children. They also told me that female circumcision was now occurring at an earlier age than before, and at the hospital, both of which they considered good innovations.

I also found a number of non-governmental organizations working in Tambacounda (like the Catholic Caritas, and the American and French volunteers) and some internationally financed projects: the PARCE (*Projet*

d'Aménagement et de Reboisement des Forêts du Centre-Est) for protection and extension of forests; the PRPT (*Projet de Reboisement et de Protection contre les Feux de Brousse dans la Région de Tambacounda*) for the prevention and combat of bushfires; and the PDESO (*Projet de Développement de l'Elevage du Sénégal Oriental*) for stock breeding. The semi-governmental organization SODEFITEX (*Société pour le Développement des Fibres Textiles*) had already successfully propagated the cultivation of cotton for the market by means of many village cooperatives (the ABPs) and had constructed a huge cotton processing factory in Tambacounda. In 1986, initiatives were also running to further irrigated rice cultivation along the River Gambia (PISO, *Périmètres Irrigués du Sénégal Oriental*) as well as the cultivation of bananas for the market (OFADEC, *Office Africain de Développement Economique*).

As far as local government was concerned, an important step in the decentralization process had been made in 1984, namely the joining of villages into larger administrative unities, municipalities (*communautés rurales*), directed by a largely elected council, although still strongly controlled by the state-nominated *sous-préfet* of the *arrondissement*. People already had some experience with a multiparty system and periodical elections, as well as with manipulations for gaining votes at the national level.

The government had established the National Park of Niokolo Koba and had authorized the construction of some private hunting settlements along the Gambia River. This brought in a regular stream of tourists and French hunters, who could be lodged in at least two official hotels in Tamba, Asta Kebe and the Niji Hotel. There was an airstrip, for civil and military purposes. Tamba also was a garrison town with military barracks.

In sum, in 1986, we were faced with a local society open to, and longing for certain foreign valuable items, which national and international agencies were greedy to deliver them. It was in this situation that our research training entered the scene. A product of the globalization process itself, it would also contribute to that process locally. Many Dutch students circulated during these 18 years in which the training took place, staying three months in villages or town quarters spread over Senegal and The Gambia. Village or family heads always wanted to lodge students and showed their disappointment when I had to tell them that, this year, they would not receive a student. On the other hand, at least 12 Senegalese and Gambians have been invited to come to The Netherlands, seven of whom married Dutch partners. The training also circulated resources (food), but mostly money in the form of salaries for the interpreters and of personal expenses by the students and

by their relatives and friends who often visited them after the training. As far as the exchange of ideas or messages is concerned, one of the main objectives of the training is that the students learn about other people's points of view. On the other hand, their stay in the villages, as a *préfet* of the Tambacounda district once strikingly said to me, produces an opening of the mind there ("*une ouverture d'esprit*"), for him a reason why he liked to receive as many students as possible. (See several mixtures of valuable elements from different societies or traditions in photos 5.1–5.24).

Developments since 1987

Through the years, other indicators of progressing globalization became visible. In the late 1980s, a huge transmission tower was constructed in Tambacounda. This made possible certain spectacular developments, such as the installation of telephone boxes at many places in town, the spread of TV sets to many households , and the diversification and reinforcement of radio reception. Moreover, the road to Kolda, which had been asphalted in about 1988, was soon followed by the roads to Kedougou and to Bakel.

The distribution of the telephone was a striking success. Initially, many public telephone boxes were placed in town. Apparently, there is a strong need to communicate with family members abroad, or elsewhere in Senegal. However, if you wanted to make a call abroad, you had to collect lots of coins and also take somebody with you to put the coins into the apparatus at a rapid pace. Around 1990, private "*telecentres*", authorized by the government, sprang up. They not only offered telephone services, but soon also fax apparatus and copiers were installed. So, the students could easily send written messages, and copy official documents, instead of writing them out by hand or photographing them.

In the larger villages, the telephone boxes came somewhat later. National or international enterprises constructed boxes and transmission towers, fed by solar energy, in villages such as Koussanar, Missirah and Netteboulou. This also led to a rapid rise in private *telecentres*. In Netteboulou, the public telephone box as well as the private *telecentre* were located just in front of the old mosque.

The distribution of TV sets in Tamba town is another success story. Many of the wealthier households bought a set. Sometimes, a poor family was given a TV set as a present from their emigrated son. Consequently, and not always to

the pleasure of the students, the compounds with a TV set were overcrowded at night with family members and neighbours who came to watch favourite programmes like *Dallas* and other American movies. This allowed them to follow the apparent lives of (rich) Westerners close up. They could also see that their own government was represented as being active and dynamic, while, according to many of them, "in practice the government does nothing for the population".

The broadcasts by several radio stations were frequently listened to. In the villages, many people listened regularly to Radio Tambacounda. Broadcasts in the local languages spoken within the region were particularly appreciated. Development and nature conservation projects made increasing use of the radio to transfer their messages to the audience, among them, the board of the National Parc Niokolo Koba and, since about 1990, the Picogerna (Projet Intégré de Conservation et de Gestion des Ressources Naturelles).

In contrast to all these blessings of progress, rumours reached my ears at the start of the fourth research training in June 1989 that, some months before, a number of Mauritanian shopkeepers and traders had been killed in Tambacounda and their houses burned. There was a very complicated conflict going on between Senegal and Mauritania (Fall, 1998). It started as a dispute between Mauritanian Fula herders, who made use of pastures in Senegal, and Senegalese Soninke agriculturalists, who had their farms on the other side of the Senegal River in Mauritania. Tensions about land use between both these groups, and others, had increased as a consequence of years of drought and of the construction of dams in the Senegal River and large-scale irrigation schemes, all factors reducing the availability of arable land and pastures. These tensions came to a head on April 9 1989. Several Soninke farmers were shot down by Mauritanian agents. The Senegalese government reacted by sending troops. Hundreds of people were killed on both sides and large numbers of nationals expelled to the other country. This international conflict also had its repercussions in Tambacounda.

Then, in January 1994, the devaluation of the frs CFA by 50% became a fact. This initially led to a stream of complaints about the increased prices of imported goods, for instance rice and wheat (for bread), but these complaints, to my surprise, soon faded away as farmers could get a better price for their locally cultivated food products.

A regional council was installed in 1996 within the context of the internationally recommended decentralization policy. At the end of the 1990s, we saw the arrival of several private medical clinics, accessible only for wealthy families.

In the meantime, the emigration of young men to Europe went on unabated. Western Union arrived in Tambacounda in 2001, followed by Moneygram, both institutions through which emigrants could send money easily and rapidly. Also, some of our former interpreters (from Hamdalaye Pont, Dienkore Peul and other villages) had succeeded in entering France or Spain. Several migrants sent money to their family, or returned to their village for holidays, enabling their fathers to construct large stone houses (for example in the villages of Missirah, Hamdalaye Pont and Gouloumbou), or a beautiful mosque for their village (Missirah). One of the students of the 1996 cohort, having returned from her research village Missirah to the Netherlands, went to Paris in order to visit members of her (Sylla) family who had been living there for several years.

Emigration was regarded as the main route to development (see also Tall 2002). A countless number of young men dreamt of their departure to Europe and a paid job there. Even my own assistant made more than one strong emotional appeal to me to help him emigrate. One had become conscious of "fortress Europe", which was closing its borders to immigrants, while "you as Europeans have free entry into Senegal, and even do not have to pay for a visa". Nevertheless, people did spend a lot of time and money smuggling family members into Europe.

Once, in 2006, I got a telephone call from Casablanca in Morocco. On the line was the son of the village head of Buntungo (a village south of Koussanar), who had hosted a student in 1990 and in 1999. The last student had financed a grain mill for the women's group in the village. Subsequently, the villagers themselves had built a shelter for the mill, we (the student, my assistant and I) were present on the day in 2003 (Friday, August 1) that the mill was delivered to the group. A big party! Music by a group of griots, the women singing and dancing! The son of the village head had received a one-week training to learn how to serve and maintain the mill. For more than a year all went as planned, but during my visit in January 2006 I was told that the machine had been in disrepair already for some time. It appeared that the son of the village head had left the village, taking with him all the money earned from the grain mill. I do not know whether or not he did so with the consent of his father. Anyhow, he was on the phone and said to me that he was on his way to Spain

but that he had run out of money. He hoped that I could help him by sending money. In my view, I had no choice but to refuse.

In 1999, I saw the first cybercafé with internet and e-mail in Tambacounda. Some years later, the mobile telephone started spreading rapidly. The electricity network had been extended from Tambacounda to Koussanar and somewhat later to Missirah, so that people there may have light, fax, telephone and internet. Several students from the last years of the training helped their interpreter or other local persons to get access to the internet and email.

In the meantime, more and more social-scientific research had been carried out by researchers from the Universities of Dakar and Saint Louis, commissioned by international organizations. These organizations had also given impulse to reforms of the forestry law (in 1993 and 1998) as well as to the sustainable use and management of natural resources. Many new projects had been started up. Prominent among them was the huge project Progede (Projet de Gestion Durable et Participative des Energies Traditionnelles et de Substitution) for the sustainable use and management of the last forests of Senegal. (for more information about this and other projects see Chapter 12). Three new hotels were constructed in Tambacounda in this last period of our research training, plus some tourist hotels along the River Gambia. Soon, Missirah and Netteboulou would both receive a secondary school (*collège*).

During the training course of 2002 my assistant told me of the recent phenomenon of TV sets using batteries spreading into many villages. In his village alone (Netteboulou) there were already about 20 of them, he said. "People want to be informed about the world outside, and it gives the owner prestige, not in the least by the fact that many people come to his compound to look TV", he explained to me.

In fact, his case is especially informative. In April 2003, I was at home, in The Netherlands, watching a football match, when during the half-time break I was called by my assistant from the telephone cabin in his village Netteboulou. It appeared that he was watching the same match on TV, in his compound in Netteboulou. He said he wanted to surprise me and to inform me that he was supporting Ajax. In fact, his message seemed to be that he was connected now to this international medium and to the modern world. His hunger for knowledge of events in the world outside his village, as well as the prestige attached to such knowledge, were almost certainly important motives for him, as I know from our long-standing relationship. One month later, in

Senegal, we talked about the high cost of living in Senegal and his problem in making both ends meet. I asked him, then, why for heaven's sake he had bought an expensive TV set with a battery. In my eyes these things appeared to be pure luxury, and some of the first things to economize on. His answer: I want to keep my children at home. If I have no television, my children go to other families all the time to watch television with them. Often, they must make room for others, and then they are addressed with remarks such as "hey, slave child, move aside". My assistant refuses to accept the qualification "slave descendant", which is still attached to him and his family according to the dominant local discourse. He wants to keep his children free from this kind of indoctrination and humiliation. He even added that when he has his children at home, they have less chance of being poisoned by adherents of local politicians. He himself belongs to the political dissidents in his village.

Thus, my informant indicated that he is involved in a process of emancipation and politicization in his village. A TV set was an indispensable device for him to protect his children against harmful effects of his political activities and to gain inspiration and arguments from outside for his local social struggle.

Some concluding remarks

During the years of our research training (1986–2003), I was able to perceive many signs of the ongoing globalization process in Tambacounda, notably within the domains of infrastructure, administrative organization, education, healthcare, birth control and, last but surely not least, the media, including radio, telephone, TV and internet. A less agreeable sign was the involvement in an international conflict.

The remarkable development within all these domains may be ascribed, on the one hand, to the need of the Senegalese government, international donor organizations and business circles to gain access to local societies, to their votes, consumer markets or natural resources, and, on the other hand, to the strong demand within these local societies for opportunities, modern products from outside, and for money. However, these opportunities in the form of paid jobs were only achievable by a few and, consequently, many literate men and women were confined to agriculture and mass unemployment.

The combination of, on the one hand, the improvement of formal education, the images of material abundance of the Western world, the success stories of earlier emigrants, and, on the other hand, the disappointing financial results

of agriculture, the unemployment and a lack of confidence in the capacity of the leaders to create paid jobs, resulted in many people, young and old, regarding emigration as the best solution to their problematic situation. The most important local response to globalization was, without doubt, the emigration of young men, not seldom followed by their wives or sisters. As a literate local farmer once said to me: "I do not want to stay under the grass roof forever".

An example of the strong demand for foreign products in local societies is the integration of radio and TV, and notably the spread of battery-powered TV sets. The story of my assistant teaches us that people may incorporate modern media just to better achieve their own projects. He had used his scarce money to buy a costly TV set in order to find external inspiration and encouragement for his local social struggle, as well as to protect his children against what he regarded as the oppressive social ideology in his village.

Such was the social arena in which the students arrived. They were, on the whole, more than welcome, but sometimes they were confronted with strained expectations. When it appeared that they could not satisfy these expectations, they sometimes experienced serious disappointment on the side of their interlocutors.

A final remark concerning the arena of our research training may be that, on account of the progressing globalization process, the students in the last years were able to enjoy facilities that those students of the first years did not have. This is certainly true with regard to the media of communication. As a result of the internet, the last groups had access to a lot of information, if not through the internet cafés in Tambacounda, then through those in Dakar or at home. After 2000, it was not unusual to make appointments with informants by telephone. Documents and reports could be copied easily. While in the 1980s letters and postcards took two weeks to arrive, students in the 2000s could call with home, or be called, at any time. Within the domain of healthcare, students could make use of the facilities of the regional hospital and of several private clinics, which simply did not exist in the 1980s. With regards to public transport, the establishment of the Mouride buses (strict on time and at a lower price) was also an improvement.

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Photo 5.1

Dr. Henri Lo of the ISE (Institut des Sciences de l'Environnement) of the Cheikh Anta Diop University of Dakar, invited by Leiden University, for two periods of several weeks, 1997 and 1999

Photo 5.2

The University car within the Coulibally compound in Netteboulou, an image loved by the family, 1993

Photo 5.3

Papisto Keita, invited by Leiden University to celebrate 15 years of research training and to participate at a conference on intercultural communication, at the home of my sister and brother-in-law in The Netherlands, November 2000

Photo 5.4

My Gambian assistant, Saiba Krubally, invited by Leiden University at the occasion of 15 years research training, greeting members of my family in the Dutch way

Photo 5.5

New school-desks for the primary school of Netteboulou, financed by the Dutch Embassy, and fabricated by the Don Bosco technical school of the Catholic mission, 1990

Photo 5.6

Marriage feast in Netteboulou, with electric guitars and amplifier, 1987

Photo 5.7

The state-owned telephone box in front of the old mosque, Netteboulou, 1988

Photo 5.8

The private telecentre in Netteboulou, at a distance of 15 meters from the state-owned box, 1989

Photo 5.9

The public prayer at the religious feast of Tabaski, with the men in front

Photo 5.10

and the women behind, at Netteboulou probably in 1989

Photo 5.11

The still very important name-giving ceremony, the official welcome to the new-born, at the compound of the village head of Missirah, 1999. (photo Sabine Westendorp)

Photo 5.12

Cutting the baby's hair by three blacksmith women during the name-giving ceremony at the compound of the village head of Missirah, 1999. (photo Sabine Westendorp)

Photo 5.13

Slaughtering a sheep at the religious Tabaski feast by a family father, highly educated in accountancy, Mboro, 1993

Photo 5.14

The new mosque of Missirah, financed by emigrants according to informants, 2006

Photo 5.15

Transferring African ideas and practices to tourists, and making money out of traditions: the Tanje Village Museum, The Gambia, 1999

Photo 5.16

Trying to win the interest of tourists, 1999

Photo 5.17

In the shade of the bantaba of the Tanje Village Museum, 1999

Photo 5.18

Musicians at the bantaba of Tanje Village Museum, 1999

Photo 5.19

Making money out of traditions: performance by the red masks in Netteboulou, 2002

Photo 5.20

Dancing for the masks, Papisto Keita in Netteboulou, 2002

Photo 5.21

A huge billboard for Sikkens' coatings along the main road in Tambacounda town, 1995

Photo 5.22

An ambulant trader selling foreign artefacts, Tambacounda, 1995

Photo 5.23

Vendor of coffee in Tambacounda, 1995

Photo 5.24

My wife and I, eating a piece of pizza in the pizzeria of Numuyel, The Gambia, set up by a former emigrant to Italy, 1994

PART II
Case study of the village of Netteboulou

6

Social order and change in Netteboulou, a Mandinka village in Eastern Senegal

In the introduction to this book, I mentioned that I was interested in the village of Netteboulou right from the very beginning of the research training. Thus, I did not choose it from a representative perspective; on the contrary, Netteboulou seemed to me very special and even unique. It can perhaps be seen as a variant within a range of modalities of patronage and clientelism, or as a blend of a long-standing social order and the recent political reality in Senegal.

I carried out research myself during the trainings of 1986–1990, and subsequently stayed informed about the village in later years by means of short visits and through friends from the village, including my assistant and watchman. In addition, over the years, eight students conducted their research training there and provided me with a lot of information. Moreover, Paul Folmer and Selina Haledo made a film about Netteboulou and its farming system on the basis of shots, taken in 1987. The selections I have made from their data is my responsibility and authors names between brackets refer to similar, or more detailed information.

Netteboulou is predominantly a Mandinka village, situated 26 kms south of the regional capital Tambacounda. Leadership has been in the hands of the Signate family since the foundation of the village. For pictures of the village heads (*alkalo*) during the period of our trainings, see photos 6.1 and 6.2.

According to the census of 1999, the village counted 1020 inhabitants, divided over 89 compounds (Peters 2001, 9 and 12). In the census of 1986, these figures were respectively 963 inhabitants and 70 compounds (Videler 1987, 16 and

annex 2), indicating a small increase of the population, notwithstanding a continuous emigration. For images of Netteboulou, see photos 6.3–6.6).

Netteboulou is the main and largest village of the municipality (*communauté rurale*) of the same name, and it is the seat of the rural council (*conseil rural*). The municipality counts 64 settlements, the majority of which has only 50 to 200 inhabitants (Peters 2001, 8–9). It belongs, together with the municipalities of Missirah and Dialocoto, to the wider district (*arrondissement*) of Missirah, which has an under-prefect (*sous-préfet*) as its head. He is appointed by the national government and is its representative at the local level. The actual territory of the municipality of Netteboulou, established in 1984, consists of the former canton of Netteboulou and a small part of southern Boundou.

According to all versions of oral history, the village of Netteboulou was founded (following heavy conflict) on its current spot in 1887 by the Signate, the leading noble family, in cooperation with some allied (but dependent) families (Peters 2001, 38–39; Videler 1987, 17–23). With this act, the Signate, originally Dioula traders, acquired the position of founding family and owners of the land around Netteboulou (Tilanus 1988, 10–11, 25–27). The Signate's first compound was – and still is – surrounded by families of blacksmiths, leatherworkers, *griots* and slaves. The Signate welcomed strangers and decided whether or not they could stay in the village and on what conditions. They offered protection, housing and food, land use, and slave women to marry, in exchange for loyalty and often also labour obligations for men and women (Peters 2001, 41–42; Videler 1987, 29–32). Newcomers had to accept that all important leadership positions were fulfilled by members of the noble Signate family.

Social categories: their hierarchy, interdependency and durability

When people from Netteboulou spoke with me about the history of their village, it became clear that they divide their historical community into three social categories that were hierarchically ordered, interdependent and endogamous.

At the top were the noblemen (*foro*), at the base the slave descendants (*jongo*), and in between the *nyamakalaw*: a general name for groups that hereditarily had an obligation as well as the exclusive prerogative to fulfil

certain social functions. Among these specialized groups were blacksmiths, leatherworkers, the "*fina*" and so-called griots.

The foro category included the king's patrilineage and royal (Signate) lineages who had lost their access to the highest office as well as later arrived families that had been foro in their homeland and, who, after their arrival were recognized as such by the Signate. Examples are the noble Diaby and Fofana families (Tilanus 1988, 36). Usually, the foro families had slaves who had to work for them. As masters, they were responsible for food, clothes, housing and, later, also government taxes for their slaves. The foro master decided who his slave could marry and he was responsible for a bride price. He also had to pay the costs of the marriage and other ceremonies.

The jongo have always been a far from homogeneous category that includes prisoners of war, bought persons, railway labourers who came to Netteboulou, their descendants, and all persons born from a slave mother. Their personal status varied according to the way they had been acquired, or according to the prestige of their master and the functions entrusted to them. Over time, they had a range of labour obligations towards their masters (Tilanus 1988, 13–15).

Traditionally, the blacksmith (*noumou*) knows how to extract iron, and how to make weapons and agricultural and other tools from it. He was also the woodcarver, producing, for instance, mortars and pounders and stools. In social life, blacksmiths are spokesmen for the noble Signate family during public meetings and ceremonies. They are also charged with the circumcision of the boys. They were believed to possess magical powers. The women of the blacksmith family in Netteboulou, the Kante, had the obligation and the prerogative to make pottery, to circumcise the girls and to assist as midwifes. In sum, life would be impossible without the blacksmiths: no weapons, no tools, no agriculture, no initiated adults and no healthy babies (Videler 1987, 34–36).

The leatherworkers (*karanke*) are traditionally charged with ritual slaughtering, with the flaying and distribution of slaughtered animals and with the tanning of skins. In the past, they made saddles for the horses of the Signate (slaves were not allowed to possess horses or cattle in the old days) and shoes. They still provide the leather for charms *(gris-gris)*: they sew a piece of paper with a powerful Koran text into a small leather envelope. The karanke women play an important role in marriage ceremonies: they escort the bride to the house of the groom (Videler 1987, 34). In former days,

leatherworkers also produced different kinds of ropes, which were used for many ends, including the construction of roofs and fences, and to attach cattle and other livestock. By tradition, all these functions are reserved in Netteboulou for the Toure and the Sylla families.

The griots (*djeliba*), men and women, were, and still are regarded as the guardians of the knowledge of history, genealogy and kinship. They have a legitimising function in such ceremonies as name giving, initiation, marriage and burial. They also serve as mediators in case of conflict, and as spokesmen and interpreters. They facilitate social contacts and maintain social order through history telling, praise singing and making music. These tasks were – and still are – reserved for the higher status griots families, such as the Cissogho, the Kouyate and Kanoute families, and were not for the lower tamtam players.

The *fina* are said to have the lowest status within the *nyamakalaw*. It is the Camara family who had the function of doorkeeper and receptionist for the Signate. They were also their couriers and entertainers. Today, they carry out some of these functions for at least six other families (Peters 2001, annex 19).

The *nyamakalaw* had to render their services to the Signate family. The Signate rewarded their services with food, money, cattle or even slaves who had to work for the *nyamakalaw*. In particular, the griots, were also allowed to demand rewards that the Signate could not refuse (Videler 1987, 33). Even slave families, such as the Dembele family, could claim objects or services from the Signate within the context of a *sanogo* or joking relationship.

In this social system, noblemen needed slaves for their labour and military force, their possible skills, and the prestige they brought to their noble master, i.e. sending large numbers of people to public events or ceremonies. The founding family initially captured or bought people; later, they welcomed strangers, people who had left their homes looking for new opportunities and who were in need of protection, food security, safe land-use rights and probably also of marriageable women. However, when they agreed to marry slave women, given by the Signate, they also had to accept slave status, at least for their children. The noble founding family also needed the specialist services of the nyamakalaw, which made these specialist groups indispensable and guaranteed them a safe social position.

Noble people, slave descendants and the various categories of *nyamakala* had to marry within their category, ensuring that their interdependency

remained intact. One notable exception to this rule of endogamy was that a noble man could take a woman of slave origin as his third wife. This was a way to create new dependants who continued to be slaves because of the origin of their mother (Videler 1987, 30).

These distinctive, interdependent social categories were tied to each other in yet another way, namely by cohorts of boys and girls of the same age who have been circumcised at the same time. These groups, separated according to sex, included members from all social categories. The leader of a male age group, however, must always be a member of the Signate family. He has someone of slave origin as his assistant who is responsible for the correct performance of the common activities. Together, all age groups are called the *boro* (Tilanus 1988, 56–58) or *kafo* (Folmer 1993, 107–109). All men older than 40 are united in the *keba kafo*. They have regular meetings during which they discuss and decide on village affairs, ranging from the establishment of a new family or a household fission to material matters like the construction and maintenance of public shelters (*bantaba*), roads, water wells, etc. However, they only discuss points placed on the agenda by the (Signate) village head (*alkalo*) and general loyalty to the founding family is expected. The execution of the decisions of the keba kafo is transferred to (one of) the younger age groups. These male age groups are called up for work within the village, or on the farms of a family. The members of an age group also provide mutual help, for instance in the case of one of them marrying, they work together on the farms of the family-in-law. They also organize sport and dance parties. The male age groups are responsible for the periodic appearance of the green and the red masks that remain important means of social control (Videler 1987, 26–28). For images of the red masks, as they appeared during our annual courtesy visit to Netteboulou, see photos 6.7–6.14.

Thus, these age groups had, and still have, a special educative and social value. By participating in the common activities, all members learn automatically how to behave correctly towards members of other social categories. The female age groups were less developed, as many girls married within or outside of the village at an early age.

Social change: weakening interdependency

So far, I have presented a general image of Netteboulou's historical community, as told by informants from the village and students reports. However, several informants, especially those of slave origin, hastened to

tell me that all this concerned the past, that this system no longer exists and that fundamental changes have taken place. For example, slavery had been abolished by law, probably in 1938 (Peters 2001, 42) and, since then, formally there were no slaves anymore. It is even punishable by law to call somebody a slave descendant, let alone that slave descendants still work for noblemen. It would even be possible nowadays for a man to marry a woman from another social category. Moreover, there are now regular elections in which everybody's vote counts equally. On closer examination, however, these very general arguments are used most notably by people of supposed slave descent. I rarely heard a Signate say that slavery had been abolished. Any such statement was made only to show how modern they are, and that there are no longer labour obligations for certain categories. A closer look at the developments of the previously described social system is necessary here.

At the beginning of the 19th century, the Atlantic slave trade had been abolished and the transition to commercial groundnut cultivation made. As was the case with many noble families elsewhere, the Signate had a growing need for slave labour for their groundnut farms (Peters 2001, 41). Consequently, they bought many slaves or accepted newcomers as such, and gave them shelter, clothing, food and slave women in exchange for their loyalty and labour. And so did other noble families who had been authorized by the Signate to settle in Netteboulou. However, from about 1900, the colonial government demanded that the *chefs de canton* levy taxes for the houses and the number of inhabitants per compound (Prins, 1995, 31, and note 157). Given the large number of indoor slaves, this must have been a heavy burden for *foro* masters. Moreover, in order to raise financial revenues, the Signate and other *foro* masters had steadily enlarged their groundnut farms, at the expense of the cultivation of food crops. More than once, noble families lacked enough food to feed their numerous slaves, and they had to buy it instead. In the meantime, the producer's price for groundnuts fluctuated strongly, sometimes even falling to zero, notably during the first world war. Thus, noble families were sometimes confronted with the problem of growing financial obligations and insecure income. Looking for a solution, they finally decided to agree to slave families' wishes to build their own houses and to live separately from their masters. This implied, however, that the heads of the new slave compounds became responsible for their own food production and that they had to pay the taxes themselves (Peters 2001, 42). As part of this solution, slave compounds were given land-use rights, in order to guarantee the safe cultivation of food crops and groundnuts for cash. In return for these favours slave families were expected to work four mornings a week on their masters' farms, as my informants (of slave descent)

told me. The rest of the time they were allowed to work their own land. Slave compounds that did not have sufficient money to pay their taxes sent some of their men to work a number of days per week on the Signate's common farm (*furoba*). They then paid the taxes for them with the produce from this land.

This solution may be considered a first step in the process of weakening mutual rights and obligations between *foro* and *jongo*. Later, probably in the 1950s, but perhaps earlier, the obligation to work four mornings a week for the noble master came to an end, notably with the arrival of the *navetanes*, seasonal labourers from elsewhere, looking for temporary work on a voluntary basis. They got a contract to work four mornings a week on the farms of their employer in exchange for housing and food, and the right to use part of his land, his equipment and drawing animals to cultivate groundnuts for themselves. In principle, they went home after the harvest, when they had sold their produce. Thus, the arrival of the *navetanes* made possible a second step in the weakening of the interdependence between noble masters and slaves. It appeared to be much simpler to insert a temporary, voluntary *navetane* than to work with an unwilling, permanently present co-villager.

The different categories of *nyamakalaw* had always been allowed to construct their own compounds and they had no farm labour obligations towards the Signate (Peters 2001, 43). They provided their services, on request, exclusively to the leading Signate family. In return, they received food, money, land-use rights, cattle and, exceptionally, also slaves. However, in the course of the 19th century, the Signate started to prefer the quality of the metal and leather wares coming from Europe. They became less interested in the material products of their own blacksmiths and leatherworkers. It seems, moreover, that the obligations inherent to the traditional interdependency could, ultimately, not be sustained by the leading family. It was probably too costly for them, while the *nyamakalaw* families could not live from the returns for their services to the Signate. Under these circumstances, it became accepted that the *nyamakalaw* delivered their services also to other noble families in the village, and after some time also to those slave families living separately. Again, the conclusion seems justified that the interdependency between the Signate family and their *nyamakalaw* has been weakened.

Another source of social change was the establishment of a school in Netteboulou in 1933. The French authorities tried to enforce a rule that not only noble children, but also those of slave origin attend school. The Signate would have considered this policy a threat to the social order. Therefore they tried, I have been told, to discourage slave children from going to

school using all kinds of measures, including magic (*gris gris*), demands for occasional farm labour, delaying admission applications, and even attempts at poisoning. Nevertheless, a number of slave children received a French primary education and learned about alternative ideas and customs.

In short, weakening interdependency probably meant for all families, the Signate included, a possibility of more freedom of action. For the Signate, moreover, it might have meant that people are less dependent on them and that they have lost certain means of socio-economic control, for instance labour obligations and integrated housing. However, they still had other means of control.

Continuity of social categories in communication and action

Notwithstanding the tendency, among slave informants, to negate the continuance of the traditional social system and in spite of the processes of weakening interdependency, there are many indications that the old social classification still operates in Netteboulou. Recall the case of my assistant who defended his decision to buy a costly television, saying that this device would prevent his children going elsewhere to watch programmes and potentially being humiliated with the qualification "slave child" (see Chapter 5). The tenacity of the old social classification is evident in his defence.

Another significant incident occurred during the fieldwork training of 2003, when I brought my students to Netteboulou to visit among others the compound of my assistant. In his words of welcome to the students, he introduced one of the local *griots* as follows: "You know that all noble families have their *griot*. Well then, see here our *griot*." Here, he was following another strategy. Instead of overtly denying the slave category in general and the slave status of his family in particular, he imperceptibly promotes his family to noble status, thus showing the importance of the social categories in current social life.

Another example occurred in 1986, when my colleague and I brought the first students to Netteboulou. This could only happen through the mediation of Ansumane Signate. That day in June 1986, he was present in his village to welcome the students and accompanied us to their respective compounds. One of the students was placed in Ansumane's compound; a second in the compound of the Dembele family, which it later turned out was a family of slave origin, very loyal to the noble Signate family. For the third student,

Ansumane accompanied us to the Coulibally family, whose compound was burned down earlier that year. Ansumane said that he had helped this poor family to rebuild their compound by acquiring funds from several NGOs. Moreover, he had given them food as their granary had also been destroyed by the fire. And now he brought them a student, which meant a bag of rice each month for the family and monthly salaries for an interpreter from the family and for a watchman for the staff house in Tambacounda. During his introduction to the family members, suddenly an old man went down on his knees in front of Ansumane and touched his feet, seemingly praising him and asking for favours. When we asked what was happening, Ansumane refused to comment. He only explained to us that this old man was displaying behaviour typical of a slave, and that it belonged to the past. However, the overall message was evident that Ansumane was the "King of Netteboulou", who takes care of his subordinates and who decides. Members of the Coulibally family also minimized this incident and put it down to a confused old man. Later, I understood that in the public discourse the Coulibally family was numbered among the slave families and that several of its members strongly contested this status.

During one of the trainings in the early 1990s, a vital young man of the Signate family, named Bolon, died after falling from a tree. I knew him from earlier conversations and I knew where he had his farms. When I came to Netteboulou some weeks later, I saw a young man of the Coulibally family, Sungku, working the farms of the deceased. I knew Sungku quite well because he had served as a watchman for the staff house in Tambacounda during the training of 1986. I told him I was very surprised to see him at work on Bolon's farm. He answered that he would continue to work on the farm until the end of the agricultural season. This meant that he could not finish his own farm that year and that he could not contribute to his own family's harvest. When I asked him why he was making such a sacrifice, he answered that the deceased and he were peers and friends. He was doing this to honour the family of his deceased friend. "But why just you?", I tried, because Bolon Signate, as head of the age group, had many friends. He simply repeated that Bolon was one of his close friends. It is likely that Ansumane Signate, the "King of Netteboulou", had made an appeal to the Coulibally family to send somebody, in order to relieve the urgent need for labour in the Signate family after Bolon's death.

Beside such indications of the continuity of the social classification in daily speech and behaviour, there is also the domain of the *rites de passage*: name-giving, circumcision, marriage and funeral ceremonies. These ceremonies are

regular and important events. All the *nyamakalaw*, in particular the *griots*, play key roles in these ceremonies, alongside the imam and other important people. One of my students (Vicky Peters) has carried out a detailed study in Netteboulou on the role of the *griots* in these rites. Below, is a concise selection of the ceremonies she has described.

Firstly, a circumcision ceremony on June 23, 2000 (Peters 2001, 74). In his sermon, the imam presents a religious justification of the traditional social classification and he points out the importance of it to his audience:

> [...] the roles of attendant of the boys (who still must, or have been initiated) is reserved for the Dembele and Cisse families since our ancestors. Everybody keeps the place of his forefathers; that is good. Thanks to God nearly all people here know our social organization [...] Our ancestors have given everybody a place in society, with proper tasks.

He discourages them from abandoning the path of their forbears. Next the *griot*, Bolon Cissogho, who had arranged the initiation ceremony, thanks the Signate for their support in organizing the event and expresses his willingness to continue the relationship with them. Both speakers emphasize the importance of traditional relationships for the future path.

Secondly, another initiation ceremony, on August 12, 2000. In the course of this ceremony, the imam thanks the Signate, "because they have founded the village and have given a place to the other families [...] The Cisse and Dembele families have been attendants for generations. They are an example for everybody, because everybody has his own place in society. When a son succeeds his father and grandfather, he is worthy of his race" (in this case, race means Mandinka identity, (see Peters 2001, 76)). One of the initiates, the son of my assistant, is praised by the *griot*, Bolon Cissogho, for the military support that his forefathers have given to Sundjata and the *griots*:

> "Keita, this is your event. You are the son of Papisto Keita, who is the son of Bala Keita and Yoba Sankare. You descend from Toumany Keita, the father of Bala Keita [...] It is good to declare publicly the good works and the identity of your family. Your ancestors offered support to the *griots*, they even hosted them. We praise your dignity, because your ancestors participated in the war [...] God gave you strength in those days. This belongs to you and nobody can take away it from you [...] Bala Keita, all these people here, that is because you and your ancestors have earned it".

By singing in this way, the *griot* seems to promote the social classification and, at the same time, to upgrade the social position of my assistant's family, which, in the dominant public discourse, is counted among the people of slave origin. Thus, the social classification does not seem to be something of the past; on the contrary, it is quite alive. Indeed, people resist it or, at other times, try to use it to their advantage.

Thirdly, a name-giving ceremony, organized by the noble Fofana family on September 11, 2000 (Peters 2001, 78–79). During this ceremony, a member of the Fofana family publicly declared that he would give 500 frs CFA to the *jongo*, the slave descendants. His use of the term *jongo* created an uneasy situation. The *jongo* families concerned felt insulted. Then, the griot Bolon Cissogho, tried to appease their irritation. He said that real slaves no longer exist, but that the classification system is needed to bring structure to society. Different categories are necessary, he says, to keep Manding society fertile. He tries to persuade the insulted *jongo* families by saying that the social categories are indeed different but of equal merit. Here, the *griot* seems to play down the social hierarchy in favour of the interdependency by which each category merits respect because of its indispensable tasks in society. It is clear that the *griot* has succeeded, because somewhat later the Fofana elder declares: "Slaves of the noble Signate and Fofana, we thank you. We are quite satisfied with our relationship, we are joking and working together. You facilitate our life" (Peters 2001, 79). Then, a younger member of the Fofana family, who has a paid job in Ansumane Signate's hotel in Tambacounda, takes the floor, saying:

> [...] I hope that you pray for the Signate and for Ansumane Signate in particular. He is a good employer. Not only he pays your salary, but he also helps you with a lot of problems. [...] we owe him very much. For this ceremony, too, he has given me extra money [...] I ask everybody to pray for Ansumane and for his brother Diame Signate.

Finally, a member of the noble Diaby family speaks:

> I thank the Signate family; that God may bring them power. The entire Fofana family descends from Diamba [the family name of the women of Signate origin] […]These Signate women [Diamba] are the glue within the Fofana family [...] I thank the Signate. Thanks to them also our family could develop. They have given their women in marriage to the Fofana and Diaby families. We owe all our happiness and wealth to them. I hope that the Signate family will continue to give us women in marriage. The Fofana are noble people

> from Guinea. Here in Netteboulou our family has acquired noble status, because the Signate have given us women (Peters 2001, 80).

In this way, the participants at these ceremonies are indoctrinated in social classification and its inherent aspects of hierarchy, interdependency and endogamy.

On September 12, 2000, Vicky Peters assisted in another name-giving ceremony organized by the Signate family. This ceremony was characterized by a quarrel between some *jongo* women and the *griottes*. The *jongo* women started to sing, despite praise singing at such occasions being reserved for the *griottes*. Thereupon, the imam intervened by explaining the social classification and the tasks of the different categories. The *jongo* women left the floor and the main *griotte*, Sira Soumano, spouse of Bolon Cissogho, started to sing: "God has created the culture of the *griots*. God has created the noble people and the *griots* next to each other [...] Somebody who does not have a *griot* is not the same as somebody who has one [...]" (Peters 2001, 80–81).

Four days later, on September 16, Ansumane Signate organized a circumcision ceremony for 35 boys. The Cisse family, which has a special bond with the Signate family, has the role of supervising the boys. A large quantity of food was prepared for a meal in the Cisse compound. The *griottes* sang in the house of Ansumane Signate. Radio Tambacounda was present to record songs and speeches. Later that day, all the circumcised boys had to dance in the public place, one after the other. Ansumane Signate, in a white dress (*boubou*), walked among them, giving them small amounts of money. According to Vicky Peters (2001, 83), it was the image of a king among his subjects.

In summary, we can conclude from these observations and quotations that, notwithstanding a weakening interdependency, the social classification system still operates. Any protests tend to come from people of slave origin rather than from the noble families. Moreover, people of slave descent sometimes try to upgrade their family to a noble status, thus confirming the strength of the classification. Another indicator of its strength is to be found in the *rites de passage*. During these regularly occurring rituals, the social classification is unceasingly impressed upon the minds of the younger generations.

New interdependencies: political patron–client relationships

The weakening of mutual rights and obligations was followed by the creation of new local interdependencies that are usually called clientelism or patronage. These had their origin at the national level. Around 1960, the time of independence, most national politicians, among whom Senghor of the then UPS (*Union Progressiste Sénégalaise*), struggled to acquire followers and to gather votes. The route to power was no longer via governmental nomination, but by the number of acquired votes. They sought contacts with traditional local rulers and politicians in order to win their support. They needed them as intermediaries in their efforts to obtain followers and votes. To this end, they offered their intermediaries financial and economic means and various favours so that they could organize successful local election campaigns and bring in many votes. Among these means and favours were food (bags of rice, maize, millet or sorghum), early delivered groundnut seeds and fertilizer, footballs and shirts, construction or maintenance of roads, grain mills, water wells and, most importantly, paid jobs. To find these paid jobs, the national politicians tried to make contact with ministries, with the boards of development projects and also with entrepreneurs.

In turn, local leaders and politicians wanted to maintain or expand their power at the local level and therefore welcomed gifts and favours from the national politicians (Peters 2001, 60–61; Tilanus 1988, 73–76). They had to redistribute these in order to win or to keep the loyalty of people and to bring in as many votes as possible. When a national politician judged the number of votes as insufficient, he could withdraw the stream of means and favours and look for another local intermediary. This has several implications. The first is that there is always uncertainty for both parties about the continuance of the relationship. A local intermediary is often uncertain about whether or not his political boss will prefer another local intermediary who will bring him more votes. And a national politician is usually afraid that other national politicians will offer more incentives and that his local intermediaries will transfer their loyalties to the political boss who has the most to offer. The second implication is that local intermediaries usually want the loyalty of the whole village and so they are intolerant of political dissidents in their villages. A local leader who succeeds in uniting all his people behind him is more interesting for national politicians than a local leader of a politically divided community.

This system of patronage or clientelism developed rapidly during the period of the one-party system from about 1966 to 1976, when the UPS was the only

official political party and its leading politicians used the state treasury for their private political ends. In 1976, two other political parties, the PDS (*Parti Démocratique Sénégalais*) and the PAI (*Parti Africain de l'Indépendance*) were officially allowed alongside the UPS, which was now called the PS (*Parti Socialiste*). Later, in the 1970s, more parties were officially recognized. The political patrons of these other parties followed the same pattern: using all available means to win the support of local intermediaries who could bring them votes and keep them in power at the national level.

Political developments in Netteboulou

Given this national context, the question is how the local politicians of Netteboulou became involved in the general competition for votes, how they acted and what kind of problems they confronted. In 1982, a certain Diame Signate, born in Netteboulou, returned from Paris, where he had finished a university study. He became a member of the PS and tried to make his entrance into politics. At that time, no other Signate was active in politics. Rather, the family had always been government officials, like *chef de canton*, until independence, and *chef d'arrondissement* after independence, until 1982 (Prins 1995, 14, 39–40). They had no experience in politics in terms of acquiring votes.

In 1982, Diame Signate had to compete against two important PS politicians, Kabine Kaba and Amidou Sakho, both former school teachers. When the pair formed an alliance against Diame, it was seen as a provocation by the Signate. After some loyalty changes Diame joined Amidou Sakho in 1984. In that same year, another highly educated competitor, an engineer called Mamadou Toure from the neighbouring village of Bantantinty, entered the scene and joined Kaba. These four politicians, and several others, were all of *foro* origin and belonged to local leading families (Tilanus 1988, 66–71).

At the internal party reshuffling (on the basis of periodical selling of memberships cards) in 1984 Diame Signate was elected secretary of the political section of Netteboulou, while Ansumane Signate became his assistant. However, a conflict soon arose about the election of the first president of the first rural council (*Conseil Rural*) in the newly created *Communauté Rurale de Netteboulou*. Diame Signate, a university man and therefore called *professeur*, proposed a certain Saloum Cisse from Netteboulou for this post. Notwithstanding broad support for Diame among the people of Netteboulou, other Signate, including Ansumane Signate, were against this idea. Not only

had Saloum Cisse become a fairly rich and influential merchant, above all he was of *jongo* origin. His election would mean a heavy infringement of the hierarchical order in Netteboulou, according to which only Signate could fill important posts. Moreover, Cisse's wealth was viewed as an outright threat to their power. Finally, Diame Signate *professeur* had to accept the candidate of the other Signate, namely the elder brother of Ansumane, also called Diame Signate. This Diame Signate was elected as the first president of the *communauté rurale de Netteboulou* in 1984 (Tilanus 1988, 84–85; Peters 2001, 47–48).

Subsequently, Diame *professeur* left for Paris again, after an invitation to continue his studies there. The story goes that, in his absence, he was not informed about the next internal party reshuffling, presumably the one of 1986. Nobody seems to have asked him whether or not he wanted to continue his function as secretary of the section. Finally, Ansumane Signate was elected the new secretary of the political section. Diame *professeur* declared that he felt betrayed. After his return, he protested, but in vain. Consequently, he decided to create his own movement or *tendance* within the PS. He said that he could no longer accept the ideas and practices of his tradition minded family members. He presented himself as the defender of the people who have suffered from the imperious behaviour of some of his family members. Thereupon, Ansumane (*roi*) and Diame (*président*) Signate declared, together with other politicians, the formation of another *tendance* within the PS (Peters 2001, 48–49). Next, the local *tendance* of Diame *professeur* joined a national *tendance* of Moustapha Niass, the AFP (*Alliance des Forces de Progrès*). All these movements existed within the same PS. However, before the elections of March 2000, the AFP, along with Moustapha Niass and Diame *professeur*, left the PS. They wanted to be, together with the PDS (Parti Démocratique Sénégalais) of Abdoulaye Wade, part of the common opposition against the forty-year rule of the PS. After the electoral defeat of Abdou Diouf and the PS, Abdoulaye Wade and his PDS came to power. Moustapha Niass was appointed to prime minister (Peters 2001, 50). Diame *professeur* became a minister in the national government and was later appointed Senegalese ambassador to The Gambia.

Abdoulaye Wade's PDS arrived in Netteboulou probably during the presidential and legislative elections of 1988. At least 24 voters, of which 20 were slave descendants, publicly expressed their preference for the PDS (Tilanus 1988, annex 6). The local representative of this party belonged to the noble Fofana family. He had left the PS following a dispute between the Signate and Fofana families. Both families were of Dioula origin and had

noble status. However, the Signate, well represented in the rural council, had refused to approve an initiative by the Fofana to undertake an agricultural project on the land once assigned to them. Officially, the Signate judged the project as economically unviable. Informally, it was said that Ansumane and several other Signate, regarded themselves as the founding family and the proprietors of the land. They did not want to risk losing control of the land (Tilanus 1988, 94–96). In their view, they had given the Fofana use rights, and not ownership. The Signate had founded the village under difficult (war) circumstances and they had granted protection and a safe place to other families, among which the Fofana. Therefore, they wanted the village to stay in their hands.

Such stories and comments by others help us understand how the Signate, notably Ansumane (*roi*) and Diame (*président*), must have seen their socio-economic position over the years. In the course of history, they lost an important source of power (labour obligations), while some slave descendants, freed from these obligations, had become rich. Moreover, as their function as governmental officers came to an end, in 1982, they were confronted with decreasing financial means and a loss of power. One of the ways to solve this problem was to join the leading political party and to bring as many votes as possible to secure their position as an interesting intermediary. Unfortunately for the Signate, however, not only a disagreement had arisen within their own family, leading to membership of different *tendances* within the PS, there was also a conflict of interest between two important families in the village, resulting in the formation of a competing party, the PDS. Given this dissension, and according to the clientelist principles, the Signate had become less interesting as political intermediaries for national politicians. This means another loss of wealth and power.

There were still other worries for the Signate. The steadily progressing actualization of two national laws must have brought a gnawing uncertainty for the founding family who claimed the ultimate ownership of the land. First, the law on the national domain (the *Loi sur le domaine national*) of 1964, according to which the ultimate ownership of the land is vested in the state, and next the law on the administrative reform (the *Loi sur la réforme administrative*) of 1972, in which the management of the local state domain is delegated to the rural council (Kranenburg 1988, 43–49, 90–93). What would happen to the Signate when they no longer held the majority in the rural council? Would the assignment of land-use rights and the settlement of conflicts about land be transferred from the Signate village head to the rural

council? Unfortunately, I have not had the opportunity to speak with them about these matters.

The Signate struggling for wealth and power

The political life of Netteboulou in the 1990s was shaped by three main players of Signate descent: Ansumane (*roi*) and Diame (*président*) Signate on the one hand, and Diame (*professeur*) Signate on the other. Here follows a brief characterization of their actions and motivations as presented by informants or perceived by me.

Firstly, Diame (*professeur*). Throughout the years he was only occasionally present in Netteboulou, because he had to give lectures at the University of Dakar or he was abroad. In his speeches, he pleaded for social change and advocated the rights of the oppressed, thus also of people who had been exploited by members of his own family. He was greatly respected, notably among people of alleged slave descent. However, when it came to elections, the majority judged it safer for their physical and social survival to cast their votes in accordance with the wishes of Ansumane (*roi*) and Diame (*président*). Thus, Diame (*professeur*) was not very interesting as an intermediary for national politicians and did not receive many valuable goods and services to redistribute. In fact, it is likely that he opposed to this buying of votes. Moreover, given the nature of his work, he presumably had less access to important employers and paid jobs. In sum, he had much less to offer to potential voters than the two other Signate politicians.

The second main player in Netteboulou's political life was the elder brother of Ansumane, Diame (*président*). He has the appearance of a friendly and easily accessible man. It is said that Ansumane had pushed him forward into the public domain, because Ansumane himself would evoke too much resentment in the villages and among other politicians. Diame had to represent the human face of the Signate family. He had been elected president of the rural council, since 1984, following the rejection of a popular candidate of slave origin by most of the Signate. He was present in the village more often than Ansumane. He also informed Ansumane about what was happening in the village and in the rural council. He was always open for debate. Speaking about the revenues from his presidency, which demanded much of his time and energy, he frankly told me that it was customary for presidents to skim a certain percentage off the project budgets. From the mid-1990s, Diame was elected president of the council of presidents of the rural communities in the

department of Tambacounda. Both these presidencies came to an end after the PDS won the elections and took power in 2001.

The third main player, Ansumane Signate, has a large social network in Senegal. In his younger days, he had spent time in France and even in the Netherlands. He is said to have earned a lot of money trading in African gold and diamonds. In April 1985, he opened a hotel in Tambacounda, which created a number of paid jobs. This brought him the public compliments of president Abdou Diouf, when he visited Tambacounda in 1987 (Tilanus 1988, 79). The president praised him as an example of a Senegalese investor of money earned in Europe, and promised him an incentive of four millions frs CFA, which at that time (i.e. before devaluation) represented approximately 12,000 euros. In the mid-1990s, he became a senator in Dakar, which provided another source of income in addition to the potential revenues from his hotel and from his hunting camp along the River Gambia.

Apart from financial revenues, his hotel brought him contacts with many people: tourists for the National Park Niokolo Koba, French hunters, entrepreneurs and traders, civil servants and politicians, as well as representatives of NGOs. When they need a service or personnel, he gives them good advice. He is also informed in an early phase about future projects that need personnel and extension officers. Thus, several people in Netteboulou and surrounding villages owe a job or a temporary source of income to him, for instance as servants in his hotel or his hunting camp, as guides for the hunters and as extension officers for projects.

However, the way he became proprietor of the hotel is the subject of rumours, which I heard from Ansumane's political adversaries. For instance, already in 1986, during the first research training, I was told by a member of the board of the PDS's Tambacounda section, and by the then director of the *Travaux Publiques* there, that Ansumane had persuaded a French business man to invest a large sum of money in the hotel that would become their common source of revenue. Once the hotel had been constructed, Ansumane is reported to have started a legal process to eliminate his French companion. One of his arguments was, according to my informants, that he, Ansumane, was the proprietor of the land on which the hotel had been built. Eventually, the French investor would have had to accept his loss and leave Tambacounda. To reiterate, this is what political adversaries of Ansumane told me; I have no proof, and I did not see it as my task to verify these rumours.

However, in 1999, I was witness to another event. At that time, Ansumane was making serious efforts, in cooperation with a politician from Bantantinty, to expropriate a hunting camp along the River Gambia from its French owner. This man, Michel Houdebine, told me that he had been able finally to prevent this expropriation with the official intervention of the French Ambassador in Senegal.

I came across other accusations against Ansumane, namely that he forced or seduced several women in Netteboulou into sexual services in exchange for money, food or presents. He was said to have taken advantage of the poverty of the women and their families. Many fathers and husbands in Netteboulou were said to know about it and were ashamed and therefore kept it secret (Peters, 2001, 58).

Why did they stay silent? People gave me several reasons. When you do not know whether or not your harvest will be sufficient to cover the needs of your family, you want to be sure that you can get grains and/or groundnuts from Ansumane. Another reason was that Ansumane was the only person in the village who had a car in those days (the 1990s). A car is regarded as indispensable in case of an urgent need for transport, for instance to the hospital. Serious criticism of Ansumane meant risking access to his car and an accompanying humiliation. In addition, if you or a family member had legal problems, Ansumane would support you on condition, of course, that he has your loyalty. If you needed treatment at the regional hospital, Ansumane had much influence with its board of directors.

Yet another reason for their silence, besides Ansumane offering them assistance in difficult times, was that, according to several informants, many people were scared of him because of his sometimes rigorous behaviour against people who he saw as disobedient to him. For example, during the 1990s, a new mosque was to be built in Netteboulou, financed by Saudi Arabia. The old mosque was rapidly demolished, only part of the new structure was built, and then work stopped. I was told that Ansumane had used part of the money to construct a huge house in Tambacounda. The Muslim community of Netteboulou had to wait years before their new mosque was finally finished. In the meantime, the community of believers criticised Ansumane for this long delay. At a certain moment in 2002, Diame Diaby, son of a noble and *marabout* family and one of my former key informants, raised questions in public about the delay of the construction. Ansumane reacted furiously, according to my informants. He sent for the police, who confiscated Diame Diaby's cattle and properties, while he himself was publicly expelled from

the village. I have been told that many people were deeply impressed by this demonstration of Ansumane's power. I do not know how the story ended. I never saw Diame Diaby again.

It was recognized by many people within Netteboulou that Ansumane and his brother were helpful in cases of emergency, as a noble, founding family should be. However, it was also said that their help is selective (only people who are loyal to them) and limited (so that the receiver remains dependent and must ask again). Moreover, "they let everybody know that they gave you support". As local informants explained, they only help you when it strengthens their power. They evaluate every initiative or project according to whether it is a threat to, or a reinforcement of their power. So, when you present a plan for some form of economic cooperation, they claim an important share in the decision-making and in future profits. If you do not agree, or if you take action behind their backs, they will obstruct the execution of your plan. Even emigrants from Netteboulou who have become rich and wish to return home are felt as a threat and are thus refused by the Signate, it was said. Moreover, some poor families in Netteboulou were seen by informants as "spies of the Signate" and I have been told that they also had "spies" in neighbouring villages. In this way, the Signate elders try to control all relationships within the village and with the outside world, in order to reinforce their power.

Notwithstanding Ansumane's power, there were people in Netteboulou who had relations with other political patrons. Prominent among them was my assistant. Since the time he was at school in Dakar, he had been a follower of Landing Savane, then leader of the Ande Dieuf party. My assistant actively participated in electoral campaigns in favour of his patron. However, my assistant's relationship with Landing Savane displeased Ansumane. In 1995, I paid a courtesy visit with a group of students to Ansumane's compound. Ansumane spoke a few words of welcome to my students and then addressed my assistant in ever more trenchant words, in French. The phrase that sticks in my memory is: "Si tu ne m'écoute pas, je vais t'écraser", if you do not listen to me, I will crush you.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to explain the village of Netteboulou's transition from a society with hierarchically ordered, endogamous and interdependent social categories to a clientelist society in which practically all participants

are dependent on one patron who controls all social relationships inside and outside the village.

This presumed transition process does not mean that the past has been forgotten. In my view, it is justified to say that the classification into three main status categories was still valid in the village community of Netteboulou, certainly among the *foro* and *nyamakalaw*. In terms of the heterogeneous slave category (*jongo*), many of them felt very uneasy about it and condemned it as being unjust or undemocratic. Some of them fervently denied the position ascribed to them in the dominant discourse, some tried to upgrade it, which, in fact, confirms the effectiveness of the classification. And during the recurring *rites de passage*, participants were often reminded of the system by the *griots*, the imam and other important persons, and encouraged to respect it. Especially the Signate family was honoured for the protection they had once given the forbears of the different families. The image of the founding family who once granted land-use rights, subsistence and protection to all other families in Netteboulou and who, for that reason, merit respect and obedience, has remained strong. Thus, we may speak of a certain continuity with respect to social hierarchy.

This is different from the interdependence between the social categories. The exclusive right for each social category to fulfil certain tasks, ritual as well as economic tasks, makes all categories indispensable for society as a whole. It is a way to distribute power over all social categories, except perhaps the *jongo*. This indispensability is also the reason why the members of other categories merit respect. However, in the course of history, many economic rights and obligations have been abolished. Slave families had been allowed to construct their own compound and to live separately, which brought an end to food and housing obligations for the founding and other noble families, and limited labour obligations for slave families. With the subsequent institution of the *navetanes*, slave families were freed even from these limited labour obligations and could use all their time and energy for their own farms. So, every family had to take responsibility for their own food and cash crop production. Several families of slave origin did so very successfully, for instance the Cisse and Dembele; other families had to cope with misfortune.

With regard to the *nyamakalaw* families, as the noble founding family preferred European artefacts instead of those made by their *nyamakalaw*, they were no longer obliged to render their services exclusively to the noble founding family. They were allowed to carry out their services in favour of

other noble families and of slave families as well. Thus, here again, we see a weakening of social interdependency and more freedom for private initiative.

National independence introduced a new method for distributing power, namely by periodical elections. The route to power was no longer via governmental nomination, but via the number of acquired votes. This seems me to be the decisive factor in the transition process towards clientelism. On account of this principle, the former royal Signate family and *chefs de canton de Netteboulou*, had to become intermediaries and had no other choice but to compete for the votes of their former protégées. This alone must have been felt as a degradation for the Signate. From then on, it was the Signate family who had to beg for loyalty and votes. Moreover, they had to deliver the acquired votes to a political boss, a national politician, in the hope of sufficient valuable goods and services in return. Finally, they have to redistribute these goods and services in such a way that it brings them as many votes as possible. However, in this unavoidable process, characterized by uncertainty, several things went wrong for the Signate.

During most of the 1980s and during the 1990s, there were three key Signate politicians. Unfortunately, a serious dispute arose between the three, leading to the establishment of two different *tendances* within the PS. Moreover, as a result of a conflict between the Signate and the Fofana family, the opposition party, the PDS, obtained a foothold in Netteboulou. In addition, some other (external) politicians and also my assistant strengthened the image of a politically divided village, whose voting behaviour was less predictable, and where the number of votes that could be obtained appeared to be small or uncertain. This made the Signate politicians less attractive as intermediaries for national politicians. This must have been another blow for the Signate.

Within this context, two of the leading politicians in Netteboulou, Ansumane (*roi*) and Diame (*président*) Signate, started working closely together to prevent a further weakening of their power. They gave economic and social support to households in need, as they did before, but from then on only in exchange for their votes. They tried to maintain a majority on the rural council. They were said to obstruct initiatives that they saw as threatening to their position. Moreover, there were always rumours that Ansumane would not hesitate to apply effective sanctions against persons who he regarded as being disloyal. People were scared of him as a result of his sometimes intimidating and humiliating behaviour. Finally, he was said to support poor spy families within Netteboulou and in neighbouring villages thus controlling

all internal and external relationships. Other strategies will be shown in the following chapters.

In sum, the old interdependency between the social categories, which gave them all a socially recognized place in the sun, has weakened in the course of time. This initially accompanied a greater freedom of economic action for all families involved. However, under conditions of seasonal food insecurity and poverty for many families, and of difficult political circumstances for the Signate, a new interdependency has developed between some Signate, eager for votes, and families that need food and assistance in difficult times. This new interdependency, or patron-client relationship, has become so tight that personal or familial initiative is strangled, that economically successful emigrants are refused resettlement in the village, and that the people of Netteboulou do not dare to protest overtly against what they silently regard as power abuses. To end with a metaphor: in the course of history, all families in Netteboulou, the Signate included, seem to have fallen from the frying pan into the fire.

Photo 6.1

Arafan Signate, village head of Netteboulou during the first years of the research training, probably 1987

Photo 6.2

Arafan's successor as village head, Hamady Signate, sitting in the centre, surrounded by compound heads, probably 1990

Photo 6.3

Street view in Netteboulou in the beginning of the rainy season, 1991

Photo 6.4

Another street view, with men waiting for the rains, 1991

Photo 6.5

The most important bantaba in Netteboulou, giving an outlook on the main street, 2000

Photo 6.6

My three children walking in the main street of Netteboulou, July 1991

Photo 6.7

The red masks, coming from the bush and entering the village,

Photo 6.8

accompanied by drumming, 2000

Photo 6.9

The red masks at the occasion of the yearly courtesy visit to Netteboulou, 2000

Photo 6.10

Papisto Keita, dancing for the red masks, 2000

Photo 6.11

Moussa Signate and Papisto Keita dancing for the red masks, Netteboulou,1998

Photo 6.12

Cooling down the masks, as it is very warm inside, 1998

Photo 6.13

Sadio Coulibally, dancing for the red masks, Netteboulou, 2002

Photo 6.14

Women and small children, afraid of the masks, did stay at a distance, Netteboulou, 2000

7

Earning a living in Netteboulou, Some limiting factors and structuring principles

How did the people of Netteboulou make their living in the 1980s and 1990s, and what limiting factors and organizing principles were they confronted with in doing so? I hope to show here that the way they organize their economic activities is the result of an intricate interplay of natural conditions and social organization principles.

The data presented in this chapter were gathered by me in many conversations and observations during successive research trainings from 1986 until 1991. I spoke from time to time with six key informants (two of noble and four of slave status) and had incidental conversations with many other people. It should be noted that conversations and farm visits always took place within the context of the research training, i.e. during the period June–August of those years.

For this chapter, I also made use of students reports, notably the Master's theses of Yolande Videler (1987), Elna Kranenburg (1988) and Paul Folmer (1993). All three lived in the village and carried out their research there in 1986 and 1987. However, selection and interpretation of their data in this chapter is entirely my responsibility.

Apart from remittances from emigrated family members, households in Netteboulou predominantly make their living from the exploitation of the environment within and surrounding the village. This means by hunting, gathering, horticulture and, most importantly, animal husbandry and farming. Moreover, some people carry out additional specialist activities, such as forging, woodcarving, ropemaking, tanning, making music, singing and drumming, weaving, tailoring, plaiting of mats and baskets, repairing

bicycles, etc. Some farmers also work as mason, carpenter, baker, butcher, fisherman, shopkeeper or small trader. Young men sometimes have small earnings from smuggling textiles or sugar from The Gambia. However, all households have farming and animal husbandry more or less as basic economic activities.

Among the local environmental factors influencing livelihood in Netteboulou, rainfall is of paramount importance. During a period of about eight months (from about November till about July) rainfall is not sufficient to allow fruitful rain-fed agriculture. Apart from some preparatory and some harvest activities, the substantial part of the agricultural process has to be carried out within about four months. In this short period, food for the entire year must be produced and the majority of the annual financial income earned. Unfortunately, the start as well the end of the rainy season may vary by four or more weeks every year. Farmers are often uncertain about whether or not the period of regular rains has really begun, while the rains may unexpectedly stop before full maturation of the crops. Even during the full rainy season, there may be dry intervals of one week or longer. It should also not be forgotten that the intensity of the rains may vary: from light to extremely heavy, leading to local inundations, rain erosion or crop damage. Making a living in Netteboulou's harsh natural conditions demands a diversity of modes of exploitation of the environment, more than agriculture alone.

Hunting by the villagers was said to be incidental and small scale and practised by men. Officially, one needs a licence for hunting. During the first part of the dry season (December–March), some young men from Netteboulou and other villages function as paid guides for French hunters and as personnel in the hunting camps. Girls sometimes earn money there by working as prostitutes.

Gathering is an inconspicuous but nevertheless important activity. The women collect firewood and the fruits and leaves of several kinds of wild plants and trees for daily meals. The men take wood from the forest for the construction of houses and fences. They also collect grasses and bamboos for this purpose (see photos 7.1–7.4).

Some men fish in the River Gambia, mainly during the dry season. At the end of the morning they bring their usually small catch to the village for sale.

Horticulture is mostly practised by women. During the rainy season, they may cultivate maize, tomatoes, onions, potatoes, peppers, calabashes,

etc. in a protected corner of the compound. In the first months of the dry season, the women's group has a common garden in which, in addition to the aforementioned plants, they cultivate aubergines, courgettes, okra, manioc, etc. The young men also had such a common garden. The plants in these gardens have to be watered twice a day. Some men plant fruit trees, in particular mango trees.

Animal husbandry

Animal husbandry is economically and socially very important. Almost all households practice it in one form or another. Some have only poultry, sheep and goats, cared for by the women. Other households also keep donkeys or horses, and, most sought after, cattle, all cared for by men. According to three key informants in July 1990, seven households had very large cattle herds: four Signate households, one Diaby household, also of noble status, and two households of slave origin, namely the households of Demba Dembele and Saloum Cisse.

In several households, I was told that they had cattle in former days but that they had lost their cattle due to illness, or because they had had to sell some cows every year in order to meet their need for food and money. This is contrary to the ideal that men and women in Netteboulou strive for, i.e. to use part of the earned money to buy cattle, or, more gradually, to convert money into sheep and goats and then, subsequently, to convert a number of these into cows. According to Videler (1987, 60), five to six goats is the equivalent of one cow.

Buying cattle is generally regarded as a good investment: notwithstanding certain risks, a herd is capital that roams around and multiplies itself. And once you have put your money into cattle, it is easier to stand firm against any financial claims from fellow household members and others. Cattle are also a buffer in economically bad times, when they can be sold. However, as we have seen, selling cattle is not an easy step for a household head. Besides a herd bringing prestige to its owner, cattle are the most convenient way of facilitating a son's marriage, as cows are an important part of the bride price. Ideally, two cows must be given to the mother-in-law and one to the bride herself. Cattle are also desired sacrificial animals for social ceremonies such as name-giving, initiation, marriage or funerals. On such occasions, they deliver not only a large quantity of meat to feed participants, but also skins for leatherwork. Moreover, cows may produce some milk during the rainy season

when the food supply has diminished or has become less diverse. In addition, oxen may be used to draw the plough on heavier soils, although horses and donkeys are usually preferred as draught animals because they are faster and easier to handle than oxen. Last but surely not least, cattle produces a lot of dung, necessary for the maintenance of soil fertility. This introduces us to a very important theme for the farmers.

Part of their strategy to maintain soil fertility is to secure their sheep, goats, donkeys and horses overnight in a kraal near their compound, where the animals drop their dung. These droppings are gathered and spread out over the family's maize farms. The regeneration of the soil, however, goes much further.

After the harvest, during the first part of the dry season (November–February), all the cattle and the other animals of the village are allowed to graze freely on farms within the so-called maize belt, an area of about 500 metres around the village, where they find a lot of crop residues to eat, mostly of maize. In doing so, they drop their dung on the future maize land. Later, in the dry season (March), part of the larger herds are trusted to Fula (*Peul*) herdsmen from neighbouring villages, who lead them far away into the bush where there is sufficient fodder and water. Part of the cattle, however, remains in the village and continues to eat the plant residues (of millet, sorghum and groundnuts) on the farms outside the maize belt. These animals also go for fodder in the nearby bush. They leave the village in the morning and come back in the evening for water and additional feeding. At night they drop their dung in a kraal near the compound of their owner. In other words, this cattle takes in biomass at a distance and brings it to the village, meanwhile transforming it into dung.

When the rains have really started (about July), and there are abundant grasses and leaves near the village, the Fula (*Peul*) herders bring the herds trusted to them back to the village. To avoid damage to the growing crops, all these family herds join into one herd, supervised by Fula herdsman. They must keep the herd outside the maize belt and other cultivated areas. They follow a yearly rotation, which means that, in one year, the herd grazes on the east side of the village, the next year in the south, then on the west side, and then again the east side, etc. The herd never grazes in the north (the Signate) side of the village, because, as one of my informants explained in 1990, not far from there are three Fula villages that have insufficient room for pastures. Moreover, parts of the terrain there would be too marshy in August, so that the cows risk sinking. This rotation of grazing areas means that every year

a part of the farming area (where millet, sorghum, groundnuts, cotton and some maize are cultivated) is fallow for a season and fertilized by cow dung (for more information see Videler 1987, 59, 113; Kranenburg 1988, 68–69). This rotation system was abolished but later restored by the Signate village head. Several farmers were against this rotation system, mainly because the Signate would manipulate the movements of the cattle herd, for instance in terms of the locations where the herd spent the night. One of my informants complained that he had not received any cattle on his farm and thus no dung.

This rotation has at least two further implications. One is that households that have their farms at a greater distance from the village (slave descendants, or later established families), are excluded from these fertilization benefits. To restore the fertility of their further away farms they have to observe longer fallow periods, unless they can afford the use of artificial fertilizer.

The other implication is that households who have farms in the grazing area of that particular year are obliged to look for land elsewhere or to ask other households to lend a farm for one season. According to my informants, this could be difficult, but is not viewed as a real problem. Moreover, I never heard any complaint. Obviously, access to land is easy (see also Videler 1987, 79–80; Kranenburg 1988, 69). In other situations, I only heard about what I like to call "sorrows", namely when household heads had to give up part of their maize farms near their compounds in favour of newcomers who were authorized by the village head to build their compound there. These household heads simply had to accept this loss of their maize land and to look for other land outside the maize belt, which, according to my informants, was not a problem (for more information see Videler 1987, 23; Kranenburg 1988, 52).

Agriculture

Notwithstanding the fact that the people of Netteboulou see themselves as Muslims, agriculture is often regarded as a human intervention in the world of male and female devils, often called *djin*. Man has to chase them by putting *gris gris* (objects with magical power) in the soil, or to propitiate them by making a sacrifice, thus transforming their negative influence into a positive force. When the rains hold off, the help of God is demanded by carrying out several rain ceremonies (for more information, see Videler 1987, 48–54; Kranenburg 1988, 64–68; Folmer, 1993, 130–131). Many people believed that rivals could do damage to one's crops by putting bad *gris gris* into the

soil. When these were discovered, it could lead to serious commotion and to magical counter-measures.

Food and cash crops

The food crops, cultivated by the men, include several varieties of maize, millet, sorghum and (some) manioc. Groundnuts and cotton are their cash crops, although part of the groundnuts is used for food. The women grow beans, onions, tomatoes, courgettes, aubergines, peppers and other kinds of vegetables as well as groundnuts and manioc, mainly for household consumption. It was said by some older informants that, in the past, when the rainy season was longer, varieties of millet and sorghum with a longer maturation time were cultivated. An irrigated rice project, started in 1978, failed after some years (Videler 1987, 67–68 and 106–108; see Chapter 9 of this book).

Social organization

The food crops of the men are grown on family farms, called *furoba* in Mandinka. Their cash crops are cultivated on individual farms, *kamanyango*, which are assigned by the head of the household at the beginning of the agricultural season. The male members of the household have to work on the family farms for four mornings per week (according to Videler 1987, 116, six mornings or all day), thus producing together the basic food for the household. In addition, the men of a household usually work together on each other's individual plots, in a sequence fixed by the household head. In some households, they work alone on their own plot for their own financial revenue. However, they are supposed to hand over at least part of this to the household head after having sold their produce.

Women are usually allowed by their husbands to have small farms on which they grow their crops, partly for family consumption, partly for sale. They may also have small gardens within the compound, where they grow vegetables and maize. Older women traditionally grew rice in the lowlands, near the village, on condition that the basins contain enough water (Videler 1987, 68), which was not the case in the years of our research training in Netteboulou. Some families, men and women, participated in an irrigated rice project near the neighbouring village of Kulare.

Spatial organisation and fertility management

The maize is predominantly grown in a belt of about 500 metres around the village. This belt is called "*souokonokena*", which means "farms (*kena*) near the home (*souo*)". The farms in this belt are sown with maize every year. Maintenance of the soil fertility is therefore a necessity. Farmers use animal dung, vegetable waste from the kitchen, and ashes from burned plants and crop residues to this end (see photos 7.5 and 7.6). If they can afford it, they also use artificial fertilizer.

All around this maize belt they cultivate millet, sorghum, groundnuts, cotton and also maize, varying in combination and rotation (see for more details, Videler 1987, 21, 68, 78; Kranenburg 1988, 51). This more distant zone is called "*woulokonokena*" (meaning "farms near the bush"). Soil fertility is maintained by periods of fallowing, by herding cattle there, by yearly rotation of crops, and by the use of artificial fertilizer. This fertilizer is provided by the semi-governmental organization Sodefitex. In principle, this fertilizer was meant to foster the growth of cotton, but in practice it was also used by the farmers for their groundnuts and maize. In general, the greater the distance to the village, the more important fallow is as a method of restoring soil fertility.

Access to seeds

The seeds for millet, sorghum and maize have to be saved after the harvest by the household heads, in their granaries. When the seeds are not sufficient, because too much has been consumed by the family or by rodents, or when they are spoiled, then the household head has to ask other household heads to give him seeds. He may get them on condition that, after the next harvest, he will return double the original quantity. Maize seeds may also be bought from Sodefitex, together with artificial fertilizer.

Specially selected and treated cotton seeds must be bought on credit from Sodefitex every year, in combination with fixed quantities of fertilizer, pesticides and insecticides.

Concerning groundnut seeds, their acquisition was problematic throughout the years of our research training. Since the introduction of a new national agricultural policy in 1984, farmers were supposed to preserve the seeds themselves; however, a number of households had no other choice but to

consume all their groundnut seeds, or they might have lost them to decay. In these cases, they could ask other household heads to lend them seeds, on certain conditions, or they could buy seeds, either from a governmental organization called Sonagraines or from merchants. In reality, however, only a few households could buy or borrow sufficient groundnut seeds. Moreover, the delivery of groundnut seeds by Sonagraines was often "too little and too late". In this way, many farmers wanting to earn some money in their home village, were forced to cultivate cotton under conditions determined by Sodefitex, (see also Videler 1987, 82–84; Kranenburg 1988, 62–63).

Successive activities and access to animal-drawn machines

The self-saved seeds are selected and prepared by the women (see photos 7.7 and 7.8). Then, after a good rain, when the soil is soft and the germination conditions are optimal, young men are in a hurry to plough and sow, with machines and draught animals belonging to their household head (see photos 7.9–7.14). Before the rains, when the soil is still hard, they may use a hoe. Women always work with a hoe (as they possess no machines and draught animals), unless their husbands, sons or brothers are willing to come with ploughs and draught animals. Richer women may hire a "strange farmer" (*navetane*) to plough and sow their farms.

After sowing follows a period battling the fast-growing weeds. Weeding between the rows is carried out using draught animals, with two types of weeding machines. Within the rows they use hoes (see photos 7.15–7.20).

The final phase in the agricultural process is harvesting the different crops. There are no machines for this activity, with the exception of a machine to separate the groundnuts from their straw; all the rest must be done by hand. This is a time-constrained and very labour-intensive activity (see also Videler 1987, 88–89).

However, not all households possess the necessary equipment (plough, sowing machine, two types of weeding machine) and draught animals (see for more details Videler 1987, 99–100). They see this as a problem, because these machines and animals allow farmers to plough, sow and weed a larger surface in a shorter time. Part of the solution may be to hire a span of oxen from a neighbouring Fula village, or to hire somebody with a machine and draught animal for one day. Another current practice for a household head without machines is to send his young men to work one day for households

that do possess machines and animals but who lack sufficient labour. The next day these young men may borrow these machines and animals to work on their own family's or individual farms (see for more details Videler 1987, 89-90). In terms of sowing, this exchange has a disadvantage, namely that on the second day after a good rain the surface layer of the soil is already drying up and thus the germination conditions are less favourable. This may lead to a lesser harvest, or even to failure of the seedlings in cases where there is a long interval between the rains. Also, the condition of workers, animals and machines may be less good on the second day.

Access to land

Regarding the access to land, all informants said that, with exception of the maize belt, there is no scarcity of land, notwithstanding the fact that some households have their farms up to five kilometres away from the village. Newcomers, once they are accepted by the (Signate) village head, get a place to build a compound at the outer edge of the village, in the maize belt. For farms, they must look further away, unless they are able to borrow land within the maize belt. It is current practice to borrow land for one season without paying for it: every household head who needs more land for his increasing family, will try to borrow farms from families who, for whatever reason, are unable to cultivate their farms themselves. Such families are said to be morally obliged to temporarily cede their unused land to families in need of it. According to my informants at the time (the 1980s and early 1990s), selling and leasing of use rights on land does not occur in Netteboulou (for more information, see Videler 1987, 79–80, 115; Kranenburg 1988, 50–62).

Access to labour

Labour is the main limiting factor for agricultural production. Demand and supply of labour vary strongly throughout the year. During the long dry season, the demand for labour is weak. According to my informants, male labour at this time is "just waiting for the rains" and thus not really productive. In the short rainy season, however, the demand for labour is high. Every household head wants his farms ploughed and sown as quickly as possible after a good rain. As weeds grow fast under tropical conditions, weeding cannot be delayed. Harvesting is also a time restricted and labour-intensive activity.

The household head may claim labour from his male subordinates, he may recruit temporary "strange farmers" (*navetanes*) for the whole season, he may hire a group of young men for a day, he may use labour organized by his future son-in-law, or he may hire a young man at 300 Frs CFA a morning (that is, before the devaluation, equal to about one euro), or at 150 Frs an afternoon. He may also hire a man from a related household with his son, his horse, plough and sowing machine for half a day at 2,000 frs CFA (or about 6.50 euros before devaluation), or at 1,500 frs CFA in case of a span of oxen (Videler 1987, 92), in order to plough and sow his farm. Finally, he may appeal to the women of his, or of other households. Women usually help harvest maize and cotton, on condition of a material compensation. For the cotton harvest, one of the women may organize a working party of well over 30 persons in exchange for a luxury meal for the whole group (see also Videler 1987, 88–90). The women often do all the work on their individual farms alone (sowing, weeding and harvesting), sometimes assisted by their daughters, by a mutual aid group, or by a group organized by her (future) son-in-law. Only incidentally do they get help from their husbands or brothers. Richer women may hire a *navetane*.

According to the customary contract, *navetanes* must work four mornings per week on their host's farms (three mornings, according to Videler (1987, 91) and Kranenburg (1988, 15)). In any case, they receive food and housing in the compound of their host (*djatigi*), and they are assigned pieces of land on which they may cultivate groundnuts for themselves. Also implied in this contract is that they have the right to use their host's machines and draught animals. The host must also give them the necessary seeds. After the harvest, the *navetane* must return double the quantity to his host, but the rest of his produce he may sell for his own account. Household heads confronted with a lack of labour try to attract *navetanes*, who, for their part, prefer to work for wealthier households that have sufficient machines and draught animals. Videler (1987, 91) mentions the number of 17 *navetanes*, spread over 14 households, during the agricultural season of 1986. In other years, this number was said to be much higher. In 1986, the *navetanes* had to cultivate cotton, owing to a lack of groundnut seeds. Videler (1987, 91) reports that sometimes the relationship between the household head and his *navetane* is so harmonious that they work together on both their farms.

Households as social units of production and consumption

The village of Netteboulou is, as all neighbouring Mandinka villages, spatially divided into compounds, or *coundas* (in Mandinka), or *carrés* (in French). A compound is a spatially distinct group of houses, kitchens and storerooms that is usually surrounded by a fence or a wall (see photos 7.21 and 7.22). In 1986, Netteboulou had 70 compounds, according to Videler (1987). Within this space live one or more households; the household head is usually an older man. He may live there with his younger brothers, his paternal nephews, his and their sons, wives and children, and possibly also with other kin and non-kin, e.g. *navetanes*. In a number of households, the head or other men are married to more than one wife and so there are children who have the same father but a different mother. There are also some female-headed households.

Ideally, the household head must meet many obligations and expectations. All informants, especially some older women, stated that it is very difficult, if not impossible, for a household head to satisfy all requests. Firstly, he is responsible for the daily food supply of the household as well as for the necessary healthcare. Secondly, he is responsible for decent housing for all household members. Thirdly, he has to pay the taxes for his dependents to the government (in the 1980s 1,000 frs CFA a year for each person older than 16, with the exception of disabled or elderly people). Moreover, he has to help his sons, younger brothers or nephews to accumulate the bride price and to finance name-giving, initiation, marriage and funeral ceremonies, or at least to participate in meeting the necessary expenses (see also Videler 1987, 38–44; Kranenburg 1988, 23; Folmer 1993, 113). He has to pay school fees and is confronted with a multitude of requests, for instance to pay for new clothes and footwear at several religious feasts. He has to buy agricultural equipment and draught animals, and to obtain sufficient groundnut and cotton seeds on time. He has to decide whether or not sheep and goats shall be sold, or exchanged for cattle. He is supposed to give one tenth of the maize and millet harvest (*zakat*) to the imam and has to contribute to the costs of pilgrimages to Mecca. Last but not least, he has the social-juridical task of solving or mitigating conflicts between members of his household and he is automatically involved in cases of conflict with members of other households.

In order to satisfy to all these obligations and expectations, the household head has certain means at his disposal. He has the generally acknowledged right to demand from all capable men in his household that they work on his farms (the family farms as well as his individual farms) during four (Videler 1987, 85, speaks of six) mornings per week, and that they come to work there

the day after good rain. It is generally accepted that the acquisition of food and money for the family has priority to working on the individual farms of male household members. These individual farms are cultivated by all the men of a household together, in a chronological order determined by the household head. After having sold the produce (groundnuts or cotton) of their individual farms, the men are supposed to transfer the earned money, or at least part of it, to the household head. This is a matter of negotiation and a potential source of conflict. Next, the household head has control over the harvest of maize, millet and sorghum, which is stored in granaries. He has the exclusive right to distribute a daily quantity of grain to the wife whose turn it is to cook. Moreover, it is the right of the household head to distribute land for individual farms to the adult male and female members of his household. He also puts machines, carts and draught animals at their disposal and decides who may use them first and to what end (see also Videler 1987, 111, 118).

All these obligations, expectations and rights are part of a normative structure, or an ideal pattern. In practice, procedures may be different or at least less smooth. Generally, few household heads can comply with all these norms and expectations in a way that satisfies all household members. Several household heads were said to be unable to correctly fulfil their tasks for lack of sufficient financial means, which inevitably leads to distribution problems. Notably, women and young men could be discontented. However, there may be other factors involved. The authority of the household head may be challenged by rivalries within his household. Polygynous marriages may lead to jealousy between co-wives, who transfer this rivalry to their children. This may obstruct any form of cooperation within the household. In relation to agriculture, this may mean that young men wreck the communal work on the family farms or on the individual farms; or that they cultivate food crops on their own individual farm besides cash crops. This may be a sign that the social cohesion within a household is under stress (see also Videler 1987, 39). Moreover, some heads were so old that they had to delegate several of their functions to a younger brother or a son, which may trigger rivalry between them, or between sons of different mothers. Other household heads were often absent from the village, which meant that the women had to take grains themselves from the granary. I have been told that it was a regular practice among the women to take a bit more grain than needed for the meal, to set aside small quantities, and finally to sell the accumulated grains in secret to a local shopkeeper. Possibly, this has to do with the frequently heard complaint of women that the household head had assigned them a farm that is too small or unfavourable (see for more details Videler 1987, 81). For this same reason, young men could be dissatisfied. Moreover, before marriage,

they were completely dependent upon and had to work hard for their family, almost without any opportunity to earn some money for themselves. Later, after marriage, they had to hand over all or part of their earnings to their household head.

In terms of the division of labour between men and women, men are obliged to work on the family farms, women may do so in urgent situations (weeding or harvesting), but it is not obligatory. The reasons given include the fact that women already have to carry out many indispensable (and time-consuming) tasks for the household, for instance fetching water from the wells, gathering firewood in the bush, preparing the daily meals (in rotation, within polygynous households), taking care of the young children, cleaning clothes, pans and jars, the house and compound, etc. In addition, women are expected to cultivate groundnuts and vegetables on their own temporary farms, partly for household consumption, partly for sale. When a woman has earned some money, she is expected to spend that mainly on household purposes.

Conclusion

So far, I have presented a general view of economic life in the village of Netteboulou during the late 1980s and the early 1990s. This view allows us to formulate some general statements that, in my opinion, allow for a basic understanding of the local ways of making a living.

The first statement concerns the climatic conditions, notably the rainfall pattern. For about eight months of the year, the rainfall does not allow for fruitful agricultural activities, unless farmers have an irrigation system. Only during a short period of about four months is precipitation sufficient for rain-fed agriculture. Therefore, farmers sow as early as possible so that their crops have a better chance of maturing. However, rainfall in this short period is quite unreliable, with an unpredictable start and end to the rainy season. This unpredictability means the moment of the first sowing is always a gamble, which may lead either to splendid crops, or to complete failure and a need to resow. This may mean that precious time in the short rainy season is lost. The rains may also stop too early, which, in the final phase of the agricultural process, may destroy the hope of a good harvest. In addition, farmers may be confronted with intervals of one or even two weeks between the rains; or

the rains may be so abundant and heavy that it may result in inundation or destruction of the crops.

Especially the combination of irregular rains with the heat of the sun imposes severe limits on agricultural activities. Thus, the best moment to plough and sow, with maximal chance of seedlings surviving, is the day after a good rainfall. Soon, the heat of the sun will return, drying up the surface layer of the soil. Therefore, on the day following good rainfall, the demand for labour is very high, and ploughing and sowing then have priority over almost all other activities.

Another fundamental insight seems to be that social and economic life are strongly intertwined. Production and consumption do not take place within different social contexts, but within the same social unit, i.e. the household. The household is a locally recognized group of people who want to continue their physical and social living by concluding marriages and giving birth. It welcomes new members with a name-giving ceremony, about one week after a baby is born, and it assists in educating young boys and girls in initiation ceremonies. It helps its members to find a marriage partner and negotiates the bride price. And it regulates the passing away of household members with elaborate funeral ceremonies. Thus, the household is much more than a production group: it is primarily a social group that lives together and strives for social and physical continuity, and which, to these ends, needs to carry out certain economic activities.

These economic activities take place according to certain principles. The usually male household head is vested with many responsibilities and duties towards the members of his household. In return, he may claim many services from them, which they must execute as a priority. For example, he may demand that his male dependants provide labour four mornings a week to the household's food farms and to his personal cash crop farms, and that they are available the day after a good rain. Next, they have to work together on the individual farms in a chronological sequence fixed by the household head. The rest of their time, they may work on their own farm or join a group of young men that offers its labour in exchange for money. Moreover, male dependants have to transfer at least part of their earnings to the household head. This is often a matter of negotiation. The subordination of the individual male members to the household and its head is evident. In theory, this normative structure leaves little freedom for individual economic action. The female household members have to work within the same household structure, with probably even less room for private initiative.

In turn, the households and their heads are embedded in the village community. This means that they have certain rights and obligations with regard to the village community and the leading noble family. The most fundamental rights that they, or their forefathers, have acquired from the noble founding family are land-use rights. It is the noble Signate family who once granted them these rights and therewith their subsistence, an act that must be commemorated frequently on many ceremonial occasions. They received the right to use as much land as they need, while the Signate remain the owners. This explains the relative ease of the annual rotation of the pastures, imposed by the (Signate) village head. If a household head is unable to cultivate all the land for which his household has acquired use rights, he is morally obliged to lend out part of it to a household in need, at least for one season. So, when another household head needs more or other farms, he can easily borrow land, providing he has the support of the Signate family (see Videler 1987, 79). In the same way, newcomers, accepted by the leading family, are allowed to build their compound at the outer edge of the village, and thus necessarily on the maize farm of a particular household head. This head has no choice but to accept it and to look for another place to cultivate his maize. He may try to borrow land within or outside the maize belt, or he looks for new farms further away (scarcity of land is not currently an issue). Again, we may conclude that social and economic life are strongly intermingled, or more precisely that economic activities are inherent to social life.

The implementation of these principles may lead to varying results, depending on the situation within the different households. Internal rivalry may obstruct any form of cooperation, certainly when the household head is not a powerful leader. The ultimate consequence may be fission of the household and establishment of a new compound. Moreover, emigration, illness or death of male members may bring about a shortage of labour in relation to the land used by earlier generations. Other households, on the contrary, are happy to provide a generation of young workers. This may be a source of prosperity for the household, providing the household head is able to prevent rivalries. In addition to these social vicissitudes, households may be unevenly struck by the capriciousness of the rainfall, by illness and death of draught animals or by breakdown of agricultural equipment. Finally, a number of households in Netteboulou face a seasonal food shortage, or at least feelings of food insecurity, which will be the subject of the next chapter.

Among the households doing well economically, were several Signate households. Seven households were cited as having large cattle herds. Among them were four Signate households. They were said to manipulate

the movements of the great cattle herd during the rainy season, in order to receive more dung on their farms. In this way, they tried to restore the fertility of their farms outside the maize belt, at the expense of other households. In addition, the Signate village head reintroduced the system of annual pasture rotation. Consequently, households with farms far away from the village, thus households of slave descendants or recently arrived people, could not benefit from this rotation.

Photo 7.1

A woman climbing a tree to pick fresh leaves for the sauce, Netteboulou, probably in 1995

Photo 7.2

Repairing roofs and fences during the dry season, Netteboulou, probably 1990

Photo 7.3

Plaiting mats for the fences, 1986, (from the slide series Nakenato)

Photo 7.4

Tailoring at the compound of Sherif Keita, one of my key informants during the first years of the research training, Netteboulou, here probably in1994

Photo 7.5

Clearing the farm, 1986 (from Nakenato)

Photo 7.6

Burning the dry plant residues, 1986 (from Nakenato)

Photo 7.7

Selection of groundnut seeds by women, 1986 (from Nakenato)

Photo 7.8

Preparing grain seeds by women, 1986 (from Nakenato)

Photo 7.9

Ploughing with a pair of oxen and two young men, 1986 (from Nakenato)

Photo 7.10

A man ploughing with a horse, led by a young boy, 1986 (from Nakenato)

Photo 7.11

My wife, ploughing with two donkeys in Madina Dian, 1998

Photo 7.12

Sowing machine with disk for maize seeds, Hamdalaye Tessan, 1986 (photo Louise Huijbens-Jellema)

Photo 7.13

Putting maize seeds into the reservoir of the sowing machine,1986 (from Nakenato)

Photo 7.14

Sowing with machine and donkey, led by a boy, 1986, (from Nakenato)

Photo 7.15

The maize belt around the village of Hamdalaye Tessan in 1986, with a weeding machine and animal droppings on the soil)

Photo 7.16

Weeding between the rows with a machine drawn by a horse, 1986 (from Nakenato)

Photo 7.17

Weeding by hand within the rows with a hoe, 1986 (from Nakenato)

Photo 7.18

Women do not own machines and have to do the weeding by hand and hoe, 1986 (from Nakenato)

Photo 7.19

The battle against the weeds: weeded and not yet weeded, 1986 (from Nakenato)

Photo 7.20

Variable growth of the crops, dependent on rainfall and availability of food and manpower, 1986 (from Nakenato)

Photo 7.21

Part of the kitchen of a large household in Sita Oule Bananding, 1997,

Photo 7.22

the other part of the same kitchen

8

Seasonal food shortage and its socio-economic implications in Netteboulou

The geographical area within which our research training programme took place, belongs to a wider rural zone in which seasonal food shortage is a recurrent phenomenon. In Senegal, this period of shortage is called "*période de soudure*" (period in which you have to make both ends meet). In The Gambia, people speak of the "hungry season". It means that for all, or at least a number of households in a village, certain basic foods (grains such as millet, sorghum and maize, but also manioc roots) are lacking at the end of the dry season and during the rainy season, while, during that same period, people must carry out arduous labour on their farms for the new harvest.

In this chapter, I will try to show how, and in which way, this seasonal food shortage influences social life in the village of Netteboulou. To understand this, we must first examine the rainfall pattern and its influence on the agricultural calendar. Then, I will try to outline the scope of the seasonal food problem in Netteboulou as well as its differentiation among the households. Next, I will describe the ways in which the different households react to the problem, how they try to cope with it or, on the contrary, take advantage of it.

The data for this chapter are mainly gathered from my own research during the fieldwork trainings in 1989 and 1990: an exploratory survey at the end of July 1989, and semi-structured interviews before and after the survey with at least five male key informants.

Rainfall and the agricultural calendar

The main characteristics of the rainfall have already been discussed in the preceding chapter: a very short rainy season; an uneven distribution of the rainfall within and between years; capriciousness at the start, during, and at the end of the rainy season; uneven spatial spread of the rains and variable intensity of the rains. There may be extremely heavy rains, causing local inundations and crop damage.

Farmers may be surprised by what seems to be an early start to the rainy season and at the same time be uncertain about whether or not the rainy season has really started. At the end of the season, the rains may stop too early, which may destroy the farmer's expectation of a good harvest at the last moment. In sum, rain-fed agriculture under the rainfall conditions of Tambacounda inevitably means serious insecurity about the outcomes.

The agricultural labour process has to be adapted to these really difficult circumstances. From about the middle of the dry season, in the month of April or even earlier, farmers start their first preparations for the new agricultural season: cutting down trees and shrubs, firstly on pastures that have had a long fallow period; then clearing all other farms of the small vegetation, and finally burning the vegetable material that has been dried up by the heat of the sun (for more details see Videler, 1987, 64). Ideally, a farmer wants to sow millet and cotton as early as possible in order to gain maximum profit from the short rainy season. Therefore, some farmers take the chance to sow by hand and hoe just before the first rain in June, hoping that more rains will fall soon and regularly, which indeed happens sometimes, but cannot be guaranteed. Other farmers prefer to wait and not to take the risk of the first sowing failing.

When the rains have become more regular and the soils softer, animal-drawn ploughing and sowing of all crops starts, at least for those households who have ploughs, sowing machines and draught animals at their disposal (for more details, see Videler, 1987, 65). Without these machines and animals, the work has to be done by hand, which means that only smaller areas can be sown. Married women start their own farms and gardens, which they cultivate by hoe and hand, unless their husbands help them by intervening with machines.

Preferably, ploughing and sowing is done the day after a good rain, because then the soil is soft enough for the machines to work. Moreover, the soil is

still humid then, which guarantees quick germination and root formation. Two days after a good rain, the surface layer of the soil is already dried up by the heat of the sun. These facts have at least two implications: firstly, that just after a good rain the demand for labour is very high, and secondly that one or two days later the germination conditions are less favourable and the risk of failure of the seedlings is much higher.

During further sowing in July, the period of weeding starts. This is done by hand (in the rows) and with machines (between the rows). Usually there are two rounds of weeding from July until as late as September. The women are supposed to contribute to the weeding, in addition to their activities on their own farms or in their gardens.

The first crop to harvest is early maize, usually around mid-September. This event is generally regarded as the end of the seasonal hunger period. The other food crops (millet, sorghum, late maize) are harvested at the beginning of the dry season, from mid-October until the end of November. The harvesting of the cash crops (groundnuts and cotton) mainly takes place in December and January. The women may be asked to participate in the harvesting activities. The period of food sufficiency preceding the first sale of the cash crops is characterized by a general lack of money in the village. So, financial loans may be paid back in grains, at the level of grain prices at that moment.

In December, the sale of groundnuts and cotton starts and may continue until March. This is the period of the year when money enters the community and many financial transactions take place, for instance paying off debts, and buying machines or draught animals. It is also the period of social events (like marriage and initiation ceremonies, feasts and mask dances). Repairing or building houses and fences also takes place during this period. To this end, clay bricks are made, grasses gathered, bags of cement and corrugated iron bought, etc.

Then, in April and May, the preparations for the next agricultural season start again. Such is the (rain-fed) agricultural cycle that households in Netteboulou have to pass through in order to obtain sufficient food and money. However, this cycle demonstrates variations from year to year and from household to household, depending on the distribution and capriciousness of the rainfall.

One additional remark must be made. The demand for agricultural labour during the rainy season may be strengthened by a higher frequency of illness

during that period, mainly malaria. More people are ill at this time on account of the combination of warmth and humidity, on the one hand, and deficient food, on the other.

Irrigated agriculture and horticulture would, according to my informants, be a good solution to the problem of the uneven distribution and capriciousness of the rainfall. Indeed, since the early 1980s, the women's group and that of the young men have small, irrigated gardens in which they cultivate vegetables during the first months of the dry season. Later, from March till June, however, this cultivation is impossible because of the heat of the sun. There has also been a project for irrigated rice cultivation. This project failed for technical, economical and presumably also social reasons. This will be the subject of the next chapter.

Seasonal food shortages in Netteboulou

Given the vicissitudes of the rainfall, food insecurity is common in Netteboulou and household heads are therefore required to take precautions. They may try to create a buffer in the form of a cattle herd that can be sold in case of famine. They also may try to establish or maintain good relationships with other (wealthier) households, or with rich persons living elsewhere, so that, if necessary, they can make an appeal for help. Or they practise a subsidiary activity that brings in some money to buy food. Another possibility is to send a son to Dakar, or to Europe, where he may find paid work so that he may send money back to his family at home. They may also invest in their children's school education in the hope that they will find a well-paid job later on and help their family. However, not all household heads have been equally successful in achieving these precautions, which implies significant variations in the food supply of different households.

In order to get an impression of this variability, and of the occurrence of seasonal food shortages at household level, I organized an exploratory survey with a local farmer, Baba Coulibally, as interpreter, during four days at the end of July 1989. We spoke with 76 household heads, living in 69 compounds. In three compounds, nobody was present; one small compound had been added to a neighbouring compound. Moreover, we encountered one household head who refused to respond. It concerned the poorest household in the village according to my interpreter. Among the 76 household heads of our survey, we counted eight female-headed households.

Given the limited time, the interviews had to be short, preferably not more than a quarter of an hour. My assistant and friend, Baba Coulibally, was very helpful in this respect. Thanks to his social skills, we were able to complete the scheduled interviews within four days, and always in a sympathetic atmosphere.

We firstly asked about the last harvest, the one of 1988: was it a good year or not for his or her household? This opening was followed by the question whether or not he or she had bought grains since the last harvest, and if so, how much and when? And whether he or she would buy grains for the rest of the current rainy season or not? Finally, we asked the household head to estimate how many mouths he or she had to feed.

Although one may have doubts about the accuracy of the information per individual household, some general distinctions concerning the seasonal food shortage were revealed unintentionally. Already during the interviewing, I started to realize that three categories of households may be discerned with regard to seasonal food shortages (see Table 1).

Table 8.1
Seasonal food shortages among the households of Netteboulou in July 1989

categories of households	number of households	estimated number of persons
1. households with sufficient food production; no necessity to buy grain	2	98
2. households with insufficient food production, but with sufficient means to buy grains	34	575
3. households with insufficient food production and with insufficient means to buy grains	40	311
total numbers	76	984

The first category is that of households whose head responded that his household had produced sufficient food (maize, millet, sorghum) in 1988 to cover the needs of the household until the next (1989) harvest. This means that they did not need to buy grains. Two households can be included in this category, one with 16, the other with 82 mouths to feed. This amounts to 98 persons without a real food shortage, according their household heads.

The second category is that of households whose heads said that their households did not produce sufficient grains, but that they have the means to buy them. Under normal market (supply) conditions, these households do not have a seasonal food shortage. They are able to buy grains in large quantities, which means a number of bags of millet (100 kgs), maize (50 or 100 kgs) or rice (50 kgs) at the same time. This category counts 34 households, comprising 575 persons who did not suffer from a food shortage in 1989, according to the estimations of their household heads.

Trying to specify this large second category (see Table 2), I counted five household heads, representing 96 persons, who declared that they intentionally did not produce sufficient grains, because they wanted to cultivate as much cash crops as possible for the market. The money earned in this way enabled them to buy the necessary grains in the period of low grain prices after the next harvest. Another number of 23 household heads, representing 426 persons, declared to have sold some livestock (cows, bulls, sheep or goats) recently, in 1989, to cover the need for grains. In addition, six other household heads, representing 53 persons, declared that they had an insufficient grain production but that they, or members of their household, spend part of their time on other, non-agricultural activities that brought them financial revenues (subsidiary activities such as being a shopkeeper, a baker, blacksmith, or *griot*, etc.). Without doubt, there are more than six households whose members perform additional economic activities. Thus, some people worked as butcher, tailor, fisherman, driver, well digger, or fetishist and marabout, but these activities were not mentioned by the household heads.

Table 8.2

Differentiation of households in Netteboulou with insufficient food production, but with sufficient means to buy grains, in July 1989

categories of households	number of households	estimated number of persons
1. households with conscious choice for more cash crops and less food crops; they buy grains after the harvest, when grain prices are low	5	96
2. households that sold some livestock to be able to buy grains	23	426
3. households with members who carried out subsidiary activities in order to buy grains with the money earned	6	53
total numbers	34	575

The third category (in Table 1) includes households that, according to their heads, had not only an insufficient grain production, but also – contrary to the second category – no sufficient means to buy grains, i.e. no or not enough money, no animals to sell, and no remunerative non-agricultural jobs. The number of households belonging to this third category is 40, comprising 311 persons. Twenty-eight household heads explained that they had no other possibility, at least during part of the hungry season, than to buy grains in very small quantities (*"pot par pot"*), as soon as they have got some money. Some of them characterized their subsistence as "living from day to day". The days they have no money, they skipped warm meals and consumed only roasted groundnuts. Seven household heads explicitly declared that they, or younger members of their household, had no other choice than to go to work for other households in order to gain some money for food. In reality, however, their number must have been much higher than the seven who said so explicitly. Finally, five other household heads, among whom three female heads, explained that they lived from charity. They have sons or kin elsewhere who sometimes bring them grains or money. Here again, the number of households that live from charity must be higher than the five whose head overtly declared so.

The survey was meant as a rapid orientation concerning the scope of food shortages in Netteboulou. It offers information about the food situation at one moment in time, namely the end of July 1989, after the apparently bad agricultural season of 1988. Moreover, the data served as a starting point for further conversations with key informants. Based on the statements of 76 individual household heads, we may conclude that 40 households were confronted with a seasonal food shortage in July 1989, while 36 were not. This means that 673 persons would have sufficient grains to consume until the next harvest, while 311 persons, or about one third of the total population, did not. This is based on the answers of the household heads to the question of how many mouths they had to feed. The households with a food shortage generally were smaller than those households with sufficient grains: among the 40 households with food shortages, I found no households with more than 20 members, while the largest households with food sufficiency counted 35, 37, 40, 62 or even 82 members.

One final remark must be made. Here, I regard only "households with insufficient food production and with insufficient means to buy grains" as households with a seasonal food shortage. That is to say, households that sold cattle to buy grains are not counted as households with a seasonal food shortage. However, this may be regarded differently by local people, because

selling cattle out of necessity is felt to be social and economic retrogression. It means that the ideal of enlarging the household's herd cannot be realised, and it may evoke feelings of food insecurity if the herd has already been reduced.

Coping with the seasonal food shortages

How did the household heads faced with a seasonal food shortage (40 of the 76 households) try to solve their food problem? Selling of cattle was no option for the simple reason that they had already sold or lost all their animals throughout the years. Others declared that they had never owned any cattle since settling in the village.

The most cited way of coping with the seasonal food shortages is going to work for wealthier households with a labour deficiency, in order to buy food with the money earned. Usually, this involves at least two young men from a household in urgent need of food working one whole day for a wealthy household that owns ploughs, sowing or weeding machines and draught animals. During this day, the workers are provided with food by their employer. The salary was 450 frs CFA per person for a day of work (which today is about 0,76 euros). The next day, the workers are allowed to use the machines and draught animals on the farms of their own household. In this way, poorer households can also gain access to machines and draught animals; but, it should be noted that, on this second day, the workers and the draught animals may be tired and the germination conditions may be less favourable. In our survey, seven household heads made mention of this practice for their household. According to some key informants, this is rather common practice.

Another way of coping was just asking a wealthy household head for grains or food. I found several cases of this in the survey. It concerned some female-headed households and small households with relatively many old-aged, ill or disabled people, and with fewer young workers. In such cases, the food giver is not repaid with labour on his farm, but rather with recognition and gratitude at ceremonies and other public events, especially during political elections.

A different way of coping with food shortages is selling agricultural machines and/or draught animals. This practice was regarded as an act of desperation. You once paid a lot of money for them, and now you are selling them at a cheap price. It is shameful for the seller as well as the buyer and hence it

generally takes place in secret. This practice was mentioned only three times during our survey: one head who said that he had sold one of his ploughs, and two others who told that they had sold one of their donkeys in exchange for food and medicines.

A number of households regularly had no other choice than to gradually consume their stock of grain and groundnut seeds. In such cases, when it is time to sow, the household head must borrow seeds. He usually obtains them on condition of returning double the quantity of grains after the harvest.

A household head may also try to borrow money from a shopkeeper or merchant. However, large loans are difficult to acquire because a household head faced with a food shortage is not usually regarded as creditworthy. Small financial loans were possible, however, albeit on the far from attractive terms that they are paid back in grains at the harvest, when grain prices are low.

The women of households with insufficient food are said to be most seriously hit by a lack of food. They have to prepare the meals and are responsible for the children. When their household heads, or their husbands, are unable to obtain food or money, they may secretly sell part of their dowry, clothes or ornaments. Some are also said to offer sexual services in return for money.

I encountered another way of coping with food shortages during the training of 1990, namely, the selling of chemical fertilizers at less than half price. These fertilizers were bought on credit from Sodefitex for the cultivation of cotton and then paid for after the cotton harvest. Two of my key informants, both of slave status, explained this practice to me. It was seen as a deadly transaction for the seller of the fertilizers. He will have a bad cotton harvest and be unable to pay back the credit to Sodefitex or to the local cooperative, which means that he will be excluded from the cotton cultivation.

Taking advantage of the seasonal food shortage

How did the wealthier household heads (36 of the 76 heads in my survey) react to the seasonal food shortage of other households? One general reaction was, without doubt, giving grains on request to, or sharing food with poorer households for free. It seems to me that such small-scale actions mostly took place between households directly connected through marriage or descent.

This may concern more or less unselfish actions. Frequency, volume and scope of this kind of gift are unknown.

In other cases, however, objectives such as increasing status or acquisition of political votes may motivate the food-giver. I have been told that some rich Signate households received many requests for food assistance. Although my informants recognized that the grain supplies of the Signate were not unlimited, it was said that their gifts of grain were small in order to keep the household head requesting help, in a situation of dependency. Moreover, their interest in helping a household was often politically motivated. At election time, household heads are reminded of the food help they have received in the past and the support they will probably need in the future. One household head openly told me that he regularly received food aid from the Signate. Other informants told me that this particular man was a spy for the Signate in return for the food.

Usually, the heads of wealthy households want labour for their farms. When a poor household head comes to ask for food or financial help, it is preferable that he sends some of his young workers to plough and sow, notably on the days after a good rain when the germination conditions are optimal. The same holds for the battle against the weeds: sending young men for a day of work who are then paid at the end of that day.

My informants told me about several other practices by wealthier household heads. Buying machines or draught animals at a low price and giving grain or groundnut seeds in return for double the quantity after the harvest, are evidently practices that benefit wealthier households. Also, giving a small financial loan on the condition that it is repaid in grains after the harvest, when grain prices are low, is a very profitable deal for the wealthier household. Grain prices vary strongly throughout the year. In November 1989, just after the harvest, the price of a bag of maize (100 kgs) was 2,500 frs CFA while it was 7,500 frs in June 1990. For 100 kgs millet or sorghum the prices were respectively 3,000 frs and 9,000 frs CFA. Under these market conditions, a small financial loan during the period of food shortage has to be converted into a huge quantity of grains at harvest time.

Another lucrative practice, already referred to in the previous section, was brought to my attention in 1990, by two informants of slave status. An important member of the Signate family is said to have bought bags of chemical fertilizer at less than half the price from household heads in need of food. He paid them 1,000 frs CFA for a bag of Uree fertilizer, while they

had to repay 2,500 frs CFA to Sodefitex after the cotton harvest. And for a bag of MPK fertilizer, he paid them 2,000 frs instead of the 4,125 frs they later had to pay back to Sodefitex. I do not know whether or not this practice was continued in later years or adopted by other wealthy household heads. Obviously, such transactions may contribute to subsequent food shortages for the poor household.

Finally, I want to state that I saw no opportunity (lack of time; too sensitive) to verify such exploitative practices. Nor can I say anything about their frequency. I am simply reporting the range of possible transactions as explained to me by informants of former slave status.

Socio-economic implications of different strategies

For household heads confronted with food shortages, "obtaining food now" is an inevitable priority. They may ask the heads of the wealthier households to give them grains. Although these wealthier households almost certainly give grains for free to poor households, usually those with elderly or disabled family members, they have their own priorities, namely the acquisition of labour and an abundant harvest, and, in the case of the Signate, votes at the elections. They normally want a household receiving food to deliver labour services at the most crucial activities of the agricultural cycle, namely ploughing, sowing and weeding.

This practice of going to work for food has serious consequences as one key informant, a farmer and slave descendant, explained to me in detail. In general, it means that labour is extracted from a household's farm and added to the farm of a wealthier household. Any work to be done on your own farm has to wait, while work on the farm of the wealthier household is carried out on time. This extraction is even more serious at times of ploughing and sowing. As has been argued, the best moment for sowing is the day after a good rain. If you first have to go and work for others, you have to postpone sowing on your own farm till the second day after the rain, when the conditions for germination and root development are less favourable and the chance of a bad harvest or even complete failure is high. A poor harvest means that next season you have to go out to work again. Thus, the practice of working for food risks to become a permanent extraction of labour. Going out for weeding has largely the same effect. Poorer households are forced to give priority to weeding the farms of their wealthier neighbours at the expense of their own crops, with consequently a risk of another food shortage etc.

On the other hand, the seasonal food shortages experienced by poorer households offers the opportunity for wealthier households to attract labour at the most favourable moments. Thus, the food shortages for the one means labour supply for the other. While the practice of working for others may result in further shortages for poorer households, it means the maintenance of a permanent reservoir of labour for wealthier households.

However, the situation of the poorer households is even more oppressed. In cases of long intervals between rains, wealthier households have no work to do and are not interested in employing people from households faced with food shortages. The poorer families have no other choice than to humbly ask for food as long as the drought lasts, or to consume the rest of their stock of grain and groundnut seeds if their request is refused.

The transfer of means of production like machines, draught animals and chemical fertilizer, at prices far below their initial costs, and the simultaneous loss of their economic advantage, reinforces this vicious circle that traps poorer households and is a source of labour for the wealthier.

Conclusions

Rain-fed agriculture under the rainfall conditions of Tambacounda district inevitably involves serious insecurity about the outcomes. Consequently, feelings of food insecurity are fairly general in Netteboulou. When households looking to prevent a real food shortage are forced to sell some of their cattle, this is viewed as a retrogressive measure that eats into their capital. Thus, selling cattle for food may exacerbate feelings of food insecurity.

On the basis of criteria discovered during my exploratory survey among household heads, the real seasonal food shortage in Netteboulou at the end of July 1989 appears to have been limited to about 40 of the 76 households, or to 311 of the 984 mouths to feed. Further conversations over the years with my key informants provided me with an overview of the ways of coping with the seasonal food problem, the strategies used to take advantage of it, and, most importantly, an understanding of their socio-economic implications.

All household heads want to profit maximally from the short rainy season, which means that there is a general scarcity of labour during these months.

Moreover, all agricultural activities must be carried out on time. Certain activities, in particular, ploughing, sowing and weeding, cannot be delayed.

Ploughing and sowing is most effective on the days after a good rain. All household heads try to take advantage of favourable natural conditions. However, the poorer among them are blocked from doing so, because they must first find work and money to be able to acquire food. The wealthier heads, who generally have a larger number of mouths to feed, are quite willing to provide their poorer neighbours with paid work at those moments that they need labour.

In this transaction, labour is extracted from the poorer households and added to the labour force of wealthier households, just at the moment when both must act on time on their farms. This means that the poorer households will probably have a less good harvest and may be forced to go out working again the next season. The extraction of labour may become permanent; in other words, poorer households may land in a vicious circle from which it is difficult to escape. My main informants were very conscious of this risk.

This act of extraction, however, means that wealthier households not only have more chance of an abundant harvest, but are simultaneously creating a permanent reservoir of labour, consisting of households with a recurring seasonal food shortage and a need for paid work. Thus, landing in a vicious circle of continuing food shortage for the one goes hand in hand with maintaining a reservoir of labour for the other. Both processes represent two sides of the same process of socio-economic differentiation that is going on among households of Netteboulou.

There were still other transactions contributing to this socio-economic differentiation process, for instance: small financial loans to households with a food shortage against repaying in grains at harvest time, when grain prices are low; the transfer of machines and draught- animals as well as other production factors like chemical fertilizer, insecticide and pesticides against prices far below the real price; and giving seeds in return for double the quantity at harvest time.

Finally, the seasonal food shortage is used by Signate households as a forceful means to acquire votes during elections. Members of many households vote according to the wishes of the Signate family for fear that in case of a food emergency they will not receive any food assistance or any paid work.

9

Irrigated agriculture for the village of Netteboulou?

Given the frequent complaints about the capriciousness and the unreliability of the rainfall, on the one hand, and the proximity of the River Gambia, on the other, the idea of irrigated agriculture was self-evident and, indeed, was highly appreciated by the people of Netteboulou. This became very clear, to my surprise, during the research training of 1987. In the first days of this second training, there appeared to be a widespread idea among the people of Netteboulou that the existing rain-fed agriculture, with its inherent food insecurity, had to be supplemented by agriculture that is independent of rainfall. There appeared to be a general preference for irrigated rice cultivation, especially among the women. They explained to me that the preparation of rice takes less time and energy than that of millet and sorghum. Moreover, labour, far from being fully employed during the long dry season, could then be used to grow the rice and to harvest it at the end of the dry season when the period of food scarcity starts. So, irrigated rice cultivation was generally regarded as a major solution to the problem of seasonal food shortages and insecurity. In sum, this was the prevailing ideology in June 1987.

I became infected by the enthusiasm of villagers in this regard. Small-scale rice cultivation with controlled water supply is the obvious solution to the food problem and could offer a stable basis for further social and economic development. However, I had heard from my students that there had already been a project for irrigated rice cultivation and that this project had failed. Thus, before discussing with villagers a plan for a new project, it was logical to learn first about this earlier project and the reasons for its failure. This chapter, then, is my reconstruction of the history of Netteboulou's irrigation project and the reasons for its failure. In the next chapter, I will give an account of my efforts to contribute to a more successful irrigation scheme, or at least to a lesser dependency on rainfall.

Due to a lack of time, I decided to trust the research into the history of this project to a former student of the 1986 cohort, Bavo Tilanus. Bavo had conducted his research training in Netteboulou on the subject of local political relationships and developments, which made him pre-eminently qualified to carry out this work. He did so in February and March 1988 and presented his results in his Master's thesis (B. Tilanus, "Democracy in a Senegalese Village" (my translation), Leiden University, September 1988).

Irrigation schemes along the River Gambia

1 April 1977 was the official start of a project for irrigated agriculture along the River Gambia in Senegal. During the first five years of this new operation, the semi-governmental organization Sodefitex opened up 17 small-scale irrigation schemes along the River Gambia and its tributary the Sandugu, for the irrigated cultivation of rice, maize and bananas. Netteboulou was among the first four villages where such a scheme was established.

Eight schemes were located in the department of Kedougou, and nine in the departments of Tambacounda and Kolda (Sodefitex, *Rapport de Synthèse du 01.04.1977 au 31.09.1982)*. The project was financed by the FED *(Fond Européen de Développement, projet 4100.033.45.01)*. Preparation, management and implementation of the project were entrusted to a subsidiary of Sodefitex, called Piso *(Périmètres Irrigués du Sénégal Oriental)*. Piso was charged with the choice of locations, the design of the schemes and the construction of pump bases, water basins, distribution works and the main channels, as well as with overall supervision and management. Participating local farmers had to contribute by cutting the vegetation and removing the root systems, by digging the secondary channels, constructing small dikes, levelling the soil, etc.

The schemes varied in size from 13 to 75 hectares. Unfortunately, my Piso informant at the time (1987) could not give me any information about the selection of villages and plots, or about who made the choice according to which criteria. The *Rapport de Synthèse* does not provide this information either. My Netteboulou informants gave me the name of a certain Mr. Bataille, who was responsible for all the important decisions. Once a scheme was arranged, Piso placed a motor pump in the river. Piso was the owner of the pump and the farmers in the scheme had to pay to use the pump per hour. The farmers also had to pay for the repair, spare parts and regular maintenance of the pump. These amounts, plus the costs of motor oil and

fuel, were divided among the farmers in a scheme and had to be paid back to Piso after the rice harvest. In principle, all participating farmers cultivated a quarter of a hectare. Piso also delivered, on credit, enough rice seeds, two kinds of artificial manure as well as insecticides and pesticides for a quarter of a hectare. The costs of these inputs were also settled with the individual farmers after the harvest. They could pay back with money or with bags of rice. Farmers in a scheme were organized in so-called UPIs (*Unité paysannale pour l'irrigation*). From 1983, Piso tried to give these UPIs more important functions, such as the distribution of the inputs on credit and the repayment of these loans, the admission of farmers to the scheme or their exclusion in the case of non-repayment. In its planning, Piso assumed that there would be two campaigns per year: one in the dry season (January–June) and one in the rainy season (July–November). Production costs were lower during the rainy season, because less water is needed, which, in turn, means less pumping hours and less fuel and motor oil.

In June 1987, ten years after the start of the project, my Piso informant told me that only one of the 17 original schemes was still functioning (and had two campaigns per year), namely that of the immigrant village of Adjaff, where due to a shortage of land, many inhabitants had no other agrarian possibilities than to practice irrigated agriculture. In response to my question about why so many schemes had failed (16 of the 17 schemes), my informant cited two general reasons: 1) "the refusal of the farmers", as he put it, to pay back the credit and their share of costs; and 2) the decision of farmers to practice irrigated rice cultivation only once per year, during the dry season, and to allocate their labour during the rainy season exclusively to traditional rain-fed agriculture. Apart from these general reasons, he also mentioned specific, local reasons for failure. For example, in the department of Kedougou, where the rainfall generally is better, farmers simply were not interested in irrigated rice cultivation. And along the Sandugu, not enough water could be pumped due to the unexpected luxuriant growth of water plants. Finally, he referred to a forthcoming evaluation of the project. This research would be carried out by the wife of the vice-director of Sodefitex Tambacounda. She was a professional *socio-économiste*. When I politely asked for a copy of her report, her husband explained to me that I could not have it because, as he put it, "Sodefitex is an enterprise which has to protect its interests".

By contrast, my Piso informant gave me several documents, among which two summarizing reports (*Rapport de Synthèse*), one covering the first five-year period, April 1977–September 1982, and the second for the period from

October 1982 to October 1986. From these two reports, I tried to reconstruct the official view of Sodefitex and Piso on the reasons for failure.

Firstly, there is a serious overlap between the activities of the traditional, rain-fed agriculture and those of irrigated cultivation. Moreover, the first has general priority for farmers, while the second is only an interesting supplementary activity for them. During the first months of the dry season (October–January), farmers are busy with harvesting, selling or storing their rain-fed crops, food and cash crops. This leaves insufficient time to then prepare for the new irrigated rice campaign. Moreover, rice planted at the beginning of the dry season (December and January) does not develop well, because of the cold during these months, with, as a consequence, poor quality rice grains. For these reasons, farmers only start sowing their rice seeds from mid-February onwards, when they have time available and temperatures are higher. However, this postponement of sowing means that the rice harvest must take place at the beginning of the rainy season (towards the end of July), when work for the rain-fed agriculture has to be resumed and, in addition, the preparations for the next rice campaign should be made.

The second big problem for Piso and Sodefitex concerns the failure of farmers to repay credits within the allotted time, or at all. Consequently, a number of farmers were excluded from participation and, in turn, the actual surface area sown in such schemes has been decreasing over the years. Moreover, discussion and insecurity about participation may also contribute to a delayed start of the necessary activities.

Thirdly, according to these summary reports, farmers do not have access to sufficiently strong draught animals and solid machines. The damp clay soils of the lowlands are more difficult to cultivate than the higher, sandy soils on which the rain-fed agriculture takes place. Consequently, animal fatigue and material damage often occur and slow down the labour process.

Fourthly, farmers often carry out insufficient maintenance of canals and dikes, which results in loss of water and increased pumping costs. Other cited reasons for failure are that rice and maize are difficult to combine in an irrigated scheme, because rice needs a lot of water in one go, while maize needs water bit by bit. Finally, the organization of the activities in a scheme is hampered by the fact that the UPI's also include members of other, neighbouring villages.

Start of the Piso project in Netteboulou (1978/1979)

In 1977, Piso had made contact with the village of Netteboulou in order to establish an irrigation scheme there. In July 1978, an area of 20 hectares had been arranged, followed by another 30 hectares in January 1979 (the first *Rapport de Synthèse*, p. 4). I have found no figures about the actual surface sown with rice in Netteboulou. Tilanus (1988, 89) mentions 40 hectares planted with rice and two hectares with bananas. At the end of both campaigns, a number of farmers declared that they were unable to pay back the credits they had received. Thus, in the case of Netteboulou, Piso was confronted with a financial debt of 469.651 frs CFA in 1979 (Sodefitex, *Rapport Annuel 1983–1984, B 3, remaining debts*; see also Tilanus, 1988, 89). Before the devaluation of the frs CFA in January 1994, this was equal to an amount of about 1,536 euro. Besides the debt, there were other problems for Sodefitex: the farmers of Netteboulou wanted only one campaign per year, during the dry season. Moreover, they wanted to cultivate rice predominantly for auto-consumption, and not for sale. This meant that only a limited quantity of rice, namely the bags of rice serving as repayment for the credits, was delivered to Piso. These were sufficient reasons for Piso to officially declare the project closed after the harvest of (July) 1979. The pump was removed, which, according to my informants in Netteboulou, resulted in the loss of the forthcoming banana harvest.

However, according to the first *Rapport de Synthèse* (p. 23), the project did not seem totally closed. In the dry season campaign of 1981, 6.5 ha of the scheme were planted with rice. In the subsequent rainy season, 0.5 ha was sown with rice and in the dry season of 1982 it was as much as nine hectares. Notwithstanding the official closing, a part of the scheme must have remained operational, and the extremely high consumption of motor oil and fuel (much higher than for the majority of the other schemes) would suggest that a pump must have been in use. Unfortunately, I did not have these facts and figures at the time of my interviews with farmers in Netteboulou and with officials in Tambacounda.

Two of my Netteboulou informants told me that they continued to cultivate rice after 1980, but at a lower location, adjacent to the scheme. They did not speak about a pump, and it was not clear whether or not they obtained seeds and other inputs from Piso.

A new start for all schemes (1984)

In the meantime, Sodefitex and Piso tried to prevent the loss of the investments they had made by developing a new agreement with farmers of the nine schemes in the zone of Tamba and Kolda. According to the "*Rapport Annuel 1983/1984*", this campaign was characterized by a new impetus for irrigated rice cultivation. A faster-growing and faster-maturing rice variety had been introduced along with a new, clearer schedule for the necessary activities during the dry season. Sodefitex and Piso thus hoped to shift rice cultivation so it did not clash with the activities of the rain-fed agriculture, and so that, eventually, two rice campaigns per year would be possible. Moreover, this new impulse meant a compromise regarding the repayment of the debts (extension of repayment) and a smaller surface to plant with rice seedlings during the rainy season (i.e. only a small part of the scheme).

So, the project in Netteboulou was resumed during the dry season campaign (February–June) of 1984. On the list were 38 participating farmers who planted 9.25 ha with rice. Ten of them were from neighbouring Fula (*Peul*) villages. Among the 28 participating farmers from Netteboulou, 19 were said to be slave descendants, including the chairman of the group. Five persons were of noble origin, among them two members of the Signate family. Further, I counted one person of *griot* status, one leatherworker, and two blacksmiths. To my surprise, the name of a politician, Kabiné Kaba, was added pro forma. He had paid 50,000 frs CFA to Piso. My informants always spoke of him in relation to the re-opening of the scheme in 1987, but he must already have been engaged in 1984.

At the time of the *Rapport Annuel 1983/84*, only seven of the 38 participants had paid back their credits completely. The total debt of this dry season campaign amounted to 453,096 frs CFA, equalling, before the devaluation, about 1,482 euro. However, the scheme was officially closed again by Piso, on account of a total debt of 922,747 frs (453,096 plus 469,651 frs CFA previous debt), or about 3,000 euro. By the way, the next dry season (1985) all nine schemes were closed (Cheikh Diop, *Rapport de Synthèse du 01 octobre 1982 au 31 octobre 1986*, p.3). In 1986, five schemes were functioning again (Korientine, Kirily, Gouloumbou, Adjaff and Dialico).

In 1986, the first year of the research training, the Netteboulou scheme had already been closed for two years. My students mentioned a failed irrigation project, but neither they, nor the villagers had paid much attention to it. This was completely different in 1987, during the second research training. On my

first visit to the village, around mid-June, one of my younger interlocutors suddenly said to me: "I have to leave now, for I have to harvest my rice". "Huh, rice? How so? Where?", I responded. This was the start of the story about the re-opening of the scheme a few months earlier, in January 1987.

The political context of the re-opening of the Netteboulou scheme (1987)

During the 1980s, several political developments occurred (Tilanus 1988, 81–89). As mentioned previously, (Chapter 6), in 1982, Djame Signate, originally from Netteboulou, returned to Senegal having completed a university study in France. He had decided to enter into politics and to garner supporters within and around Netteboulou. In doing so, he became a rival of an older politician, called Kabiné Kaba Diakhite, (Kaba for short), who, at that time, was a member of Parliament (*l'Assemblée Nationale*). Kaba's political home base was the *arrondissement* of Missirah, to which the village and the *Communauté Rurale* of Netteboulou belonged. He had many political followers in Netteboulou and Missirah, and especially in the neighbouring Fula (Peul) villages. For several years, he had been a teacher at the primary school of Netteboulou, and from 1969 to 1972 he was even head of the school (Tilanus, 1988, 66). He still had contact with many of his former pupils, among whom were many so-called slave descendants. He was held in high esteem by them, because as a teacher he strongly contributed to their awareness of the injustice of slavery.

In 1984, the new politician Djame Signate joined the faction, within the PS, of Amidou Sakho, an older politician and a rival of Kaba. In the same year, Djame Signate succeeded in selling many more PS membership cards than Kaba. In the next elections (*les élections municipales et rurales du 25 Novembre 1984*), the faction of Djame Signate and Amidou Sakho convincingly won in most of the villages belonging to the Netteboulou section. Kaba's remaining supporters were limited to a number of Fula villages, and his faction had failed to win any seats on the first rural council of Netteboulou.

In 1986, the next party renewal (on the basis of periodical selling of membership cards) took place. Again, Djame Signate and Amidou Sakho were able to sell more membership cards than Kaba. He, in turn, did not let the matter rest there and was determined to win back his former adherents. He successfully raised doubts about the validity of the party renewal. The national board of the PS decided that the politicians in the department of

Tambacounda had to re-sell membership cards in 1987, and to organize elections that same year.

According to my Netteboulou informants, Kaba had in the meantime made contact with some of his former pupils (all so-called slave descendants) in Netteboulou. They explained to him the importance of the irrigated rice scheme for the people of Netteboulou and told him that many inhabitants wanted the scheme re-opened. Kaba welcomed this information. In order to win votes, he offered to take over the debt personally and to make an arrangement with Piso to repay in instalments. The result of Kaba's intervention at Piso was that in January 1987 the pump was returned and a new campaign of irrigated rice cultivation was started.

My (slave) informants continued their story by stating that this intervention by Kaba was not at all appreciated by Djame Signate and his family. The Signate supported their Djame in his fight for votes and they hoped that a significant support in Netteboulou and its surrounding villages would result in many facilities for the village and region, which would also strengthen the reputation of the Signate family. They did not want an alien politician (Kaba) cooperating directly, without their mediation, with dependents within "their village". My informants concluded that the Signate were against the re-opening of the scheme for political reasons. However, in conversations with three Signate informants, they played down this political motivation. They said that they were against the re-opening mainly for technical and economic reasons, which will be presented later.

The Signate's disapproval had repercussions for participation in the re-opened scheme. Although, according to my (slave) informants, many people were willing to participate, ultimately only 28 participants farmed 29 plots of the original 200, one plot being cultivated by the whole group in honour of Kaba. My informants said that the fact that the Signate were against the re-opening, and indeed had threatened potential participants, explained the small number of farmers joining the scheme.

Among the 28 male participants who dared to defy the Signate, one person was of noble status (not a Signate), two were leatherworkers, and two were *griots*. No less than 23 persons, including the leaders of the rice project, were classified as slave descendants. Traditionally, leadership of development projects is in the hands of the Signate. Thus, the re-opening of the scheme was, besides being an object of rivalry between a politician from outside and

one from within, also an explicit infringement of the prevailing local ideas about social order.

Kaba continued his efforts at winning back the votes from Netteboulou. He nominated the leader of Netteboulou's irrigation project as the local representative of his political faction. He also took him, together with three other participants, on an electoral tour through the department. His activities brought him victory in many villages, however not so in Netteboulou. From the 272 votes in Netteboulou, Kaba got 41 votes and Signate 231, according to Tilanus (1988, 88). Among these 41 voters for Kaba, Tilanus counted only 13 participants of the rice project. The remaining 28 Kaba voters were family members of these 13 rice cultivators, in particular their wives, who would be obliged to vote for Kaba (Tilanus, 1988, 92). Among the 231 voters for Djame Signate, Tilanus (1988, 93) distinguished five categories of motivations: "he [Djame] belongs to our family"; "out of respect for the historical bond with the Signate"; "he is a son of the village who will always remember first the needs of his village"; "in return for acquired goods and services"; and finally, "for fear of retaliatory measures by the Signate".

From all these data, my conclusion that irrigated rice cultivation in Netteboulou had become the object of rivalry between political stakeholders is self-evident. The intervention of an external politician (Kaba) who had a long-standing alliance with a group of slave descent in the village was regarded by the Signate as a threat to their own internal politician (Djame) and as another infringement of the social order in their village. In this political struggle, the Signate came out as the winners, which explains the small number of participants in the re-opened irrigation scheme. Kaba appeared to be the loser in Netteboulou in a double sense, not only on account of the small number of votes (41), but also because only 13 of the 28 rice growers gave him their vote, while 15 voted for Djame.

The scheme was closed again after the campaign of 1987, on account of disappointing harvests and non-repayment of credits. According to Tilanus (1988, annex 16, table 3), 12 farmers were unable to repay their credits, while 16 had repaid their debts. The total debt of this campaign, as of March 1988, amounted to 311,367 frs CFA, or 1,019 euro (before the devaluation). In addition, Kaba was said to not have paid back anything of the original

debt. The plot in his honour had become a failure, as I saw from personal observation.

Individual considerations: the pros and cons of participation

Besides attention to the political context of the re-opening of the irrigation project, I also wanted to learn about the individual views and motivations in the different groups of players. So, I had conversations with nine participants of the re-opened project and with 17 non-participants. I held brief talks with 14 of this last group, and with three of them, all important members of the Signate family, fairly long interviews (more than an hour). These conversations took place during the third research training in June and July 1988, almost a year after the irrigation scheme was closed again. At that time, the research report by Tilanus (who did his research in early 1988) was not yet available, which meant I could not discuss his data and conclusions with my informants.

Firstly, of the nine participating informants, eight of them (seven former slave descendants and one griot) said the main reason for their participation was the uncertain food situation in their household. They wanted "food for the family during the hungry season". "Earning money by selling some rice" was mentioned only by two participants as a secondary reason. The ninth participant (a former *griot*) told me that his reason for participating was: "because the founding family is against the project", thus a political reason. Consequently, he had seriously neglected his rice plot, which I was able to observe myself during a visit to the scheme.

All nine informants criticized the way in which Piso had planned and carried out the project. Generally, they found the costs for participating farmers too heavy. The president of the rice growers told me that he had harvested 21 bags of paddy (of about 50 kilos per bag) and that he had to transfer seven bags – one third – to Piso. Some farmers had to pay more, others somewhat less than a third, depending on the quality of the paddy. Another farmer had harvested 11 bags of paddy from his plot and had to pay back seven of them to Piso. He viewed this transfer as "withholding food from the family". Some farmers were said to have harvested even less than they had to repay to Piso. Indeed, it was reported that one farmer had harvested just one bag; and our former *griot* confirmed that he had harvested nothing at all. Several

informants told me that they did not understand the prices of the necessary inputs and this left them feeling they had been cheated by Piso.

My informants sometimes referred to personal or family circumstances to explain their disappointing results, but generally the technical defects of the scheme were blamed. For example, part of the scheme was conducted on stony soil, pervious to water. Part of this ground would not have been well levelled, which meant that some plots risked not getting enough water; moreover, a lot of water would have leaked out of the channels. As a result of these technical defects, the pump had to function many extra hours a day, which demanded more fuel, motor oil and maintenance to be paid by the farmers. In short, all my informants agreed that these technical defects resulted in low profits and high charges for the farmers.

However, at least four of the nine interviewed participants explicitly said that they wanted to continue irrigated rice cultivation, but only once a year during the dry season, and on another spot, more to the south, where the terrain was lower and flatter. They called this spot Fafidiba. Others, including the president of the rice growers, preferred yet another spot, called Sayeko.

In terms of the viewpoints of the non-participants, let us turn first to the three Signate informants. Djame Signate, the first president of the newly created rural council, explained his view of the scheme:

> I did not want to participate for three reasons. Firstly, the soil of the scheme is not suited everywhere for irrigated agriculture with, as a consequence, the risk of a low output for the farmers concerned. Secondly, the credits to pay back to Piso are too high and many farmers will end up with a debt. Thirdly, when many farmers are unable to pay back, the village, and in particular the Signate family, will get a bad reputation. When we make a demand for a project, the government or Sodefitex will say: "Netteboulou, is that not the village which did not pay back its credits?" However, there was a small group around a politician, Kaba, who wanted the scheme re-opened. I told him that the credit is too heavy for many farmers and that they are unable to pay back. But Kaba did not want to listen. People say that we were against the re-opening, but that is not true. We were against the credits, which are so high that many farmers cannot pay back.

Ansumane Signate, the "King of Netteboulou", gave me an even clearer explanation, a brief reconstruction of which I present here. He first mentioned the technical defects of the scheme and its inherent high charges and low yields. This resulted in debts to Piso and was the reason why the scheme was closed in 1979. Now, in order to win votes, Kaba has ensured that the scheme was re-opened. However, the costs were again too high, and many farmers ended up with debts again, as in 1979:

> The Signate family has never had any objection against the irrigated rice cultivation. We even have some members who are employed by Piso. So, we want that it succeeds […]. In Netteboulou there are always small rivalries but suggesting that we have threatened the participants […], no we did not. We have mentioned that the place is not suited for irrigated rice cultivation. It is very difficult to get sufficient yields there. Only when Kaba suddenly intervened and arrived unannounced with the pump, was there a fuss. However, if Piso re-opens the scheme and farmers want to participate, then the Signate can do nothing else than to accept the farmer's choice. They are allowed to do what they want, but they will always meet the same problem of the repayment of the credits. Kaba has rendered them a bad service. He was only interested in winning votes and did nothing to ensure better credit conditions or technical improvements for the scheme. He has also divided the village and tried to hinder the new Signate politician. However, all this is not so serious. If we saw it as really serious, then the rural council would have withdrawn the terrain from Piso. We realized that it was a temporary action and that it would fail. Many people voted for our faction. They understood that Kaba's action was not in the interest of the people but in his personal interest.

In another, shorter conversation, Ansumane once said to me: "We do not like to work as slaves for Piso". And: "This project contributes to the impoverishment of our village". He explained the fact that especially slave descendants participated in the re-opened project as "due to a lack of intelligence" and "in opposition against the founding family".

I also had a long conversation with Aliou Signate, the president of the Union of Cooperatives in the district of Missirah. He spoke in the same vein as his fellow family members. He emphasized the fact that it was the Signate family who had asked Piso to come to Netteboulou and to carry out the project. The whole village contributed to cutting the trees, removing the roots and digging the canals. The rice cultivation, however, was not successful in many cases. We also planted some hectares of bananas. Just before these came to

maturity, Piso removed the pump and all the bananas were lost. He did not want to participate after the re-opening, because the terrain is not suited to irrigated agriculture: it is rather high land, making it difficult to bring water there. The costs of the pump, motor oil and fuel are high. Once you realize all this, you do not want to participate anymore. With the re-opening of the scheme, debts have increased and the reputation of the village has worsened.

He concluded with a plea for a new project at a place called Sayeko, which, according to him, would be well suited for irrigated rice cultivation. It is low terrain with good water retention during the dry season. With well-cemented channels, a good pump and a tractor for labouring the heavy soil, a project would be successful, according to him.

Finally, we turn to the 14 remaining non-participants. In response to my question about why they had not participated in the re-opened scheme, nobody admitted to having been forced by the Signate. All of them said that, in principle, they like to practice irrigated rice cultivation and to produce food for the family. However, they did not do so for various reasons, such as health problems or lack of labour in the household (6 x), too high repayments (6 x), and no chance to acquire a good plot in the scheme (3 x). Two others said they had lost faith in Piso following the loss of their bananas. Finally, two of them said they had participated in an irrigation scheme in the neighbouring village of Korientine.

Summary and Conclusions

Netteboulou was among the first of 17 villages along the River Gambia where Piso established a scheme for irrigated agriculture. In 1978, a scheme of 20 ha was opened there, followed by an extension of 30 ha in 1979. After two campaigns and a high level of non-repayment of credits, Piso removed the pump in August 1979 and officially closed the scheme.

In 1984, new impetus was given to all irrigated rice projects following several campaigns, during which only a few schemes had been functioning. In the Netteboulou scheme, 9.25 ha were sown with rice in February 1984 by 38 participating farmers but closed again later that same year. The reason was again insufficient repayment of credits. Officially, it remained closed until the dry season of 1987.

In the meantime, Netteboulou's rice scheme had become an object of political rivalry. A young politician from the leading family, Djame Signate, was successful in winning votes and concluding political alliances. In doing so, he became the regional rival of an older politician, Kabiné Kaba, a member of parliament, who until then had many supporters in Netteboulou and neighbouring villages. Based on a supposition that he would win many votes back, Kaba proposed making an arrangement with Piso to re-open the scheme. He offered to personally take over and repay the debt of the rice farmers. He succeeded in persuading Piso to place the pump in the river again, and so another re-opening of the scheme took place in early February 1987. This led to serious discussion in the village. Many farmers were enthusiastic, but the Signate were said to be against the re-opening, amongst others for political reasons. The Signate themselves denied or at least relativized this when they spoke to me about it. According to informants of slave and *griot* descent, at that time belonging to the Kaba camp, the disappointing number of participants could be attributed to the critical attitude of the Signate. Obviously, many farmers realized who would help them in case of food shortages or social problems within or outside the village. It is no wonder therefore that my informants hid behind practical reasons (such as health problems or labour shortage) when explaining their non-participation and did not refer to any influence of the Signate.

After all, this last effort (1987) to re-open the scheme resulted in another failure, according to the standard set by Sodefitex and Piso, who closed the scheme for the third time. Mentioning these repeated failures, we should not forget, however, that there were always a number of farmers who produced more rice per quarter of a hectare than Piso's norm, and who paid back all their credits.

Why did the scheme of Netteboulou fail? One has to realize that there are two main parties involved, Sodefitex and Piso versus the villagers, and that both tell different stories. Similarly, there are several categories of villagers, notably the leading noble family versus the slave descendants.

According to written sources from Sodefitex, the most important reason for the bad record of many schemes, including the one in Netteboulou, is the mismatch between rain-fed and irrigated agriculture. Due to natural circumstances (the cold in December and January), farmers must postpone the sowing of rice seeds, which means they have to harvest the rice grains at the very moment that work in the rain-fed agriculture (ploughing, sowing, weeding) has to be done, as well as the preparations for next rice campaign

carried out. In addition, our Sodefitex sources said that farmers are not willing to adapt their activities in rain-fed agriculture to the exigencies of irrigated rice cultivation. They stick to their usual food- and cash-crops and the accompanying agricultural labour calendar. Implicit in these statements is that Sodefitex, as the intellectual father of the scheme, has not correctly estimated the effects of the cold in December and January on the development of the rice plants, as well as the priority that the farmers give to rain-fed agriculture.

The second main reason for failure, according to Sodefitex, is basically a financial one. In all schemes, notably in that of Netteboulou, there are farmers who are unable to pay back their credit to Piso, thus bringing about less profit for the company. Sodefitex and Piso take this so seriously that they close the whole scheme, or that they exclude the defaulting farmers from participation, as long as this latter group has not paid off their debt. Consequently, the number of participants per scheme has been decreasing over the years. Piso tries to remedy this by admitting farmers from neighbouring villages, but this may hamper the functioning of the local UPI. Another, related factor contributing to failure, in Sodefitex's view, is that the farmers do not want to produce rice for the market but mainly for their own consumption. Consequently, Piso does not receive much more rice grains than the rice that is paid back in return for the credit. Implicit in this is that the rate of non-repayment, and the fact that the rice is not seen as a cash crop, came as a bad surprise for Sodefitex and Piso.

A final reason for failure, mentioned by Sodefitex and valid for Netteboulou, is the bad maintenance of canals and dikes by the farmers. They are obliged to maintain them, but they do not carry out this work adequately. This means plots that do not receive sufficient water because canals are leaking water or are blocked by sand or grasses. This again results in extra pumping, fuel and motor oil costs. So, in the reasoning of Sodefitex and Piso, the high costs of pumping, fuel and motor oil are largely a result of the farmers' behaviour. However, Sodefitex and Piso do not seem to realize that the soil is very dry and hard during most of the year, which makes the maintenance of canals and digging extremely heavy and labour-intensive work.

So, what reasons do the villagers of Netteboulou give for the scheme's failure? To understand this better, I conducted conversations in 1988 with both participants and non-participants in the scheme that re-opened and subsequently closed again in 1987. All of them held Piso responsible for the location of the scheme. They also all referred to the poor quality of the subsoil

and the defects of the scheme, on the one hand, and the incomprehensibly high costs imposed by Piso on participants. Some said they felt cheated by Piso; others spoke of "withholding food from the family". The leading family said they did not want to work as slaves for Piso and they called the project "an impoverishment of our village".

Thus, both parties put the blame squarely on each other for the failure of Netteboulou's irrigation scheme. For Sodefitex/Piso, the farmers stuck to their usual food- and cash-crops and were unwilling to adapt their labour calendar to the cultivation of rice. They also wanted to keep the crops for their own consumption and not to cultivate rice for the market. Moreover, they failed to maintain the canals and dikes, and many of them refused to pay back the credits, etc. For the farmers, Sodefitex/Piso selected the wrong place for the scheme, which resulted in low profits and high costs for participants.

Notwithstanding their severe criticism of Piso, a number of informants from the village, participants as well as non-participants, leaders as well as slave descendants, said that they still found irrigated rice cultivation an interesting option (food for the family in the rainy season). But, in response to the question posed in the title of this chapter, it should be carried out in a manner different to that employed by Piso, i.e. more to the south, on lower ground and with fewer costs for the farmers.

10

An anthropologist in the world of development cooperation

In the previous chapter, I characterized myself as being infected by the villagers' enthusiasm for creating a new, viable irrigation scheme for Netteboulou, at a more suited locality and with less financial costs for participating farmers. From the viewpoint of action anthropology, the achievement of this idea, in close cooperation with the villagers, seemed to me extremely interesting. It could be an opportunity for learning by planned intervention and multiple consultation by farmers, rather than just relying on participant observation and interviews. Moreover, I could learn not only about a specific local society and its socio-economic change processes, but also about development organizations, representatives of our Western culture, and about intentions and effects of governmental policies.

My colleague, Mr. Maurice Bergh, was very interested in my experiences in Netteboulou from the start. At the time, he was also chairman of Lidesco, the Leiden Institute of Development Studies and Consultancy Services. This was our departmental organization for applied anthropology and sociology, established to acquire research mandates and funds. As chairman of Lidesco, he succeeded in obtaining financial support from the Office for International Cooperation of Leiden University for the research, carried out by Bavo Tilanus in February and March 1988, on the history and failure of Netteboulou's irrigation scheme (see Chapter 9).

During the third research training, in June 1988, I had initial conversations with representatives of development organizations, in order to find out whether or not they would agree with a pilot research in Netteboulou. Later that year and in 1989, I made contact with several other organizations. I present here my experiences with the various organizations in a chronological order.

The direction of Sodefitex and Piso

On June 15, 1988, I had a short conversation with the technical director of Sodefitex, a Frenchman, and on June 27 a longer interview with the then vice technical director of Senegalese origin. At that time, I had only some vague ideas about possible future research and not yet an elaborated research proposal.

According to both informants, the main problem for Sodefitex was that the farmers do not want to do two campaigns per year. However, only when there are two rice harvests per year will the investments in irrigated rice cultivation be profitable. Despite this, farmers prioritize their rain-fed campaign and do not want to change that. After a very good rainy season and a very good harvest, farmers may even decide to skip the rice cultivation for one season, they said. Moreover, any rice grown is regarded as food for household consumption, and very few sacks of it are being marketed. For both my informants, the question was how to integrate the intensive production of rice (two campaigns) into the existing agricultural production system (with several food crops and two cash crops)?

From my Piso informant I understood that technological solutions were being sought to this integration problem. Firstly, by developing and introducing rapidly maturing rice varieties, and secondly by developing small nurseries that are protected by transparent plastic sheets against the cold in January and February. In this way, the process from germination to maturity could perhaps be shortened by at least one month, and so the rice cultivation would fit more easily into the existing agricultural calendar.

I told my informants of my wish to start a pilot research in Netteboulou. They responded that an extensive regional research would soon be conducted by the wife of the vice director. When I asked whether I could have access to her final report, the answer was that Sodefitex is an enterprise and that its interests had to be protected against competitors. So, the prospect for cooperation was not very favourable.

Farmers thoughts on a new scheme in Netteboulou

In the same month, June 1988, some of my informants, among whom the leader of the failed irrigation project, made an appeal to me to visit a place in the bush with them called Sayeko. This area is a treeless basin that, according

to them, contains water all year-round with high levels after inundation from the River Gambia, gradually lowering during the dry season. During this visit (at the end of June, and thus at the end of the dry season), I indeed saw an apparently large surface covered with water and water plants. The top soil near the water was very slippery and, according to my interlocutors, very fertile. They estimated the surface of the basin at about 20 to 30 hectares. The distance to the village was about four kilometres. Many informants, some important members of the founding family included, saw this spot as a more suitable place for irrigated agriculture than the location chosen at the time by Piso. All my informants automatically presupposed the use of a pump. Several of them also spoke of a tractor with a plough, needed to facilitate the tillage of the heavy soil there.

However, in a later conversation in June 1988 with the president of the rice growers some questions arose. Assuming that the soil was fertile, would it be possible to construct reservoirs and dams with gates, in order to catch as much water as possible from the inundated river and to store it? Would it be possible to distribute water using gravity, i.e. without a pump? Or is it possible to practice recession agriculture, following the level of the water, as done in the flood plains of the River Senegal? If that is possible, how would the plain be subdivided and what criteria would be used to assign the plots? What kind of crops would be most suited to the soil and wanted by the people? As we were both unable to answer these questions, we came to the conclusion that, whichever solution was chosen, a pilot investigation by a multi-disciplinary team of scientists (at least a cultural anthropologist, an irrigation expert and a soil scientist) would be necessary.

In the final research proposal, I made no reference to this conversation with the president of the rice growers. The reasons for this were that it concerned only one informant, and that all other informants, and even the president himself on other occasions, automatically assumed there would be a motorized pump available. So the president's ideas did not seem very relevant, although I now regret not having integrated these questions into the research proposal to discuss them with agricultural engineers and other experts. Even more so given the rise, some years later, of what was called the use and management of water retaining basins (*bassins de retention).*

Lidesco

In October 1988, I finished the first written version of the research proposal. Slightly modified versions followed, also a short one in French. I had already written a provisional paper about Netteboulou and its agricultural system, and another about irrigation projects of different scales in Senegal. When I explained I was short of time, Lidesco's research manager, Mrs. Martine Kret, offered to integrate these papers into a coherent research proposal that could be interesting for the agricultural engineers of Euroconsult, and could meet with their approval. Although the emphasis on the village study of Netteboulou was maintained, the proposal as a whole was upgraded to a regional study of the area along the River Gambia under the title: "Proposal for research on the possibility of small-scale irrigated rice cultivation in the department of Tambacounda in eastern Senegal, and for a pilot project on irrigated rice cultivation in the village of Netteboulou" (my translation). This Lidesco proposal also created room for the study of governmental agricultural policies. All this was an understandable extension, in order to get the approval and cooperation of the agricultural engineers. A proposal for only one village probably is not attractive for engineers engaged in development cooperation. One sometimes has to make concessions in order to achieve his goal.

This preparatory research at the regional level should be carried out by a multi-disciplinary team of two anthropologists and an irrigation expert according to the Lidesco proposal.

The research in Netteboulou would have two phases. The objective of the first phase would be: "to explore the various possibilities for, and the design of a village irrigation project which would be in tune with the ideas and needs of the local population". In the second phase, the design would be executed and tested, both in close cooperation with the local population. If the irrigation project in Netteboulou proved successful, and if there were demonstrable needs in other villages along the River Gambia, a third phase would follow, in which the design, adapted to local circumstances, could be executed in these villages as well.

The future irrigation project in Netteboulou should be "in tune with the ideas and needs of the local population". This means that the irrigated rice cultivation would have to respect the exigencies of the existing, rain-fed agriculture and animal husbandry, and that the new project had to reckon with only one rice campaign per year. It further means that the rice production must be primarily directed at household consumption rather than selling on

the market. In addition, it means that the financial costs for the farmers must be low. Finally, local ideas and knowledge with regard to possible terrains and soils, their spatial organization and the organisation of the farmers group must be taken into account.

Is such an irrigation scheme feasible in Netteboulou? The answer should be given by a multidisciplinary team comprising an agricultural engineer, a soil expert and a cultural anthropologist.

Agricultural engineers from Euroconsult

On May 11 1989, my two colleagues from Lidesco and I had a conversation with three agricultural engineers from Euroconsult. Their written and oral comments were disappointing for the Leiden anthropologists. What the engineers wanted first of all was research in order to find the "decisive factors for failure" of the Piso schemes. They also wanted FSR (Farming Systems Research) over a large area to see whether or not there were enough suitable sites along the River Gambia, whether the agricultural calendar of the different populations leaves enough room for irrigated cultivation, and whether or not the farmers really did want to cultivate rice. According to them, the Senegalese authorities at regional and national level had to be more involved. We had to know their attitude towards irrigated rice production: did it fit into the government's development policies? The Lidesco proposal, they said, certainly offered very interesting anthropological information but was already so comprehensive that it would be superfluous to include an anthropologist in the multi-disciplinary team. As one of the engineers wrote, "the proposal is very general and vague, originating more from the minds of the members of the Leiden department than from Senegalese dynamics" (my translation).

In sum, the differences between the engineers and myself appeared to be unbridgeable. They wanted large research projects from the beginning (research into the failure of all Piso projects; regional FSR; and research into the governmental policies and juridical regulations with regard to agriculture, land tenure, and water use) and, possibly, a pilot project in Netteboulou but then without an anthropologist.

I simply wanted a small-scale scheme for Netteboulou. My central question was to know whether or not it would be feasible to create a small-scale scheme for irrigated rice cultivation, with only one campaign per year during the dry

season, mainly for household consumption in the rainy season, and with an acceptable level of costs for the farmers. If such a scheme was successful, more villages could follow the example of Netteboulou in a spontaneous distribution process. Given these, in my view, enormous differences between the engineer's and my approach, I decided to withdraw from further talks with Euroconsult and Lidesco.

A local NGO: Caritas Tambacounda

On June 27, 1989, I spoke to the director of a Catholic non-governmental organization called Caritas Tambacounda. He kindly listened to what I told him about Netteboulou, about the seasonal food shortage and the pitiable failure of the Piso schemes. I explained to him that many farmers in Netteboulou still wanted a scheme to reduce food shortages, but then a technically better scheme, with less costs for the farmers. To design such a scheme a pilot investigation had to take place, carried out by a multi-disciplinary team. I asked him whether, as a local NGO, Caritas would consider supporting me in acquiring funds for this pilot research with the Dutch Ministry of Development Cooperation and with Dutch NGOs. He advised me to prepare two documents: 1) a decree by the Rural Council of Netteboulou in which the basin of Sayeko would officially be reserved for the group of rice growers in the village; and 2) an official request from the board of the rice growers for a pilot study (see documents 10.1 and 10.2 at the end of this chapter). At the end of the conversation, he encouraged me: "why not continue where others have failed?".

On November 30, 1989, I sent him a short, provisional research proposal in French and asked him to start the preliminary deliberations within the context of Caritas. In a letter of January 8 1990, he responded that he had sought contact with the technical director of Sodefitex, who had presented him a review of, as he wrote, "meaningful facts": "not only had the people of Netteboulou not paid back their credits, they also never had shown any gesture of good will. They do not have the will to take their destiny in their own hands and to take care of themselves, financially nor in alimentary respect". His conclusion: "it is less expensive to buy them trucks with rice than to let them work for it". He called this information "not very promising for the future", but said "that should not hinder me from undertaking the research and to succeed where others have failed".

Cebemo: Catholic organization for development cooperation

In December 1989, I made contact with Cebemo, a Dutch, Catholic, non-governmental organization for co-financing development projects. Cebemo had a long-standing relationship with Caritas Senegal and partly financed several projects by Caritas Tambacounda. After an initially positive reaction to my research proposal, the responsible Cebemo officer explained to me that she first had to consult Caritas Tambacounda, which was their local supervisor and controller. The answer came in a letter, dated June 8, 1990, from the director: Cebemo could not deal with my research proposal, because their local counterpart, Caritas Tambacounda, did not want to support the research proposal. The written motivation of the director of Caritas Tambacounda was added. In this letter the director of Caritas refers to me as "Mr. Van den Breemer … dazzled by optimism, notwithstanding my attempts to dissuade him". The refusal of the Caritas director to support my proposal for a pilot study appeared to be based on a combination of three ideas or images. Firstly, he presents Sodefitex as a well-organized, well-equipped organization with a long and fruitful experience in the region. If such a powerful and efficient organization had not been able to achieve an identical irrigation project with the same population, why carry out a new pilot investigation? Second idea: the characteristics of the population of Netteboulou. There reigns dissension among them. They show no initiative to take their destiny into their own hands. They prefer to receive help instead of working for it. The village is highly politicized. In the villagers' view, political relationships deliver more food, in the form of aid, than farm work could do. Third idea: why bring in strangers (i.e. researchers from The Netherlands, without practical experience in the region) to repeat within the same population a plan that had already failed?

When, by chance, I discussed Caritas' rejection with one of the teachers of the Catholic primary school in Tambacounda, he said he was not at all surprised. He explained that the director of Sodefitex was a devout Catholic who regularly attended to the mess on Sundays. As director of Sodefitex, he would render important services to the Catholic Mission, including the transport of construction materials and spare parts for the cars. No wonder, then, that the director of Caritas wanted to stay friends with the director of Sodefitex, according to my informant.

After my return from Senegal in August 1990, I sent a letter to Cebemo (dated September 13), in which I requested a conversation, in order to restore the "one-sided and misleading image of Sodefitex and the village of Netteboulou",

presented by the director of Caritas Tambacounda. This discussion never took place, due to restructuring within Cebemo. Finally, I wrote a letter to the new responsible officer, dated November 19. Here follows a summary of this letter. I started by pointing out that an emancipation process was taking place in Netteboulou, in which the former slave descendants were trying to free themselves from the mastery of the noble founding family. One way that the founding family maintained their power was exploiting the seasonal food shortage of many of the slave families. This shortage compels poor slave families to work on the farms of wealthy families in order to earn some money or food. For the poor households, this means a withdrawal of labour from their own agricultural process at its most crucial moments, with, consequently, a lesser harvest and ultimately another food shortage in the following rainy season. For wealthy households, the seasonal food shortage means maintenance of a pool of labour. Now, a small-scale project for irrigated rice cultivation in the dry season, accessible for all households, would abolish, or at least diminish, this process of withdrawal of labour from the poor households. The availability of self-grown rice during the rainy season would liberate many poor households from the need to work on the farms of wealthier households.

After having presented this image of the socio-economic interrelationships in the village of Netteboulou, I continued my letter by discussing the image of Sodefitex. I wrote that the farmers of Netteboulou tell another story than the director of Caritas Tambacounda. According to them, the irrigation scheme, constructed by a subsidiary of Sodefitex, had technical defects (soils pervious to water; terrain not well levelled, loss of water from the canals), leading to extra hours of functioning of the pump and to extra costs for fuel and motor oil. Moreover, the site was chosen without consulting the farmers. The risks of the pump breaking down and of a bad harvest were entirely the farmers' responsibility. Of the 17 village schemes constructed under Sodefitex supervision, 16 schemes failed. Sodefitex blamed the farmers exclusively for this failure. When I asked for a copy of an evaluation study, the vice director responded that Sodefitex is an enterprise and therefore the report was not accessible to competitors.

With this information in mind, it should be clear to Cebemo why I viewed the director of Caritas' characterization of Netteboulou and Sodefitex as one-sided and misleading. His letter only reflects the view of Sodefitex's management, not that of the local population. The author also speaks of dissension between the villagers. No wonder, there is an emancipation process going on! The noble founding family is, unsurprisingly resisting this

change. The local population is described as lazy and lacking initiative, but the Caritas letter does not mention that the founding family is suppressing any individual initiative that does not strengthen their power. In short, Caritas does not take into account the views of the local population and instead follows exclusively the top down interpretation of Sodefitex. Another example of the Church having sided with the Capital, I concluded.

Yet another letter arrived at Cebemo, dated January 3, 1991, from the president of the board of irrigated rice cultivators in Netteboulou. He makes an appeal to Cebemo to support them in realizing a new irrigation scheme. With regard to Sodefitex, he writes that this organization is more worried about their own financial profit than about the interests of the farmers. "This society avoids taking any risks as much as possible". He calls Sodefitex's choice of location for the earlier scheme injudicious and refers to other errors made during the establishment of the scheme. He asks whether the director of Caritas is perhaps dazzled by Sodefitex and its capital. I must admit here that he, the president of the rice growers, wrote his letter after being informed by me about the preceding correspondence.

Although Cebemo did not give a written response to either letters, it is likely that they took their contents seriously. During an evaluation mission to several projects in Senegal in March 1991, the responsible officer personally visited Netteboulou and indeed spoke with local leaders and others. In June 1991, several informants told me that they greatly appreciated his visit to the village. Subsequently, I heard nothing more of Cebemo.

Conclusions

Clearly, my foray into development country did not produce the intended results. My idea to create, together with the people of Netteboulou, a new, viable irrigation scheme there failed to gain traction. There would be no planned intervention and no close cooperation with the villagers in realising a new scheme. However, in spite of this failure of my intentions, I learned about the ways development organizations think and act and, of course, I learned a lot about myself, too.

During this time, I encountered members of at least two organizations, who were thinking in terms of large-scale research and development, namely Lidesco and Euroconsult. They primarily wanted studies at regional and national level in order to see whether or not rice cultivation in small-scale

irrigation schemes in the area along the River Gambia would be spatially possible, whether or not it would be economically viable and whether it was in tune with government policies. One had to be sure that the future investments would deliver an optimal financial return. The establishment of a number of schemes would be wholly dependent on the research results.

Coherent, understandable, splendid! However, confronted with this large-scale engineers' approach, I became aware that I had a completely different idea about the course and the goals of a possible project. Given the overwhelming enthusiasm of the people of Netteboulou, the leading family included, for a new and better scheme, I considered this village a kind of laboratory, where modalities of spatial and social organization could be discussed with the farmers, and possibly tested in close collaboration with them. If a successful formula emerged, a process of spontaneous distribution to other villages would follow, I thought. In this way, the seasonal food shortages in the area could be prevented, or at least diminished, while only modest quantities of water would be withdrawn from the River Gambia on account of the small scale of irrigated soils.

In the end, I did not see any room for my approach with my engineering interlocutors. While they had envisaged a large and expensive research project with, eventually, the realization of a number of schemes in return for huge investments, which had to be remunerative, I only wanted a small pilot research together with the local farmers, in order to see whether or not it was possible to combat the local seasonal food shortages by controlling the water supply. Large-scale research at regional and national level could perhaps be one of the next steps.

I also met two non-governmental organizations: the local Catholic Caritas Tambacounda and the Dutch Catholic NGO, Cebemo. There appeared to be a long-standing interrelationship between Caritas and Cebemo. Caritas Tambacounda was dependent on Cebemo for the partial financing of several of its projects. Cebemo, in turn, needed reliable local organizations to supervise their projects on the spot.

Initially, I had an encouraging conversation with the director of Caritas Tambacounda. However, after I sent him the provisional written research proposal with a request for his support, he consulted with the technical director of Sodefitex, a move that came as a surprise for me. The outcome of this consultation was a refusal to contribute in any way to the proposed pilot research. Their arguments were mainly based on a negative image of the

farmers of Netteboulou as lazy profiteers without any initiative or willingness to take their destiny into their own hands.

At about the same time, I had made contact with the head office of Cebemo. At the end of an open and friendly discussion, I was told that their final decision would depend on the reaction of their local counterpart in Tambacounda. A few months later, I received a response: they could not accept my proposal for a pilot research in Netteboulou, because their regular local partner, Caritas Tambacounda, had refused to participate. The letter of motivation from Caritas Tambacounda was included. In this letter, Sodefitex was represented as well-organized, expert and experienced, so why carry out a new research? Moreover, the farmers of Netteboulou were described as being politicized, indolent and quarrelsome, so why work with this kind of people? Finally, the researchers from Leiden were depicted as strangers without experience in the region and as greedy for funds to finance research projects by Leiden anthropologists.

In my view, Sodefitex's view was decisive in this matter, firstly with regard to Caritas Tambacounda's rejection of the proposal and subsequently with respect to the decision by Cebemo. From the very beginning, in June 1988, Sodefitex had signalled no willingness to communicate and had represented itself to me as an enterprise that needed to protect its interests against competitors.

Following Cebemo's disappointing response, I made a final effort to convince the organization. I sent them a letter setting out my version of what was happening in Netteboulou and about the functioning of Sodefitex, concluding that once again the Church had chosen in favour of the Capital. At my request, the president of the group of rice growers of Netteboulou had also sent a letter to Cebemo pleading for a new irrigation scheme, and describing Sodefitex as an organization that not only had made errors, but, moreover, transferred all risks to the farmers. Cebemo did not answer either letter, but did send a representative to Netteboulou to talk with farmers. However, after this visit, nothing more happened with respect to irrigated agriculture for Netteboulou.

Although one could possibly regard this chapter as a retaliation after many years, I have decided to include it. Firstly, I still believe in my and the villagers' ideas, at least within the context of that time, and I still regret that these ideas were never given a chance to be tested. Moreover, I find it funny to show the kinds of unexpected and time-consuming complications that a socially

committed anthropologist may become embroiled in. Finally, although I am clearly blaming others for this failure, I must, of course, admit my own role in this episode. Frustrated by a chronic lack of time and preparation, I did not defend my case strongly enough against the direction of Sodefitex and the engineers from Euroconsult. However, even if I had been able to do so, this would not have been a guarantee of success, because it concerns here deeply anchored views and interests.

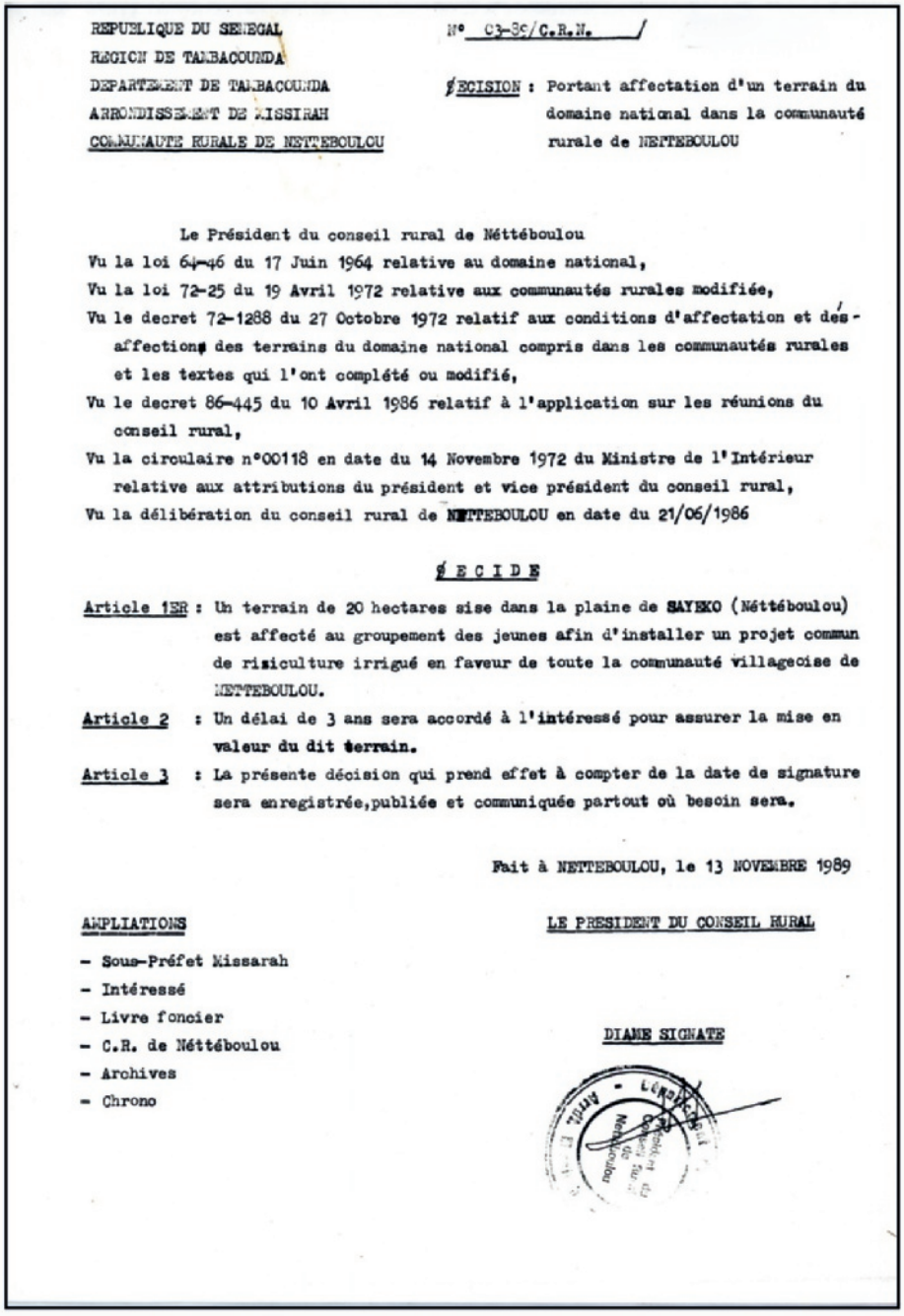
Postscript

When I visited Netteboulou in January 2012, to my surprise, a number of informants told me that an enormous project for irrigated agriculture was being prepared as part of the so-called Plan REVA *(Plan Retour Vers l'Agriculture, or Plan Back to Agriculture)*. This Plan REVA, a joint venture by the governments of Senegal, Spain and Morocco, had started in Senegal in 2006. Its general aims include combatting food insecurity and unemployment in rural areas and, in this way, reducing the emigration of young workers to the cities and to Europe. The project wanted the young farmers to cultivate vegetables such as capsicums, tomatoes, cabbages, onions, potatoes, carrots etc., and wanted to sell the produce to merchants at local or even international markets.

The first activities of the project near Netteboulou started in 2010. In 2011, a terrain of 60 hectares, at a distance of about four kilometres from the village of Netteboulou, had been stripped of its trees, bushes and roots by young men from Netteboulou and neighbouring villages, for a promised salary of 2,000 frs CFA (about 3 euros) per day. When I arrived, in January 2012, two buildings and a water tower, as well as the main access roads had already been constructed. Also, a well-protected nursery was already there. I also saw enormous piles of tubes, with different diameters, for trickle irrigation. What still had to be done was the levelling of the terrain, the placing of the tubes and the construction of small roads, etc. The pump had been delivered but was not yet placed in the river. The project was awaiting tractors, cars and machines to till the soil and to transport inputs and outputs.

So, the small project that I once had in mind no longer seems to make sense. However, something may still go wrong with this big project. For example, I met one of the farmers participating in this venture. He had been involved in the deforestation of the terrain for two months in 2011. Nine months later, he had still not received any salary, because the employer responsible

for the deforestation had suddenly disappeared, taking all the money with him. My informant assured me that this had happened to many other young workers from Netteboulou. Another informant explained to me that this is common practice in the large projects: the management divides the tasks and responsibilities among different employers. Once the employer's part of the job is completed, the employer concerned disappears, and the other employers refuse to take any responsibility. How can one expect honest behaviour from people after such personal experiences?



REPUBLIQUE DU SENEGAL
REGION DE TAMBACOUNDA
DEPARTEMENT DE TAMBACOUNDA
ARRONDISSEMENT DE KISSIRAH
COMMUNAUTE RURALE DE NETTEBOULOU

N° 03-89/C.R.N.

DECISION : Portant affectation d'un terrain du domaine national dans la communauté rurale de NETTEBOULOU

Le Président du conseil rural de Néttéboulou
Vu la loi 64-46 du 17 Juin 1964 relative au domaine national,
Vu la loi 72-25 du 19 Avril 1972 relative aux communautés rurales modifiée,
Vu le decret 72-1288 du 27 Octobre 1972 relatif aux conditions d'affectation et des-affections des terrains du domaine national compris dans les communautés rurales et les textes qui l'ont complété ou modifié,
Vu le decret 86-445 du 10 Avril 1986 relatif à l'application sur les réunions du conseil rural,
Vu la circulaire n°00118 en date du 14 Novembre 1972 du Ministre de l'Intérieur relative aux attributions du président et vice président du conseil rural,
Vu la délibération du conseil rural de NETTEBOULOU en date du 21/06/1986

D E C I D E

Article 1ER : Un terrain de 20 hectares sise dans la plaine de SAYEKO (Néttéboulou) est affecté au groupement des jeunes afin d'installer un projet commun de rizi culture irrigué en faveur de toute la communauté villageoise de NETTEBOULOU.

Article 2 : Un délai de 3 ans sera accordé à l'intéressé pour assurer la mise en valeur du dit terrain.

Article 3 : La présente décision qui prend effet à compter de la date de signature sera enregistrée, publiée et communiquée partout où besoin sera.

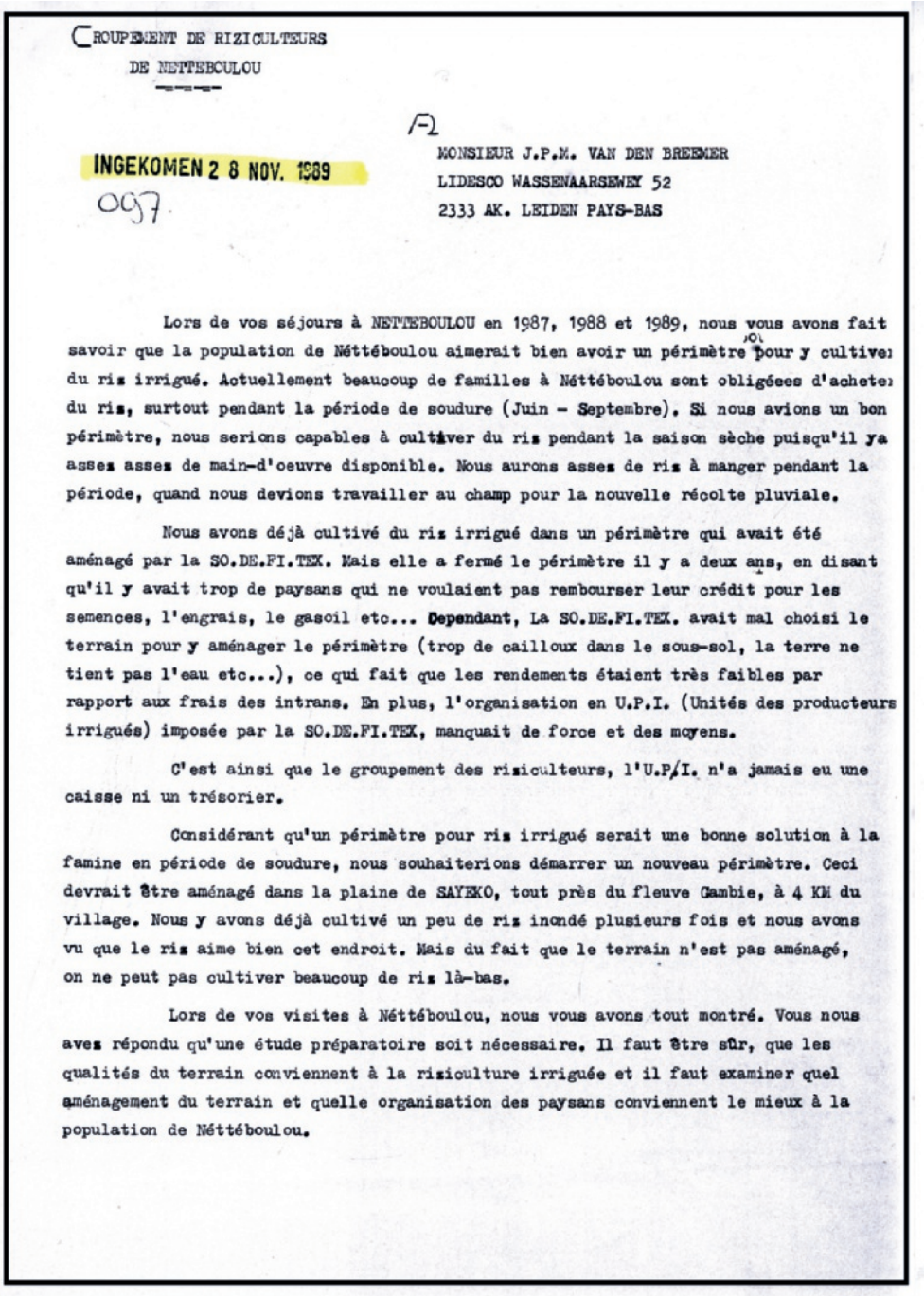
Fait à NETTEBOULOU, le 13 NOVEMBRE 1989

AMPLIATIONS
- Sous-Préfet Kissarah
- Intéressé
- Livre foncier
- C.R. de Néttéboulou
- Archives
- Chrono

LE PRESIDENT DU CONSEIL RURAL

DIANE SIGNATE

Document 10.1
Decision by the council of the rural municipality of Netteboulou to reserve a terrain of 20 hectares at Sayeko for an alternative irrigation scheme, November 13, 1989



CROUPEMENT DE RIZICULTEURS
DE NETTEBOULOU

F1

INGEKOMEN 2 8 NOV. 1989
097

MONSIEUR J.P.M. VAN DEN BREEMER
LIDESCO WASSENAARSEWEG 52
2333 AK. LEIDEN PAYS-BAS

Lors de vos séjours à NETTEBOULOU en 1987, 1988 et 1989, nous vous avons fait savoir que la population de Néttéboulou aimerait bien avoir un périmètre pour y cultiver du riz irrigué. Actuellement beaucoup de familles à Néttéboulou sont obligéees d'acheter du riz, surtout pendant la période de soudure (Juin - Septembre). Si nous avions un bon périmètre, nous serions capables à cultiver du riz pendant la saison sèche puisqu'il ya assez assez de main-d'oeuvre disponible. Nous aurons assez de riz à manger pendant la période, quand nous devions travailler au champ pour la nouvelle récolte pluviale.

Nous avons déjà cultivé du riz irrigué dans un périmètre qui avait été aménagé par la SO.DE.FI.TEX. Mais elle a fermé le périmètre il y a deux ans, en disant qu'il y avait trop de paysans qui ne voulaient pas rembourser leur crédit pour les semences, l'engrais, le gasoil etc... Dependant, La SO.DE.FI.TEX. avait mal choisi le terrain pour y aménager le périmètre (trop de cailloux dans le sous-sol, la terre ne tient pas l'eau etc...), ce qui fait que les rendements étaient très faibles par rapport aux frais des intrans. En plus, l'organisation en U.P.I. (Unités des producteurs irrigués) imposée par la SO.DE.FI.TEX, manquait de force et des moyens.

C'est ainsi que le groupement des rizicultеurs, l'U.P.I. n'a jamais eu une caisse ni un trésorier.

Considérant qu'un périmètre pour riz irrigué serait une bonne solution à la famine en période de soudure, nous souhaiterions démarrer un nouveau périmètre. Ceci devrait être aménagé dans la plaine de SAYEKO, tout près du fleuve Gambie, à 4 KM du village. Nous y avons déjà cultivé un peu de riz inondé plusieurs fois et nous avons vu que le riz aime bien cet endroit. Mais du fait que le terrain n'est pas aménagé, on ne peut pas cultiver beaucoup de riz là-bas.

Lors de vos visites à Néttéboulou, nous vous avons tout montré. Vous nous aves répondu qu'une étude préparatoire soit nécessaire. Il faut être sûr, que les qualités du terrain conviennent à la rizículture irriguée et il faut examiner quel aménagement du terrain et quelle organisation des paysans conviennent le mieux à la population de Néttéboulou.

Document 10.2

Request by the board of the rice growers in Netteboulou for an exploratory research into the possibilities of an alternative irrigation scheme, November 13, 1989

Après votre départ de Néttéboulou, une assemblée générale a eu lieu à la place du village à la suite de laquelle tout le monde a donné son avis favorable à la création de ce nouveau projet puis a ainsi installer un bureau.

Nous aimerions bien, et nous insistons même beaucoup qu'une telle étude de préparatoire soit entreprise par votre bureau LIDESCO de L'UNIVERSITE de LEIDEN au PAYS-BAS.

Fait à NETTEBOULOU, Le 13 NOVEMBRE 1989

PRESIDENT DU GROUPEMENT	VICE PRESIDENT	SECRETAIRE
BABA COULIBALY	DAOUDA DEMBELE	MOUSSA DEMBELE

Continuation of Document 10.2

PART III
Student research on use and conservation of natural resources

11

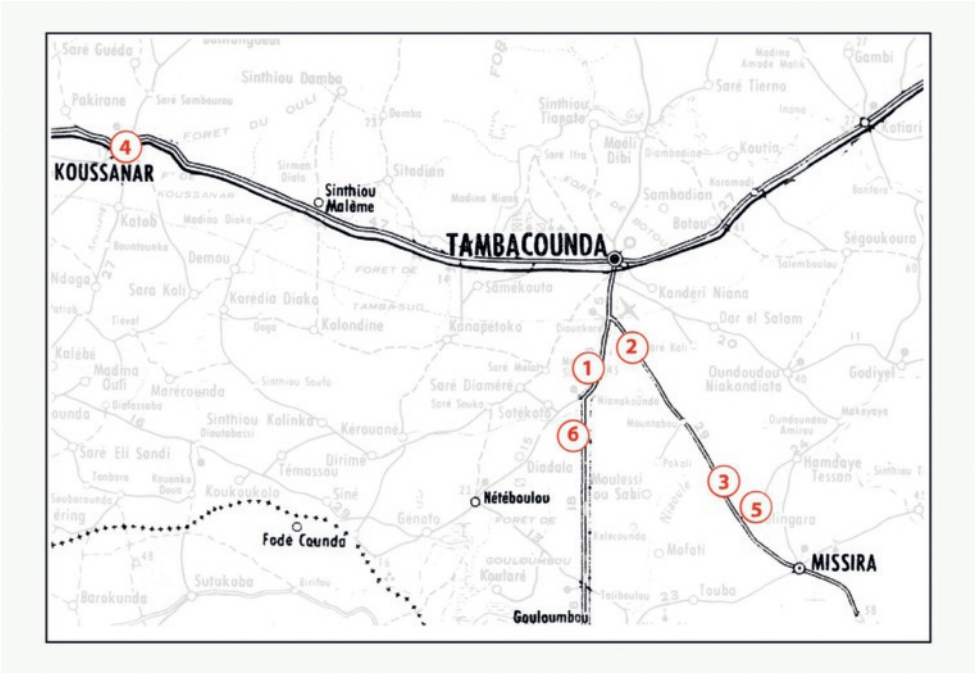
Farmer's views of commercial cotton cultivation in six villages in Tambacounda district

Since the early 1960s, one of the objectives of the agricultural policy of Senegal has been to diversify the agricultural export production. Within this context, the government decided to promote commercial cotton cultivation. This task was delegated, first to the French enterprise CFDT (*Compagnie Française pour le Développement des Textiles*) and then, in 1974, to the so-called semi-governmental organization Sodefitex (*Societé pour le Développement des Fibres Textiles*). Sodefitex was tasked with stimulating and supervising cotton cultivation by local farmers, and organizing the distribution of the necessary agricultural inputs as well as the buying up of the cotton produce. To achieve these ends, Sodefitex has been creating village cooperatives of cotton growers since 1979.

During previous research trainings, notably that of 1996, I had heard a lot of criticism from farmers concerning the cotton cultivation and the functioning of Sodefitex. Notwithstanding my earlier disappointing experiences with Sodefitex (see Chapter 10), I decided to offer cotton cultivation as a research theme to the students. I could recruit five students for the training of 1997, and one for that of 1998. This chapter is possible thanks to their efforts. Their names are Vera Docters van Leeuwen, Roelf Gravemeijer, Merel Hekker, Leonie van der Helm, Markwin van Helsdingen and Joost Merkx.

I selected six villages for this research (for their location see map 11.1). A general criterion was good accessibility during the rainy season. My second criterion related to the dominant ethnic group, because I had got the impression that Fula farmers were more enthusiastic cotton growers than their Mandinka colleagues. On this basis, I selected three villages of predominantly Fula (Peul) identity, namely Bourgou, Hamdalaye Pont and

Madina Dian; and two Mandinka villages, Dienkore Manfin and Sita Oule 2 (with Banandingding Diatta as village head). For the one student of 1998, I chose a large village (Koussanar) with clear Mandinka and Fula quarters.



Map 11.1

The six villages for the comparative study at farmer's views of commercial cotton cultivation

1 = Bourgou, 1997, Fula (Peul)
2 = Dienkore Manfin, 1997, Mandinka
3 = Hamdalaye Pont, 1997, Fula (Peul)
4 = Koussanar, 1998, Mandinka and Fula (Peul)
5 = Madina Dian,1997, Fula (Peul)
6 = Sita Oule Banandingding, 1997, Mandinka

All six students were tasked with conducting exploratory research in their respective village into the views in different social categories with regard to commercial cotton growing and the functioning of associated organizations (Sodefitex and local cooperatives). So, dependent on the distinctions they judged relevant, every student, guided by a checklist of discussion points, talked to farmers growing cotton and farmers who did not grow cotton, with members of the village founding family and of households established later, with members of wealthy households as well as poor people, with noble people as well as slave descendants, with men and women, etc. In addition,

they all observed, close-up, the agricultural activities of selected households (cotton-growing and not cotton-growing households) and discussed their observations with members of these households.

The students and I were handicapped by Sodefitex's refusal to cooperate. Newly arrived in their research villages, the students learned that Sodefitex had forbidden its agents from giving any information to them. Policy documents, reports and evaluations were also not accessible. So, the students could only learn about Sodefitex and its functioning through their interlocutors in the villages. Thus, in cases where information about Sodefitex is incomplete or incorrect, this may be the result of this refusal to communicate. That said, one of the students had friendly relations with the agent serving his village, right from the start, while another had a former agent among her informants.

This chapter is the result of a comparative study of the six student reports. The objective of this comparison was to find answers to the following questions:

1. how do people in the villages speak about and evaluate the cultivation of cotton in comparison with the cultivation of their other crops?
2. how do they judge the functioning of Sodefitex?
3. how do they see the functioning of their village cooperative?
4. why, in spite of so much criticism, do people continue to cultivate cotton and to cooperate with Sodefitex?

Before answering these questions, I will present some background information about the government's development policy and the role of Sodefitex in it, and about the approach of Sodefitex over time.

Development policy and Sodefitex's role

From 1963, the CFDT was allowed to start the promotion of commercial cotton cultivation in Senegal. In order to advance economic development more effectively, in the early 1970s, the Senegalese government divided the country into several agrarian or ecological zones. A specialized development organization was created for each zone, to which the regional development was entrusted on a contract basis. The so-called cotton zone (*zône cotonnière*) became the intervention territory for the CFDT (Achterstraat, 1984, 420; Ba, 1986, 229). This zone covers large parts of the regions of Kaolack, Kedougou, Kolda, Velingara and Tambacounda.

In 1974, the Senegalese branch of the CFDT was transformed into Sodefitex, which was presented as a semi-governmental organization, in which the CFDT would have a 20% share, while the Senegalese government would have the other 80% (Van Hoven, 1995, 57). The government charged Sodefitex with two tasks for the cotton zone, namely 1) the promotion of cotton production and commercialization, and 2) the advancement of rural and agricultural development. The second task is very broad. It implies the furtherance of food crop production (including horticulture and small-scale irrigated agriculture), animal husbandry and even literacy and healthcare (Achterstraat, 1984, 420). Thus, Sodefitex was more than just an interventionist organization solely for the promotion of cotton cultivation. It was meant to be a society for integrated rural development of the so-called cotton zone. However, although Sodefitex has undertaken many activities related to its second task, in practice, cotton production and commercialization have remained its principal concern with the other activities often playing a supporting role. Cotton has always been regarded as the mainstay for Sodefitex (Achterstraat, 1984, 420).

The promotion of cotton cultivation was very successful until the end of the 1970s. Subsequently, however, production began to decrease, albeit irregularly, and farmers began to withdraw from cotton cultivation (Ba, 1986, 237). According to Ba, this was due to: unfavourable rainfall, higher input costs, the labour-intensive nature of cotton growing and the lower profitability in comparison to the cultivation of groundnuts. Sodefitex reacted by taking several measures, such as raising the producer's price of cotton, introducing a credit system for agricultural equipment, establishment of local cooperatives since 1979 (the so-called ABP's: *Associations de Base à la Production*), and setting up a cotton festival every four years during which the best male and female cotton producers were honoured and rewarded (Ba, 1986, 237). In 1982, a record harvest was achieved. In 1992, the number of local cooperatives had grown to about 1,800, spread over the cotton zone (Van Hoven, 1995, 56–58).

However, in the 1980s, cotton cultivation was plagued by problems and in 1989 there was a serious conflict between the farmers and Sodefitex (Van Hoven, 1995, 57). Farmers from many villages complained about the high costs of the inputs and the low producer's price. Another large conflict occurred in 1996. Sodefitex was accused of having supplied poor quality insecticides, resulting in white fly attacking the cotton plants and, in turn, affecting the quantity and quality of that year's harvest. Consequently, the cooperatives requested an exemption from paying back the credits. Sodefitex responded negatively. At the end of a heated dispute, the cooperatives had

to accept repayment of the credits within a term of four years. If this did not happen, Sodefitex would exclude them from cotton cultivation by no longer supplying the requisites. Sodefitex excluded 32 cooperatives who had sold their cotton in The Gambia for a better producer's price.

Sodefitex's approach

In terms of the promotion of cotton cultivation (the first aim), Sodefitex supplied the necessary inputs for cotton growing on credit, initially to individual farmers in many villages, and later to local cooperatives. Among these inputs were: two kinds of chemical manure, two kinds of herbicide, three kinds of insecticide, and two kinds of cotton seeds, all offered in packages and priced per *corde* (i.e. a quarter of a hectare). These requisites were delivered on credit, just before the start of the agricultural season. The credits had to be repaid after the harvest, following the sale of the produce about six months later.

Also delivered on credit was agricultural equipment, such as several types of ploughs, three types of combined ploughing and sowing machines, a sowing machine with different types of disks that can be adjusted to the variety of seeds of other crops, different kinds of carts for transport, and pumps for insecticides and pesticides with protective masks and gloves, etc. The costs of this equipment had to be repaid by the farmers in four annual instalments.

In 1979, five years after its start, Sodefitex had begun to establish local cooperatives, the ABPs. These ABPs had boards with several members, for whom Sodefitex had financed job-specific training. In doing so, Sodefitex started to apply a policy of transferring responsibilities to the local cooperatives, while at the same time reducing its own costs (Achterstraat, 1984, 427). However, its agents (*encadreurs*) still had an important role to play in organizing and controlling the distribution among the farmers of the requisites and equipment they had ordered, and in the buying up of the cotton produce and the repayment of the loans by the individual farmers. This left less time for agricultural extension to the farmers. Therefore, from about 1988, Sodefitex wanted the local cooperatives to enter a second phase and become ABPCs (*Associations de Base des Producteurs Cotonniers*). Individual credits were replaced with collective loans to ABPC boards.

The transition to the second phase meant that many of the agents' tasks were transferred to the boards of these new-style cooperatives. These had to take full responsibility for ordering requisites and equipment with Sodefitex and, importantly, for estimating the credit-worthiness of their members. They had to exclude farmers or households who were judged not creditworthy. Next, they were responsible for the distribution of requisites and equipment delivered on credit by Sodefitex as well as for the collection and weighing of the cotton of all members, and finally for the payment to the members with the relevant deductions for their loans. All this became the responsibility of the ABPC boards.

Buying on credit from Sodefitex had always implied an obligation to sell the cotton harvest exclusively to Sodefitex, and to do so at the producer's price, as fixed by a general committee at Dakar. At the time of the ABPs, and before, it was very difficult for Sodefitex to enforce this obligation and to take action against individual cotton growers who sold their harvest for a better price, for example in The Gambia, and who then reported being unable to repay Sodefitex. With the transition to ABPC status, it was in the interest of the board and of the cooperative as a whole, to prevent individual members from selling their harvest through other channels than Sodefitex. Otherwise, the board would have a financial deficit and problems with Sodefitex. If an ABPC, for whatever reason, was unable to repay the aggregated credits, then it might be excluded from further credit and from delivery of requisites and equipment. This extreme measure is clearly a punishment, not only of the negligent or unreliable farmers, but also of those members performing well. In order to prevent such a situation, or to justify such a measure, Sodefitex made an appeal to the principle of communal guarantee (called *caution solidaire*). According to this principle, ABPC members would be responsible for each other's behaviour in the cotton production and commercialization. If some members of an ABPC misbehave or are confronted with misfortune in the production of cotton, it is the obligation of the board and of the cooperative as a whole to remedy the problem and to take on the debts of these individual members. Individual debts were the debt of the cooperative as a whole, and thus had to be paid back to Sodefitex by the board.

As I will show later in this chapter, many farmers did not agree with this principle of communal guarantee and there were initiatives to form smaller cooperatives comprising friends or family members. Sodefitex was not deaf to such initiatives and appeared willing to cooperate with such smaller cooperatives. Indeed, this became a point of discussion in 1997 and 1998.

With regard to the advancement of rural and agricultural development (second aim of Sodefitex), I will confine myself here to only two topics. Firstly, the literacy campaign set up by Sodefitex. This campaign had assumed large proportions and it was highly valued among the rural population. Sodefitex had many young men trained to be instructors. They, in turn, had given literacy training to men and women in many villages in Pulaar (Peul) from 1982, and in Mandinka and Wolof since 1988 (Van Hoven, 1999, 238). Not only local interests, but also those of Sodefitex were served by these literacy trainings. Without at least some villagers being literate, the functioning of the ABPs and, since 1988, the transfer of so many tasks to the ABPC boards would have been impossible.

The second topic, under the heading of "advancement of rural development by Sodefitex", is taken from Van Hoven (1995, 63; and 1999, 239–243). He writes that Sodefitex, in its extension booklets, not only gives technical instructions with regard to cotton cultivation, but also directs farmers to contribute to Senegal's development in a free and equal way, and through hard work. In these booklets, Sodefitex seems to be preaching a nationalist and religious ideology. By presenting hard and diligent work as sacred, Sodefitex tries to further the labour ethos and individual farmers' feeling of accountability. Moreover, the local cooperatives are represented as *daara*, groups of young, hard-working and equal Muslim believers. During the cotton festival of 1992, the "king and the queen of the cotton" were honoured by traditional praise singers (*griots*), in the presence of President Abdou Diouf, for their hard work. The "king of cotton" was rewarded by President Diouf with a pilgrimage to Mecca, financed by Sodefitex! Van Hoven (1999, 242) interprets these phenomena as "an interesting effort to incorporate Sufi modes of religious consciousness into a nationalist scheme". In particular, the relationship between the spiritual leader (*marabout*) and his disciple (*talibe*) was integrated into a nationalist discourse and translated by Sodefitex into a partnership approach. Sodefitex tries to represent its relationship with the individual cotton grower as a sacred relation between the master and his disciple, who has to work hard and must respect the rules of Sodefitex to reach paradise. Unfortunately, none of my students mentioned this ideological aspect of Sodefitex's approach. Either they missed it, or this ideology did not play a significant role in the villages around Tambacounda.

So far, I have presented my selection of background information about Sodefitex's approach over the years. Now, we will attempt to answer the four questions formulated in the introduction of this chapter.

Farmer's views of cotton cultivation

The comparison of local views of cotton cultivation in 1997 and 1998, as described in the six reports, reveals an ambiguous attitude. On the one hand, mostly the wealthy farmers say that they regard the cultivation of cotton as an extra opportunity to boost their financial revenues, as long as the weather and market conditions are favourable. On the other hand, all informants described the cultivation of cotton as being laborious and labour-intensive; as costly and requiring significant financial investment; and as economically risky. Many of them also called it a threat to the health of people and cattle.

The laborious and labour-intensive character of cotton cultivation was explained as follows: Firstly, the farms must be divided into blocks of 50 x 50 metres (called *corde*), and the boundaries well-demarcated. Immediately after a good rainfall, the field has to be ploughed and sown, and herbicide sprayed the same day. The sowing has to be done with an animal-drawn machine, in lines with a distance of one metre between the rows. After the plants have sprouted, several rounds of weeding are needed, between the rows with a machine, and in the rows by hand. The weeding is especially labour-intensive for those farmers who, for financial reasons, did not use herbicides, or who sowed by hand in order to economize on seed. Meanwhile, chemical manure must be applied twice. From the moment the plants come into bud, they have to be sprayed with insecticide every two weeks until the harvest, i.e. about five or six times. Finally, by far the most labour-intensive activity is the harvesting. This must be carried out by hand. Cotton growers compete to recruit labourers, often children, for this work (see photos 11.1–11.3).

A big financial investment by the farmer is needed if one wants to grow cotton in the way Sodefitex prescribes. He must buy, on credit, improved seed, herbicides, artificial manure, insecticides, pumps and, in order to attain a certain level of production, agricultural equipment such as ploughs, sowing- and weeding-machines and carts for transport. He also needs draught animals. Farmers who cannot afford to buy equipment, or who have no draught animals, may borrow these from other farmers, but must wait until the other has finished his activities. This often means that the sowing and the weeding are delayed and, consequently, their cotton plants must grow under less favourable conditions.

All farmers speak about cotton cultivation as being economically risky. The cotton plant is very sensitive to drought and needs precise weather conditions: much rain during the growing phase and much sunshine in

the flowering phase. When these conditions are not well met, the resulting harvest may be disappointing. Moreover, the plants may be attacked by several kinds of insects, notwithstanding the use of insecticides. Moreover, illness and a decreasing labour force may hit the farmer's household. The combination of such circumstances may, given the financial investment already made, lead to a harvest that is insufficient to repay all the credits and therefore to a situation of debt. Only the wealthier households, who have many workers and agricultural equipment, or have enough money to hire labourers, may withstand the risk of a bad harvest.

All farmers realize that the spraying of herbicides and insecticides poses health risks for people and animals. The poison may be breathed in or consumed after it has penetrated crops, leaves or herbs.

Besides this general discourse about the cotton and its cultivation, there is also the evaluation of cotton cultivation in relation to that of other crops. No household in our six villages specialized in growing cotton exclusively, and all households combined it with the cultivation of the usual crops such as millet, sorghum, maize, groundnuts, etc. all of which are said to be much safer and less labour-intensive than cotton. Generally, farmers understand that the cotton cultivation requires the withdrawal of labour and soil from the cultivation of other crops, and that cotton cultivation competes with that of food crops for time and energy. They explained that, when a household cultivates too large an area of cotton, and if the harvest is disappointing, they may end up not only with debts, but also with a food shortage. This risk is particularly acute for small and poor households. These are hardly able to produce sufficient food and they do not like to cultivate crops that cannot be consumed and that are more labour-intensive and precarious than other crops. However, for farmers with sufficient labour, equipment or money at their disposal, the cultivation of cotton is an acceptable risk.

Cotton cultivation also withdraws labour from the cultivation of groundnuts, which has long been the favourite cash crop of the Mandinkas. This crop is said to be less labour-intensive and less precarious than cotton. Moreover, groundnuts may be used for household consumption and can be sold as well, while their straw can serve as fodder or can also be sold. Cotton, by contrast, is not for household consumption and can only be sold. This is one of the reasons why Mandinka household heads continue their groundnut cultivation and restrict their cotton acreage.

To summarize, for the wealthier households, cotton cultivation is a welcome extra option for earning money. They are able to cope with the risk of a bad cotton harvest. For the small and poor households who want to try this option, failure has serious consequences: not only a debt, but also a food shortage and no money to buy food. As one of my informants once told me: *"c'est le coton qui a tout gâté"* (it is the cotton that has spoiled everything).

Farmer's views of Sodefitex's activities

In all six villages, people generally had a positive view of Sodefitex's literacy campaign. Members of the ABPC boards often spoke in a rather positive way about Sodefitex, too. The Mandinka village of Sita Oule Banading, for example, had hardly any critical comments about Sodefitex. However, in the five other villages, the majority of informants (in 1997 and 1998) were highly critical of Sodefitex on several points, a selection of which I present below.

The producer's price for cotton was regarded as too low in relation to the input prices, which were found too high. Input prices were said to increase much faster than the producer's price for cotton. Moreover, there was a widespread conviction that Sodefitex was rolling all the risks of cotton cultivation on the producers. When the harvest is a failure because of circumstances beyond the influence of the farmers (bad rains, insects, illness), Sodefitex still insists that credits must be repaid. As an informant in the Mandinka village of Dienkore Manfin said: "Sodefitex knows no compassion".

Next, there is a lot of criticism concerning the delivery of requisites and equipment by Sodefitex. Contrary to its own advice to use masks and gloves when spraying herbicides and insecticides, Sodefitex did not furnish these protective means, or not sufficiently. People felt that Sodefitex did not care about the health of the farmers. Concerning the delivery of equipment, it was often the case that the numbers ordered by the ABPC boards were not supplied. For example, in 1997, five farmers in the Mandinka village of Dienkore Manfin had ordered a cart, but only three carts were delivered, leaving the board of the ABPC with a serious distribution problem. The record for the Fula village of Hamdalaye Pont that same year was eight carts ordered, but only four supplied; and 15 *houe sines* (ploughing machines) requested and only three delivered.

A fundamental criticism was that Sodefitex had acquired a monopoly position. On account of governmental policy, Sodefitex was the only supplier

of agricultural requisites and equipment on credit. Farmers only had access to these means of production, and to credit, through the obligatory membership of the local ABPC. Moreover, in return for the credit, they had to sell their cotton to their ABPC, which then had to sell it exclusively to Sodefitex at a price fixed by a committee in Dakar. Sale to other trade partners was forbidden on penalty of exclusion from the delivery of seeds and all other inputs by Sodefitex. In July 1997, farmers in the Fula village of Madina Dian had started a GIE (*groupement d'intérêt économique*, a voluntary association of entrepreneurs, recognized as such by the State) in order to obtain insecticides and herbicides directly from Senchim, a chemical factory in Senegal, and, in turn, to break the monopoly of Sodefitex. Informants reported 70 villages in the Missirah *arrondissement* doing the same. According to the student's report, the farmers considered Sodefitex as a state apparatus imposing rules from the top and punishing disobedient farmers and ABPCs. Extension had degenerated into outright inspection to prevent farmers from using the cotton requisites for other crops, and from selling their cotton produce to other trade partners than Sodefitex.

A last point of severe criticism concerned the principle of communal guarantee (*caution solidaire*). The transition to the status of ABPC implied that Sodefitex no longer delivered goods on credit to individual cotton growers, but instead granted credit to ABPC boards. This fact that Sodefitex gives only collective credit, and pays the boards for the aggregated cotton harvest minus the collective credit, means that all problems with regard to the distribution and repayment of individual credits are transferred to the ABPCs and their boards. Thus, when some members, for whatever reason, produced a quantity of cotton that was not sufficient to repay their credit, and when their household heads are incapable or unwilling to compensate for this, the result is a financial deficit for the ABPC. In practice, this means that the board cannot pay successful producers all of what they are due. In the end, the good producers have to take the rap for the deficit caused by their less fortunate fellow farmers. In applying this principle of communal guarantee, Sodefitex neglects the possibility of rivalries between families or other groups in a village. This principle stirred up tensions within ABPCs and discouraged the good farmers.

To summarize, notwithstanding a generally positive appreciation of certain activities, the majority of informants in five of our villages regarded Sodefitex as a state organization with a monopoly position in the production and marketing of cotton; imposing top-down rules and sanctions; inspecting

the observance of its rules; and seeking its own profit at the expense of the farmers, i.e. a bad partner to cooperate with.

Local views of ABPCs

In one of the six student reports, there was no mention of any problems regarding the local ABPC. The Mandinka village of Sita Oule Banading is small and appears to have harmonious social relationships. The number of cotton growers there has remained quite stable over the years, while the founding family, after mutual consultation, had recently transferred a number of important ABPC board functions to members of former slave families.

In the five other villages, most informants severely criticized their ABPC, in particular on three points. Firstly, they criticized the obligatory nature of the membership. Many of them said that they were members, only "because otherwise you have no access to cotton seed, fertilizer, insecticides, or agricultural material on credit", i.e. you are excluded from the cotton option and from new agricultural equipment. In the Fula village of Bourgou, farmers had recently created three *denton* (singular *dentel*, a small cooperative group on a voluntary basis) on their own initiative, because they did not like compulsory cooperation within one village cooperative.

Secondly, several informants in the five villages expressed their distrust of their ABPC board. New information was not communicated or was deliberately held back, it was said. Scarce agricultural material, delivered by Sodefitex, went to members of the board or to their friends. Some boards were criticized for accepting farmers who were not creditworthy and thus incapable of repaying their credit. Informants in Koussanar asserted that local political relationships had played a decisive role in the appointment of board members. According to an important informant there, elections for the board were not necessary "as the farmers know which men must hold which posts".

The third source of dissatisfaction about ABPC's was, again, the principle of communal guarantee, *caution solidaire*, imposed by Sodefitex on the basis of supposed village solidarity. In practice, this meant that the board paid less to the successful farmers than what was officially due. The successful producers had to carry the can for those less successful farmers. As one informant in Dienkore Manfin said: "As a farmer, you are forced to repay the credit of your enemy, only because you have been put together in the same ABPC". For the family of the village head of Hamdalaye Pont this principle was reason enough

to want a separate ABPC solely for their family. The large village of Koussanar had two ABPCs, one for each quarter of the village. Since 1993, Sodefitex had refused to deliver the requisites, because the credit of both cooperatives had not yet been paid back. In both cases, successful farmers did not agree to accept any responsibility for the debts of their fellow farmers. Some of these fellow farmers were accused of having secretly sold their cotton in the Gambia at a better price. Others were said to have sold the fertilizer, which they had received on credit from Sodefitex, in order to solve their financial or food problems. Still others would have used (part of) their fertilizer for their other crops, with, as a result, a bad cotton harvest.

To summarize, in five of our villages farmers felt compelled by Sodefitex to become members of the village cooperative, whose board they did not trust and through which they had to pay for the irresponsible behaviour of fellow farmers.

Why do farmers still cultivate cotton?

Notwithstanding these mostly negative comments on cotton cultivation and on the functioning of Sodefitex and the ABPCs, many farmers continued their cooperation with Sodefitex (see photos 11.1–11.3). Moreover, where Sodefitex had excluded the ABPC from cotton cultivation, for example in Koussanar, local efforts to repair the relationship with Sodefitex were reported. How is this possible, given such severe criticism?

An obvious reason is the government policy of discouraging commercial groundnut cultivation within the cotton zone. One of the measures to reduce groundnut production included making access to groundnut seeds more difficult. Households who had been unable to save their groundnut seeds, on account of the seasonal food shortage or due to rodents and decay, could no longer get seeds on credit, but had to buy them from Sonagraines. However, this organization often delivered these with considerable delay, in scant measures and at high prices. The buying up of groundnuts was also often delayed, because the responsible organization, Sonacos, lacked sufficient funds. Thus, when it was made difficult to earn sufficient money from cultivating groundnuts, households had to look for alternatives, among which the commercial cotton cultivation.

However, the decisive reason for farmers to continue cotton cultivation is that government policies have given Sodefitex a monopolistic position. As a

consequence of the new agricultural policy (NPA), issued by the government in 1984, all governmental subsidies for agricultural ends were abolished. However, this did not apply to Sodefitex and cotton production. With this, Sodefitex became the only agency in the cotton zone allowed to deliver agricultural equipment on credit (with repayment in four yearly instalments). As the farmers need agricultural machines for their food crop cultivation, and often cannot afford to pay the full amount for equipment in one go, they have to approach Sodefitex and cultivate cotton. In doing so, they consider not only the financial benefits of cotton production, but above all the access to equipment and the advantages this brings in cultivating food crops. In practice, they cultivate a minimum of cotton in order to hold the door open to Sodefitex and its credit.

Thus, in spite of severe criticism of cotton growing and Sodefitex, farmers who are in need of money and of agricultural material on credit, simply have no other choice than to work with Sodefitex and to grow at least some cotton.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to find an answer to the question how, in the years 1997/8, commercial cotton cultivation and its associated organizations (Sodefitex and the ABPCs) were viewed by local producers and why, despite fierce criticism of the company, they continued a degree of cooperation with Sodefitex.

On the basis of exploratory research carried out by six students in six villages in 1997 and 1998, it became clear that, at that time, practically all informants in our villages had negative views of commercial cotton cultivation as prescribed by Sodefitex. It was regarded as more labour intensive, more costly, and more insecure than the usual food and cash crops. Moreover, in case of a large cotton area and unfavourable conditions (bad rains, insects, illness), it could lead not only to financial debts, but also to food shortages, hence many cotton growers kept only a small acreage of cotton. Even the wealthier farmers shared this view, but they were able to try their luck and cope with any risk of crop failure.

From our research, it also appeared that the majority of informants in five of our six research villages saw Sodefitex as a state organization that, thanks to various government measures, had acquired a monopoly position. According to the new agricultural policy, issued in 1984, all agricultural

credits by governmental organizations had been abolished, and farmers had to take full responsibility for solving any problems themselves. Nevertheless, Sodefitex had been allowed to maintain its credit system, with four yearly instalments, which was very attractive for farmers in need of agricultural equipment. However, in order to get access to this equipment, they first had to become members of the local cotton cooperative, and to order and apply certain quantities of cotton seeds and requisites (pesticides, chemical fertilizer and insecticides) on Sodefitex's conditions. Next, they had to sell their cotton produce, via the local cooperative, exclusively to Sodefitex, for producer's prices fixed by a governmental committee in Dakar. In addition, several informants in the same five villages declared they had no trust in the board of their local cooperative, through which they had to pay for the "free riding" or bad performance of fellow farmers. Thus, our informants in 1997/8 described a monopolistic situation for Sodefitex and, correspondingly, a situation of structural coercion for the farmers.

This is not everything that we learned from our informants. The monopolistic Sodefitex was also shifting all risks in the productive phase to the cotton growers. Despite having no influence on production conditions, i.e. capricious rainfall, attacks by insects and illness of household members, they were expected to continue to pay back in full the amount borrowed for increasingly expensive insecticides, pesticides and chemical fertilizer.

They also mentioned other government practices. In the context of decreasing groundnut prices on the world market and a policy to diversify Senegal's agricultural export production, the commercial cultivation of groundnuts in the cotton zone was discouraged. The company Sonagraines was reported to deliver groundnut seeds in insufficient quantities for high prices and too late in the agricultural season. And Sonacos regularly lacked sufficient funds to buy up the groundnut produce on time. Farmers felt these practices were stopping them from a traditional channel of income, i.e. the groundnut cultivation. Only the cotton option was open to farmers, as long as they followed Sodefitex's rules.

Our informants tell a story quite different from that laid down in the government's new agricultural policy, in particular withdrawal of the state and privatization. In their conception, the state has not withdrawn at all and was still pre-structuring the field for Sodefitex and the cotton farmers. While this new policy held farmers and communities responsible for their own agricultural production, many of our informants said they had been reduced to badly paid labourers for Sodefitex.

Despite this background of Sodefitex's monopolistic position and the structural coercion of farmers, it is understandable why so many households continued to cultivate this unloved crop and why they prolonged their cooperation with such a selfish partner as Sodefitex. They seem to have two reasons. Firstly, if the farmers wanted to stay in their home village and earn some money there, they had almost no other option than to accept the commercial cultivation of cotton under Sodefitex's conditions. Secondly, Sodefitex's credit facilities for agricultural machines were attractive for farmers, because they need these machines for their own food crop cultivation. For both reasons they preferred to keep the door to Sodefitex open by cultivating a small acreage of this risky crop.

However, this rather pessimistic view seems to be somewhat counter-balanced by farmers' initiatives in several of our six villages to set up small cooperatives comprising friends or family members, in order to prevent the problem of free-riding and to make the principle of communal guarantee acceptable. As said, Sodefitex did not seem to be deaf to these initiatives.

One final remark is warranted. From the cited literature sources and from the farmers comments, it is clear that the Senegalese government has always been deeply involved in commercial cotton cultivation. It was the government who wanted to diversify the agricultural export production and who chose for cotton; who defined the cotton zone; and who entrusted the promotion of cotton production and commercialization, initially to the French enterprise CFDT and later on to the semi-governmental Sodefitex. It was also the government who tried to create favourable conditions for Sodefitex by discouraging commercial groundnut cultivation and by exempting Sodefitex from the abolishment of agricultural credit. In establishing the cotton festival, the government and Sodefitex tried to promote a labour ethos among farmers by connecting hard work in the cotton production with the ideal of being a good Muslim and a dutiful citizen. However, on the basis of the comments of farmers in our villages in the district of Tambacounda in 1997/8, one can say that a higher producers price and lower input costs, among others, would do better in that regard.

Photo 11.1

My friend, Baba Coulibally, from Netteboulou, recruiting young boys to help him harvesting his cotton, January 2004

Photo 11.2

Part of Baba Coulibally's cotton, ready for transport, January 2004

Photo 11.3

Farmer from Buntungo, south of Koussanar, transporting his cotton

12

Conservation of nature and rural development in five villages in south-eastern Senegal

During my repeated stays in the department of Tambacounda, I became interested in the, in my view, problematic relationship between the board of the Niokolo Koba national park and the surrounding villages. As a consequence of a fortress conservation policy in the past, all people living inside the park had been forcibly removed from it and resettled in or between the already existing villages outside the park. Although these imposed changes have not been undone, the board decided subsequently to follow a participatory approach towards the local communities, which meant creating a positive attitude to nature conservation within these communities by contributing to their development.

In this chapter,[1] I want to deal with the question of the interrelationship between nature conservation policies and rural development policies: how does this interrelationship work in the area around the Niokolo Koba national park? Do they reinforce each other, as current ideas on sustainable development prescribe?

For practical reasons, research was limited to the rural municipality (*communauté rurale*) of Dialokoto (about 70 km south of Tambacounda). The municipality is well suited for this research, because the Senegalese state is represented there by at least two significant instances of nature conservation, namely the aforementioned national park (*Parc National de Niokolo Koba*,

1 This chapter is a slightly modified version of a contribution to Jon Abbink and A. van Dokkum (eds), Dilemmas of Development. Conflicts of interest and their resolutions in modernizing Africa. Leiden, African Studies Centre, 2008,, 19-38.

PNNK) and the forest reserve of Diambour (*Forêt Classée de Diambour*, FCD). See map 12.1.

The park had started in the 1920s as a protected hunting reserve for French hunters. After a number of border changes and extensions, the park had, since the last extension in 1969, an area of 913,000 ha, i.e. more than a quarter of the size of The Netherlands. It acquired the status of national park in 1954. During the 1970s, all human settlements had been removed from the park, and all exploitation of any resource within the park officially forbidden. In 1981, it was classified as a biosphere reserve within UNESCO's Man and Biosphere Programme (MAB). Herewith a "participatory" ideology was introduced. This implied that a certain level of human exploitation of some resources in a buffer zone (an adjacent area of approximately one kilometre wide) was allowed, albeit under certain conditions (Feenstra, 2005, 58). For a more detailed history of the PNNK, see Takforyan (1994, 53–56), Larrue (2002, 151) and Ndaye (2003).

Map 12.1

The national park Niokolo Koba (PNNK) and the classified forest of Diambour (FCD), with the five research villages, (based on S. Muilerman, 2004, and Pistes-Sodefitex, 2001)

To the north of the national park, separated from it by a long, narrow belt of land, we find the forest reserve of Diambour (FCD), an area of about 150,000 ha. It had been established in the second half of the 1930s in order to safeguard the catchment basin of the River Nieriko from deforestation by local people (Larrue, 2002, 151). The status of reserve implied that it was forbidden by law to establish human settlements there, to cut living trees and shrubs, to hunt, to use fire and to cultivate crops. On the other hand, certain human activities have always been allowed, such as grazing cattle and the gathering of wild fruits, yam tubers, herbs, dead wood, etc. for local consumption only. Moreover, since the new forest code of 1998, some cultivation of food crops in places demarcated by the state forest service has also been allowed. For any form of commercial exploitation, however, an authorization by this national service is needed.

The rural municipality of Dialokoto numbered 44 settlements, with a total population of 7,121 inhabitants in 2003 (Boyen, 2004, annex 6), predominantly Mandinka and Peul (Fula). Many of the 44 settlements were not represented in the rural council (*conseil rural*), which counted 28 seats and had the village of Dialokoto as its base. The council included members of different political parties, but since the rural elections of 2002 the PDS of President Wade has formed the majority on the council (Boyen, 2004, 28, 97–98; Vanmechelen, 2004, 62).

Administratively, in 2003, the municipality of Dialokoto together with the rural municipalities of Netteboulou and Missirah, belonged to the district (*arrondissement*) of Missirah, which had a *sous-préfet* as its head and which, in turn, belonged to the *département* of Tambacounda under a *préfet*. The *sous-préfet* was assisted by a small group of specialists in agriculture, animal husbandry, forestry, healthcare, nutrition, etc., called the CERP (*Centre d'Expansion Rurale Polyvalente*). This CERP had to serve the three municipalities within the district, their councils as well as private groups.

For the park authorities, the rural municipality of Dialokoto, which stretched out along the northern border of the national park, belonged to what they called the "periphery of the national park".

I was happy to find five students willing to carry out the research. Two of them in 2002 (Esther de Graaf and Rebecca Vanmechelen) and three in 2003 (Elke Boyen, Nienke Feenstra and Sander Muilerman), from June to September in both years. They lived and worked in five villages, from north-west to south-east: Badi, Wassadou, Dialokoto, Dar Salam and Dienoudiala (see map

12.1). In addition, a number of other villages were involved in their research, including Nionghani, Touba Badi and Damantan. Moreover, previous student research had been carried out in Dialokoto from June till November 1995 by Natascha Zoutewelle. Without these students' enthusiasm and perseverance, this chapter could not have been written. Data mentioned here were largely gathered from their research reports and from conversations with them in the field. However, selection and interpretation of the data in this chapter are my responsibility.

In order to answer to the questions mentioned above, I will first briefly explain the ideology underlying the desired integration of conservation and development policies. This is followed by an overview of organizations active in the municipality of Dialokoto, firstly of the governmental organizations for nature protection, and secondly those for rural development and income generation. Then I will describe a number of private projects or NGOs for nature conservation and those for rural income creation. In a comparative analysis and conclusion, I will try to formulate some general statements about the relationship between conservation and rural development in our research area.

The twin concepts of nature conservation and rural development.

With the definitive breakthrough of the concept of sustainable development in the international discourse on environment and development during the 1980s (IUCN, 1980; WCED (Brundtland), 1987; IUCN, 1991), awareness has been raised globally regarding the need to integrate efforts relating to nature conservation and those of rural development (Adams and Hulme, 2001, 13–16). Whereas previously development experts and nature conservationists often worked separately, and sometimes even had antagonistic relationships (Anderson and Grove, 1987, 3, 7–10; Adams and Hulme, 2001, 12), several economic and environmental crises, such as that in Africa in the 1970s, required their cooperation. Conservationists became aware that, if they wanted to achieve their goals in a sustainable way, they would have to take into account needs and developmental wishes at the local level (IIED, 1994; Hulme and Murphree, 2001, 1–2; Achterberg, 1994, 26–30). Equally, development experts started to recognize that for development to be durable, they had to respect the "carrying capacity" of the environment (Harrison, 1987, 27–43; World Bank, 1992, 1–63; Shepherd, 1998, 1–89). Thus, at an ideological level, both parties became locked into interdependency.

As a result, several Integrated Conservation and Development Projects (ICDPs) have been undertaken in the zones around national parks and nature reserves, often with community-based management (Adams and Hulme, 2001, 20). It is believed that the protection of nature and wildlife, in combination with growing tourism, will stimulate rural development by creating paid jobs and other remunerating activities, whereas progressing development and alleviation of poverty will facilitate the protection of nature, among others by removing the motivations for what are regarded as illegal practices, e.g. poaching. Policies of conservation and those of development should be synergetic in this ideological construction.

However, there is a contradiction in this ideological construction. Although the two parties are interdependent and should cooperate, the tension between conservation goals and development goals remains. Indeed, the complaint is often heard that ICDPs have too little to offer for either rural development or nature conservation (Adams and Hulme, 2001, 20–21), which means that the supposed synergetic process does not work optimally. In every practical situation, the interrelationship between the policies of nature protection and those of rural development must be analysed and negotiated, and therefore a forum for coordination is essential. How is this ideology applied in our research area, as perceived by different stakeholders?

Overview of organizations in Dialokoto

In 2002 and 2003, at least 14 organizations for nature conservation and/or rural development were active in our research area, the rural municipality of Dialokoto. They may be distinguished as governmental and non-governmental (or private) organizations. Moreover, they may be arranged along a continuum from those primarily aimed at nature conservation to those primarily aimed at rural development or income generation. Applying these distinctions results in four categories of organizations: state organizations for nature conservation; state organizations for rural development and income generation; non-governmental or private organizations for nature conservation; and non-governmental or private projects for rural income generation.

State organizations for nature conservation

The *DPN (Direction du Parc National)*. Since 1967, the management of the park has been in the hands of a governmental board (DPN), whose legal competencies were limited to the park and its buffer zone. From the 1960s until far into the 1980s, the policies regarding the local people had the reputation of being very repressive, culminating in the 1970s in the forced resettlement of all villages and their inhabitants into zones adjacent to the park. However, as poaching and degradation increased (Ndaye, 2003), and under the influence of UNESCO's MAB programme, a new policy was introduced (Takforyan, 1994, 56). In order to prevent poaching and to achieve sustainable nature conservation, supported by local communities, the inconveniences of the forced resettlement had to be relieved by creating economic opportunities outside and possibly also inside the park, and by involving local people, to their advantage, in the maintenance of natural species. If local people enjoy economic advantages from the park and its wildlife, they will become motivated to protect nature and to abandon or prevent poaching. Within this context, the growth of tourism is regarded as indispensable; it is seen as another necessary condition for nature protection and rural development. Moreover, in this view, the park is not intended to become a green island in an ocean of degraded environment, but rather should function as a storeroom for the abundant plants and animals within the park, which could then spread or be transferred to zones outside the park. This requires sustainable use and management in adjacent zones.

Thus, according to the DPN's new philosophy, rural development is required to achieve sustainable conservation of nature. During the period of research (2002/3) the researchers noted four touristic facilities, two inside the park (the *Hôtel de Simenti* and the *Camp des Lions*), and two in the buffer zone (the *Campement Touristique de Dar Salam* and the *Campement Touristique de Wassadou*). The park and these facilities offer some opportunities for local development (Muilerman, 2004, 111–115; Boyen, 2004, 42–44).

Firstly, they provide paid employment: as hotel personnel (about 65 salaried jobs during the peak season from November till March); as tourist guides (the park has about 40 of them); and as temporary labourers during the weeks after the rainy season for the repair and maintenance of the roads, bridges and observation posts inside the park (at 1,750 frs CFA or 2.67 euros per day, according to Vanmechelen, 2004, 117). Most interesting for local people is the job of tourist guide. These guides are usually recruited from neighbouring villages and they must be available on demand. They work

most days during the tourist season, but only occasionally in the low season. For instance, Dar Salam has 12 tourist guides. The mean salary of a guide for the whole tourist season is estimated at 300,000 frs CFA, or 461 euros (Boyen, 2004, 44). Badi is described as having eight tourist guides and eight labourers as well as two persons employed in the *Hôtel de Simenti* (De Graaf, 2004, 94). The precise number of guides in Dialokoto is not known (at least four of them); there are about ten labourers. No guides have been registered for Wassadou and Dienoudiala, only some occasional labourers. Beside paid jobs, there are other developmental effects of tourism. Local people may earn some money by selling locally produced or gathered foodstuffs and fruits to the hotels or the park guards, by selling beeswax candles and souvenirs, and from cultural entertainment (music and dance) for the tourists.

Secondly, the new participatory policies of the DPN have created new economic opportunities for local communities. These are allowed, for local consumption, to fish and to gather several kinds of forest products inside the buffer zone, on condition that these activities are well organized, that they respect certain quota, or result in afforestation. For example, in Dialokoto an officially recognized local group of entrepreneurs (a GIE, *Groupement d'Intérêt Economique*) has been allowed to harvest honey in the buffer zone. In the villages of Badi and Wassadou, GIEs have been permitted to practice the irrigated cultivation of bananas. In the village of Medina, a GIE is allowed to raise guinea fowls, and in Dar Salam to grow bamboo, with raw material taken from the buffer zone. One day per six weeks, the people of Dar Salam are collectively allowed to practise fishery inside the park, for local consumption only (Boyen, 2004, 38–41). The women's group of that same village is allowed to gather dead wood in the buffer zone in exchange for reforestation activities within and around the village. Dienoudiala has been authorized to build and exploit the *Campement des Lions* inside the park.

The EFC (*Service des Eaux et Forêts et de la Chasse*). This is a nationwide organization that ensures observance of the national forest law. Its main objective is to achieve the sustainable use of Senegal's forests through regulation of their exploitation as well as by reforestation. EFC has always had a double task. On the one hand, to provide Senegalese cities with wood and charcoal by allocating licences and quota to entrepreneurs, and on the other hand, to maintain the productivity of the forests for future generations. One important task derived from this is the prevention and fighting of bush fires in cooperation with local groups *(comités de lutte contre les feux de brousse)*; another task is the management of tree nurseries.

A key objective is the regulation of hunting (outside the protected zones) by the allocation of hunting territories and quota to entrepreneurs (Muilerman, 2004, 65–66, 115; Boyen, 2004, 94; Feenstra, 2005, 52–54). In 1989, the regional EFC in Tambacounda had defined within that region 24 lease holdings (*zones amodiées*) for small game hunting, and one large zone for big game hunting (*Zone d'Intervention Cynégétic* or ZIC). My sources do not mention whether all the holdings were actually leased or not. The leaseholders comprised a number of foreigners and wealthy national entrepreneurs. Each had to pay 300,000 frs CFA (or 1080 euros) per year for a licence, plus a small amount per hectare. They usually had their own camp (*campement de chasse*) in their lease zone and they recruited their clients, by means of modern publicity channels, mostly from French hunting associations. It was in their own interest to manage the game stock in their holding in a sustainable way and to prevent poaching. Big game hunting in the ZIC was organized and controlled by the forest service itself. Hunters, mostly from France, had to buy a general licence (15,000 frs CFA [23 euros] per week) as well as a special permit to shoot a fixed number of animals, for instance for one buffalo or one antelope an amount of 300 euros. Local people could not afford big game hunting. For small game hunting they had to buy a licence at 13,000 frs, or 20 euros, for the whole season.

There were at least two hunting camps in the rural municipality of Netteboulou. The leaseholders recruited their personnel, i.e. guides, cooks, cleaners, guards, musicians, etc., from neighbouring villages. The hunting season largely coincides with the tourist season (from November until March).

After the general shift in tropical forestry towards more participatory approaches, the Senegalese parliament finally accepted a new forest law in 1993. This *code forestier* made co-management by state organisms and private groups legally possible and specified its conditions. Moreover, local groups could, under certain conditions, obtain permission for the commercial exploitation of forest products. In 1998, this law was amended. Legal competencies of the municipal councils were redefined and they were allowed to transfer part of their responsibilities to specialized private partners (entrepreneurs, local groups or NGOs) on condition that there is an approved plan for sustainable use.

Consequently, the EFC, as the nationwide guardian of the state forests, had to cooperate not only with many councils at the different administrative levels and with the village heads, but also with numerous groups of women

or young people in the villages and with GIEs, NGOs and private projects for nature conservation as well as with the DPN.

The Rural Council *(Conseil Rural).* The rural council had several tasks and powers with regard to rural development as well as the use and maintenance of natural resources within its administrative territory. Firstly, the council had to decide about the desirability and the distribution of development projects over the different villages of the municipality (for, e.g. roads, bridges, schools, health centres, water wells and pumps, etc.). Secondly, the council had to decide on the allocation of use rights on land and forest, with exception of the rights on commercial forest exploitation, which were the domain of EFC. Another responsibility of the rural council was the coordination of reforestation (the laying out of windbreaks and woodlots) and the prevention and combat of bush fires by the creation of fire lanes. Within the context of progressive decentralization more powers had been delegated to the rural council. For example, in 1993, the council acquired the right to demand subventions from the national forest fund *(Fonds Forestier National)* for local forest management. It also got the legal power to redistribute the use rights on natural resources according to a management plan approved by the EFC *(gestion de terroir)*. In 1998, the councils were allowed to transfer certain responsibilities to specialized private partners. In the early 1990s, the councils had already been given the right to collect annual taxes in the villages of their territory and to keep these revenues as their budget.

In 1999, the rural councils of Dialokoto, Missirah and Bala (department of Bakel) delegated the management of zones with high densities of *ronier* palms (Borassus aethiopum) to the CIVD (Comité Intervillageois de Développement) in order to protect the biodiversity of these zones and to develop a sustainable use of the palms (Feenstra, 2005, 66–69). Initially, 18 of the 22 villages identified as neighbouring such a high-density zone participated; in 2003, 12 of them were still involved.

State organizations for rural development

There are too many governmental organizations and services concerned with some aspects of rural development and income generation to discuss them all here. According to the criterion of furthering income-generating activities among the local people, I have selected two relevant organizations.

The Sonacos (Société Nationale de Commercialisation des Oléagineux du Sénégal). Sonacos, established in 1975, is a state organization designated as a groundnut buyer and one of the agencies that sells groundnut seeds to farmers who need them. There were a number of complaints from farmers that Sonacos often delivered seeds too late and in insufficient quantities, and that the price was too high. Rumour had it that this was done deliberately to force the farmers to cultivate cotton, to the benefit of another income-generating organization, namely Sodefitex.

Sodefitex (Société pour le Développement des Fibres Textiles). I have already discussed Sodefitex, its role, approach and activities in chapter 11. I have also argued that the relationship between Sodefitex and the cotton farmers has experienced a series of crises over time. For convenience sake, I present here a brief summary of some relevant points. In 1974, the development of the so-called cotton zone (*zône cotonnière*: Kaolack, Kedougou, Kolda, Tambacounda and Velingara), defined as such by the government, had been trusted to the newly established Sodefitex. This semi-governmental organization was charged with two tasks, namely, 1) the promotion of the cotton production by the farmers and of its commercialization, in order to generate, among others, a higher financial income for the farmers; and 2) the advancement of rural and agricultural development.

The first task required Sodefitex to deliver requisites for cotton cultivation: herbicides, insecticides, chemical fertilizer. The second task implied, among others, the advancement of food crop production (horticulture; small scale irrigation agriculture), animal husbandry, literacy and healthcare, and later also social forestry (laying out of wind-breaks and woodlots).

Sodefitex, thus, was more than just an organization for the promotion of commercial cotton cultivation. It was meant as a society for integrated rural development on the basis of a steady cotton production by the local farmers, who got a new option to generate financial income. Within this context, Sodefitex indeed promoted social forestry and appeared to be concerned with the environment and its sustainable use. However, one of its first actions was to promote the use of pesticides, insecticides and chemical fertilizer in a large part of Senegal, which is difficult to reconcile with the maintenance of biodiversity.

Non-governmental organizations for nature conservation

The *Projet de Gestion de la Biodiversité des Rôneraies de Wassadou*. This project in our research area was carried out by the CIVD and was part of a group of nine small-scale local projects, which, in 2000, all combined to form the *Fédération des Conservateurs de Biodiversité à la Périphérie du Parc National de Niokolo Koba*. All nine micro-projects were related to the national park. This federation was formed with a view to acquiring support from the UNDP (Muilerman, 2004, 69–70).

This project's objectives were the protection of areas with a high concentration of rônier palms, and the generation of financial income from their sustainable use. The rônier is a multifunctional tree. Its leaves are used for roofing, mats and fences, for baskets and fish traps. Its fibres supply the material for pieces of furniture (armchairs, tables) and sponges. Its fruits are processed for human consumption and its roots have medicinal value. The wood of its trunk serves as rafters for roofs and, lastly, the tree produces a stimulant, namely palm wine. The traditional way of exploiting the tree often means its death, with, as a consequence, that in most zones around the national park this useful tree had become scarce or had already completely disappeared. However, around Wassadou and Badi rôniers still existed in large numbers. In order to counter their decreasing numbers, the project members established a rônier nursery and woodlot in Wassadou, and they had also planted young trees between the farms (Feenstra, 2005, 69). In July 2003, they made a proposal to the rural council to establish a communal rônier reserve. They also provide information about the use value of the tree, how it is threatened, and how to protect it. Finally, they try to organize the production and sale of furniture and sponges.

The *PRCNK (Projet des Rôneraies Communautaires de Niokolo Koba).* This project was carried out by a Belgian NGO. The project aims were the protection of concentrations of the rônier palm in the periphery of the national park, and the development of new economic opportunities related to this palm tree (to enhance the economic value of the tree). To these ends, the project staff organized trainings in the sustainable use of the rônier tree and in the manufacturing of baskets, brooms and furniture, and they tried to set up a GIE for the artisans (De Graaf, 2004, 111; Feenstra, 2005, 71–74). Moreover, they stimulated local groups to plant woodlots of rôniers and other trees. On the other hand, the making of sponges (from fresh branches) by the women was discouraged on account of the detrimental effects on the rônier. Since the construction of an office in Dienoudiala in 2000, the project set

up activities in 23 villages. In parallel to the CIVD, it established a network called the CIVG (*Comité Intervillageois de Gestion*), in which initially 18 villages took part. In 2003, this number had dropped to six (Feenstra, 2005, 70). Unfortunately, the project did not succeed in developing cooperation with the EFC, because this organization wanted its services paid for by the project (Muilerman, 2004,69–70). Consequently, the project decided to work with the DPN of the national park, despite the DPN having no jurisdiction outside the park. Within the context of this cooperation, the DPN placed one of its agents as a public relations officer (*animateur*) within the PRCNK. However, this man was said to lack the necessary qualities for this job, and he was not popular among the local people (Feenstra, 2005, 80). At the end of the first three-year phase, the project was stopped. It is worth mentioning that the local *Projet de Gestion de la Biodiversité des Rôneraies de Wassadou* was already functioning before the arrival of the PRCNK. It is striking that the two projects did not succeed in achieving any form of cooperation. According to staff members of the Belgian project, the local project staff wanted access to the resources and means of the PRCNK (computers, motorcycles, bikes), they wanted to be paid the same salary as the local personnel of the Belgian project, and they wanted local people to be paid for their labour contribution ("money for work"), which was regarded as unacceptable by the PRCNK (Feenstra, 2005, 77–81).

The *PROGEDE (Projet de Gestion Durable et Participative des Energies Traditionnelles et de Substitution).* The Progede was a very large project financed by the World Bank and The Netherlands (Boyen, 2004, 100–105). Given the alarming situation of, on the one hand, an increasing need for firewood and charcoal in Senegalese cities and, on the other, the rapidly decreasing forest area in Senegal, this project had a twofold aim: 1) to develop a system for the durable supply of energy (firewood, charcoal, gas) to urban consumers and for the promotion of sustainable energy use; and 2) to develop a systematic and sustainable exploitation of the remaining forests in Senegal, around Kolda and Tambacounda. To this second end, these forests were divided into a large number of blocks, separated from each other by large fire lanes. This allows for a more systematic and controllable allocation policy by the EFC, and it confines any damage in case of bush fires. Moreover, in order to reduce the pressure on the remaining forests, the project promoted many diverse activities such as sustainable land use and horticulture, tree culture and planting, fighting bush fires, the introduction of new, drought-resistant varieties, stock-feeding for commercial purposes and vaccination campaigns, prevention of cattle theft, poultry farming and the production of eggs, breeding guinea fowl, apiculture (without the dangerous use of fire)

and honey processing, and income-generating activities as marketing poultry and eggs, cattle, honey and wax, etc. On all these points, and dependent on the local situation, the project in principle worked with local groups or committees for management and development (*Comités Villageois de Gestion et de Développement*). The project also helped to finance the construction of water wells for horticulture as well as permanent water pools for cattle breeding. Some agricultural tools, beehives, etc. were given for free, which other projects disapproved of. In Dar Salam, the Progede fully financed the construction of a water pump and two wells. After a fire destroyed the whole village in 1996, the project organized training in fire prevention and donated all kinds of fire-fighting appliances for free (Boyen, 2004, 105–107). For its second objective, the Progede had a sub-office (*antenne*) in Tambacounda. In order to further the process of administrative decentralization, this office aimed at cooperation with the rural municipal councils in the vast regions of Tambacounda and Kolda, also with the rural council of Dialokoto (Muilerman, 2004, 73). It tried to advance the knowledge and capacities of these rural councils with regard to the sustainable use and management of natural resources. The project also worked at other administrative levels. It cooperated with the regional EFC, with the DPN and with the CERPs, also in order to strengthen the capacities of those state services.

The *ASAN (Association Sénégalaise des Amis de la Nature).* This Senegalese NGO also had the twofold aim of protecting nature and improving the living conditions of the rural population. It has a French partner organization and is a member of the international *Amis de la Nature*. It focuses on nature education by means of radio broadcasting and schools. In this context, it delivered useful services to the EFC and the DPN by explaining their programmes and measures to the public, and by making people aware of the value of nature conservation. It also organized conferences, public debates, courses in ornithology, excursions into the national park, film projections and the annual world day for the environment (in June). Moreover, it had created tree nurseries at schools and at village level. To improve living conditions, it had co-financed school buildings, health centres, water wells and grain mills, and tried to find funds for such small projects (Boyen, 2004, 111–114; Muilerman, 2004, 74–75). It was active in several villages around the national park such as Missirah, Dialokoto, Badi, Wassadou and Dar Salam.

Non-governmental projects for rural income generation

The *CMS* (Crédit Mutuel du Sénégal). This non-profit organization, established in France and working throughout French-speaking West Africa, had a small office in Missirah (Muilerman, 2004, 91–92). The CMS is specialized in the design and organization of saving and credit projects. Individuals, groups or NGOs may become members and receive micro-credit. To become a member, one has to save and deposit a specified minimum amount of money. Once a member, one gets further information about banking affairs. Initially, members may receive loans up to the amount saved. Later, after the client has proved an ability to repay the loan and to pay the interest, he or she can obtain another loan up to the maximum of three times the mean positive balance of the last six months. There are five types of loans for agricultural, commercial or consumptive ends. All loans must, in principle, be paid back within a year. The CMS had clients in many villages, including Dienoudiala. Several projects had contracted out their micro-finance system to the CMS. The CMS has filled the vacuum that SGBS *(Société Générale des Banques au Sénégal)* and other official banks had left.

The *PROMER (Projet d'Appui aux Micro Entreprises Rurales).* This project's objective is to stimulate non-agrarian initiatives (micro-enterprises) in the villages of the administrative regions of Tambacounda, Kolda and Kaolack. At a time when the prices for peanuts and cotton have decreased, one can no longer rely on agriculture only, and therefore alternative economic activities (cattle husbandry, commerce and small industry) must be encouraged. To this end, PROMER offered professional training facilities, assisted in finding new markets or in ameliorating access to existing ones, gave advice and help in the contact with official banks to obtain loans, etc. It also provided adult literacy campaigns, notably for functional literacy, which means that it was simultaneously a course in entrepreneurship. According to a key informant (Muilerman, 2004, 94), however, the organization lacked an accepted regional plan within which its projects could function. Efforts to organize a forum for coordination and negotiation (*cadre de concertation*) for the different projects have failed. For these efforts to be successful, the international donors would have to give up part of their autonomy.

The GIEs *(Groupements d'Intérêt Economique)*. After the government had created in 1984, the legal possibility of establishing formal economic associations of entrepreneurial individuals, many GIEs came into being. A GIE is a group of between four and 20 members, which is formally recognized by the state and, on this basis, can demand subventions or credit facilities

in order to achieve economic objectives (commerce, gardening, transport, grain mill, water tower, etc.). A GIE must have an official board (president, secretary, etc.), official regulations approved by the state, and a bank account with a balance of at least 10,000 frs CFA (15 euro). To fulfil all bureaucratic conditions and taxes an amount of about 50,000 frs CFA (77 euro) was needed. All villages had at least one, but often several GIEs. Badi had one for the sponge-making women and several others for the irrigated banana cultivation in the buffer zone (De Graaf, 2004, 64–65). Wassadou (Feenstra, 2005, 62–65) had two GIEs for irrigated banana cultivation: one large association (77 parcels and 103 participants) that had requested more land, and a smaller one (25 parcels). The plantations were laid out in the buffer zone with the consent of the DPN. In September 2003, all Wassadou parcels were devastated by the flooding of the River Gambia. Dialokoto had at least 14 GIEs (Vanmechelen, 2004, 58). Only some of them were active within the domain of nature protection and afforestation (prevention of poaching, bushfire-fighting and -prevention, planting of commercial woodlots). Dienoudiala had five GIEs (Muilerman, 2004, 91). Dar Salam, finally, had two (Boyen, 2004, 25), both active in the domain of nature protection as well as that of rural development.

The MFR *(Maison Familiale Rurale)*. This organization had 51 establishments spread over rural Senegal. One of them is in Dialokoto (Vanmechelen, 2004, 59). Its aim is to encourage and support local initiatives, in particular GIE projects within the domains of agriculture, cattle breeding, apiculture and literacy. The MFR was financed by international donors. All members of participating GIEs had to contribute 1,000 frs CFA (1,53 euro) per year. The organization had activities in 24 of the 44 villages of the municipality of Dialokoto. It granted micro-credits (for example to buy a donkey, a plough or cart), it offered literacy training in Mandinka and Pulaar, it assisted in setting up cereal banks and grain mills, it organized training in advanced apiculture (without the use of fire) and the processing and marketing of honey. The DPN permitted this form of apiculture by GIEs in the buffer zone of the national park.

The APROVAG *(Association des Producteurs de la Vallée de la Gambie).* This organization, established in 1988 as a local follow-up for the OFADEC *(Office Africain de Développement Economique)*, started a commercial banana plantation along the River Gambia in 2001, nine kilometres from the villages of Badi and Nionghani. The objective was to generate a more regular and stable financial income for farmers from these and other villages, who

had once lived inside the park and who had to cope with poverty since their resettlement in a less fertile area (De Graaf, 2004, 104–109).

DPN consent was necessary for the establishment of this plantation due to its location within the buffer zone. Trees had to be cut down and water withdrawn from the river for irrigation, while pesticides, insecticides and artificial manure had to be applied. Moreover, to produce a top harvest a banana plantation may only remain on the same spot for four years. Notwithstanding this, an agreement between the DPN and the APROVAG was signed at the end of 2000. The project pledged to help in the fight against poaching and to forbid its participating farmers from crossing the river. In the village of Badi, 24 households were granted a plot. Other households were put on a waiting list. Therefore, it seems remarkable that plots were also assigned to people from outside the periphery of the national park, notably to a group of Mouride youngsters from Touba. They lived in a settlement called Touba Badi, near the plantation. Preparations on the site had started in August 2001. A number of 113 parcels of 10 x 20 metres, as well as adjacent grounds and paths, had to be cleared by the participants, while the APROVAG delivered the necessary banana seedlings, two water pumps, tubes, etc. During the research period, in August 2002, the harvest took place in the presence of the researcher (De Graaf, 2004, 106). Transport and marketing were carried out by the APROVAG. People in Badi were very positive about the APROVAG. Unfortunately, because of the extremely heavy rains in September 2003, all the plantations along the River Gambia were flooded, resulting in the loss of all the banana trees and of all the energy invested, and meant replanting and waiting for the new harvest.

There were more plantations along the River Gambia managed by GIEs or supervised by NGOs, such as the Laboya plantation, 15 km from Dialokoto. This plantation comprised plots given to several young men from far away villages, and even from Tambacounda.

Comparative analysis and Conclusions

In response to the question of how to characterize the relationship, within our research area in the years 2002/3, between nature conservation policies and those for rural development, it is clear from the above that we

must distinguish between the ideological level and reality as perceived by representatives of different stakeholder groups.

Governmental interventions at ideological level

The "conservation and development" ideology is clearly reflected in the objectives and the approach of the DPN, the EFC, and the rural council (CR). It is also recognizable, albeit to a much lesser extent, in those of Sodefitex. By contrast, our data suggest this is not present in the approach taken by Sonacos.

The board (DPN) of the Niokolo Koba national park emphasized the need to create economic opportunities for local people living in the adjacent zones, in order to achieve sustainable conservation and solid local protection of nature. The words "dialogue" and "negotiation" frequently recurred in their conversations with the student researchers and me.

The national forest service (EFC) showed enthusiasm for achieving the objective of sustainable exploitation of state forests using the new instruments set out in the forest laws of 1993 and 1998. This includes, among others: co-management of state forests with private groups, commercial exploitation of forest products by local groups, and, since 1998, the legal transfer of conservation responsibilities of the rural councils to specialized private partners, as well as some food crop cultivation in certain parts of the state forests by local groups. In terms of hunting, the EFC already had a system of lease holding, in which it is in the interest of the leaseholder to manage the game stock in a sustainable way and to prevent poaching and exhaustion. All these new legal possibilities could bring new economic opportunities and paid jobs to local people.

The rural council officially represented the local communities. It had the task of coordinating development projects and increasingly also the protection of natural resources. The councils had the right to collect taxes for their own budget. Moreover, they have had the right, since 1993, to demand subventions from the national forest fund for projects of forest management. Since 1998, they have also had the legal power to reorganize the use rights on natural resources (gestion de terroir) according to a management plan approved by the EFC.

Next, there is the rural development organization Sodefitex, established in 1974 at the behest of the Senegalese government. Besides the promotion of cotton cultivation and the commercialization of cotton produce, Sodefitex also has the more general task of rural and agricultural development. While both these tasks implied a rise in farmers' income, the second task included also social forestry (woodlots, wind-breaks, etc.), i.e. maintenance of natural resources.

Thus, at an ideological level, the international message of integration of nature conservation and rural development seemed to be understood by at least four important governmental organizations within the rural municipality of Dialokoto.

Governmental interventions in practice

Three of these organizations, DPN, EFC and the CR argued that they had to cope with an enormous lack of money, means and personnel.

The staff of the DPN had dwindled to about 70 members in 2003 and had only two cars at its disposal to cover an area of 913,000 ha (Takforyan, 1994, 60–61; Ndiaye, 2003,14; Feenstra, 2005, 56–58). Although the DPN received some help from the Senegalese army, illegal exploitation, especially commercial poaching, remained a major problem (Boyen, 2004, 78; Muilerman, 2004, 61; Feenstra, 2005, 57). Moreover, the national park was surrounded by nine rural municipalities, which together formed the so-called periphery of the park and which belonged to different higher administrative units (Ndiaye, 2003, 4; Boyen, 2004, 87–88, annex 6; Feenstra, 2005, 57). It is very time consuming to maintain contacts with all these actors at the different levels, let alone to come to effective agreements. Therefore, communication and cooperation with the local communities of the park's periphery is mostly left to special projects. Notwithstanding this problematic situation, the DPN started an international cooperation with the neighbouring Badiar National Park in Guinea, which might be desirable from several points of view but is yet another competitor for the limited means.

The EFC also had to face a serious decrease of means (personnel, money, cars and computers) with, consequently, complaints about insufficient communication with the many conservation and/or development projects and with the DPN, complaints about unsatisfactory contacts with the villages (De Graaf, 2004, 50; Muilerman, 2004, 67), and complaints about

corrupt behaviour of its agents (Feenstra, 2005, 88). Moreover, according to EFC officers, the badly needed regional consultation structure (*cadre de concertation*) did not function well. The complaint was that there were too many different well-funded projects whose staff behaved arrogantly and even refused to cooperate.

With regard to hunting, foreign hunters had to be accompanied by a local guide, who had to observe the rules. Generally, exceptions notwithstanding, the hunters had a bad reputation among local people. They did not respect the rules, while their guides and local drivers did not dare to intervene for fear of losing their jobs. Moreover, the EFC was understaffed (Boyen, 2004, 95). Ndiaye (2003, 11, 14) said the lease system "in principle correct", but spoke about a lack of respect and control by all the partners concerned. Another critical remark comes from Takforyan (1994, 62), who mentions a contradiction between the policy of the DPN and that of the EFC. While the DPN regarded the maintenance of biodiversity outside the park as necessary for the maintenance of biodiversity within the park, the remunerative exploitation of wildlife and forests outside the park was in the hands of EFC. Finally, it must be noted that the government stimulated the cultivation of cash crops (cotton; bananas) in the periphery, which is difficult to reconcile with the maintenance of biodiversity there.

Regarding the rural councils, they, too, had to cope with a serious lack of means and of specialized knowledge to carry out their tasks in a satisfactory way. In several rural municipalities, including Dialokoto, local communities had become so dissatisfied with the functioning of the council that they refused to pay taxes, which resulted in a serious decrease of revenues for the council (Feenstra, 2005, 84–85). Although project leaders were expected to explain their plans to the council, there was a general feeling that these projects functioned more or less independently from the rural council.

The case of Sodefitex was different. Here, it was not so much a lack of means, but the demand of international economic competition to keep its costs as low as possible that caused crises in the company's relationship with the farmers. The cultivation of cotton did not, on the whole, deliver the desired increase in income, on account of the rising prices of requisites and the low price for the produce, combined with poor harvests as a result of bad weather or insects. So, for many cotton farmers, there was no poverty alleviation and no incentive to stop illegal exploitation of nature. Cotton cultivation appeared to be interesting only for relatively wealthy farmers who could sustain the risk of a bad harvest and debts, providing they did not feel hampered by the

obligatory membership of the village cooperative and the imposed principle of communal solidarity.

Local people also had mixed feelings about the DPN and the EFC. On the one hand, the negative effects of the national park and the forest reserve on local income generation had been amply explained to the researchers: resettlement on less fertile soils; ever shifting borders of the buffer zone; enclosure between two protected areas and consequently a smaller agricultural area; shorter fallow and longer cultivation periods resulting in soil degradation and smaller harvests; hunting and fishing regulated and limited; damage to crops and cattle by wild animals without any form of compensation and with heavy sanctions on shooting them. On the other hand, it was widely recognized that, thanks to governmental intervention, flora and fauna within the park remained more diverse and beautiful than elsewhere in Senegal and that this encouraged tourism. People highly appreciated that tourist facilities and hunting camps had already brought a number of paid jobs to local people (hotel personnel, guides, labourers) as well as other economic opportunities (such as selling food, fruits, souvenirs and cultural entertainment). People were also positive about the newly created opportunities in the buffer zone (such as the apiculture, the breeding of guinea fowls, and the cultivation of bananas) as well as in the forest reserve (food crops for local consumption). Nevertheless, they considered this far from sufficient, especially given the sacrifices they had made in the past and continue to make. In particular, they criticized the fact that the higher and better paid personnel of the DPN and the EFC as well as those of the hotels were recruited from elsewhere in Senegal, mostly from Dakar.

Non-governmental initiatives at intentional level

The student reports mention four non-governmental initiatives for nature protection, namely the biodiversity project of Wassadou, the PRCNK of Dienoudiala, the PROGEDE and the ASAN. All four projects had the double aim of protecting nature and improving living conditions (developing new economic opportunities). PROGEDE is by far the largest project. As previously mentioned, its second goal was to develop a sustainable exploitation of the remaining forests in Senegal. In order to reduce the pressure on these forests, many diverse development activities were promoted, from horticulture and irrigated agriculture to vaccination campaigns for the livestock and to the creation of income-generating activities such as marketing poultry and eggs, cattle, honey, etc. The project also tried to strengthen the knowledge and

capacities of the EFC and of the rural councils and the CERPs with respect to sustainable use and management of natural resources.

With regard to rural development, five private initiatives were mentioned by my students: CMS; PROMER; the GIEs; MFR and APROVAG. With the exception of a small number of GIEs, none of these five initiatives had the protection of nature and natural resources as an explicit objective. Thus, while the private projects for nature conservation did explicitly consider rural development as essential, the private projects for rural development did not explicitly recognize the protection of nature and natural resources as necessary for rural development. Clearly, the message of an integrated approach had not penetrated, or it had been marginalized.

Non-governmental interventions in practice

When it comes to the perceived reality of the four private projects for nature conservation, undoubtedly the most remarkable fact is the failure of the Belgian *Projet Rôneraies* (PRCNK). This project did not seem well prepared from the outset, and once in the field, it was not flexible enough to cope with the wishes of already existing organizations, namely the nationwide EFC and the small local biodiversity project of Wassadou (Muilerman, 2004, 70–72; Feenstra, 2005, 77–81). The core of the problem was a fundamental disagreement about access to the material and financial means of the Belgian project.

This failure probably could have been prevented if there had been a regional forum for coordination and negotiation (*cadre de concertation*). Its absence was felt as a serious problem, notably by the EFC, the DPN and PROMER. There was a rather general complaint that the international donors often want to maintain their autonomy (Muilerman, 2004, 94; Feenstra, 2005, 82, 89).

Another observation was that local people, despite a high appreciation for PROGEDE's activities, had accepted its conditions only in name, and that in practice they continued to secretly cut rôniers and bamboos within the borders of the national park (Boyen, 2004, 107). Feenstra (2005, 81–82) speaks of a hidden tendency to prioritize achieving one's own short-term interests.

Other problems were noticed with regard to the five private projects for rural development. Although the CMS office in Missirah was said to function well and several projects (PROMER, MFR) made use of its services, individual local demand for micro-credit remained limited. Familial logic did not seem to match with that of entrepreneurial management, (Muilerman, 2004, 97).

All private initiatives, with exception of PRCNK, were positively appreciated by many informants at the local level. Nevertheless, there was a general feeling that these initiatives were not sufficient. In Badi, there was a waiting list for APROVAG. In Wasssadou, one of the GIEs wanted to expand its plantation to satisfy the demand for plots. In addition, all banana plantations were devastated by flooding in September 2003, which meant the loss of all local investments and another year to work and to wait for the new harvest. Earlier that same year, one of the GIEs in Wassadou was confronted with the breakdown of its water pump, resulting in the loss of their banana harvest. Lastly, apes and hippos are fond of bananas and cause a lot of damage, despite round-the-clock guards.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I have tried to answer the question of the interrelationship between nature conservation policies and those for rural development in the municipality of Dialokoto, where first the colonial and later the Senegalese government had taken several far-reaching measures for nature conservation, and where recently governmental and private organizations tried to win the cooperation of the villagers by offering them possibly interesting economic opportunities. Can one speak of integration and synergy between the different policies during our research period, 2002–2003?

Integration and synergy of conservation and rural development policies presuppose, in my view, at least three conditions: 1) formal expression in the philosophy and objectives of most organizations and projects concerned; 2) sufficient means to achieve those objectives; and 3) a functioning forum for coordination and negotiation in order to elaborate a synergetic cooperation adapted to the local situation.

On the basis of the foregoing description and analysis, at least three conclusions seem to be justified. Firstly, that most governmental organizations (DPN, EFC, CR and Sodefitex, with exception of Sonacos) and all private projects for nature conservation (Biodiversité Rôneraies Wassadou, PRCNK, PROGEDE,

ASAN) explicitly recognized this double aim of nature conservation and rural development, but that the private projects for rural development (CMS, PROMER, many GIEs, MFR and APROVAG) hardly considered nature conservation and protection of natural resources, although they sometimes had to make concessions to DPN or EFC in order to get permission for their development activities.

My second conclusion is that these governmental organizations, with the exception of Sodefitex, had to cope with such a serious lack of resources and personnel that they could not correctly implement their policies, whereas many private projects seemed to be relatively rich and had many more resources at their disposal.

Thirdly, in several organizations and projects a strong need had been expressed to create or revitalize a forum for coordination of, and for negotiation about activities and competencies of the different projects and organizations. The complaint heard in the poor governmental organizations was that the rich private projects were often behaving in an independent and arrogant way.

Thus, impressive ideological reasoning and well-intentioned actions notwithstanding, the conditions for integration and synergy were, in my view, not yet optimal. Moreover, although the developmental effects of nature conservation were highly appreciated by many representatives of the local population, these effects were at the same time regarded as being insufficient and as being just a first step. Probably not enough to prevent poaching and other illegal activities. In addition, the cultivation of cotton and bananas, regarded as basic for rural development, was difficult to reconcile with the maintenance of biodiversity. In sum, the desired synergetic process, the mutual reinforcement of nature protection and rural development, was barely perceptible at the local level.

Retrospect: Some recurrent themes in the book

This book presents my ideas, motivations and experiences with regard to the supervising and coaching of young students in their first anthropological research outside Europe. Furthermore, based on personal research and that of my students, it offers an understanding of rural society, its structure, social processes and problems, in eastern Senegal during the period 1986–2003.

It is *a personal document*. It gives my personal reasons for my participation as a coach in the research training, and it describes the problems inherent to this coaching: how my hope to fruitfully combining teaching and research was only partially achieved (Chapter 1). It also describes my personal ideas, developed over many years, about the communication with Senegalese and Gambian people, in particular about my reactions to the constant stream of requests, and about the social effects of granting or refusing a request (Chapter 3). It also reports my efforts, as a socially engaged cultural anthropologist, to acquire support for a pilot research into an alternative irrigation scheme for Netteboulou (Chapter 10). Moreover, throughout the book, I regularly mention the effects of a constant lack of time for my work (in particular, Chapters 9 and 10). Evidently, with all this I am opening myself up to potentially malicious criticism. However, it may be instructive and funny, I hope, to read about another person's vicissitudes.

Another recurring theme is that social research and also our research training, takes place within *a social arena* in which several players aim to maintain or to reinforce their social or economic position towards other players. An example was the young politician in Tambacounda who emphatically wanted to insert Senegalese students into our training (Chapter 1). Another example was the public quarrel between two family members of a chief (in The Gambia) about who might deliver candidates for the position of interpreter (Chapter 3). I also mentioned a quarrel between two families in Netteboulou about the post of watchman for the staffs house in Tambacounda, which led both parties appealing to their respective *marabouts* for help from magical procedures. Next, I had to face many requests to financially invest in enterprises (for poultry farming, cattle breeding, horticulture, diamond trade), or to cooperate in establishing new NGOs (Chapter 3). Among the

stakeholders were also the researchers themselves. They were placed within a certain family, most often within the compound of the village head, and they had to work with an interpreter of that same family. This unavoidable reception structure may deliver them advantages with certain informants, or, just the reverse, may be a barrier to communication with others. Under these circumstances, initially unknown to the researchers, they try to elicit information about an informant's views or actions in certain matters. His or her reactions to the researcher's questions may vary from full acceptance to complete refusal to converse. Other possible reactions are repeated non-appearance, or asking for money in exchange for information, or statements desirable from the informant's point of view. So, data gathering may be a struggle (Chapter 2). In my efforts to get support for a pilot research project on an alternative irrigation scheme for Netteboulou, I became aware of two other political arenas that I had become involved in: that of Lidesco and Euroconsult and that of Sodefitex, Caritas Tambacounda and Cebemo (Chapter 10). In 1997, Sodefitex had even forbidden its agents from giving any information to my students (Chapter 11), while, in 1988, I was refused access to an evaluation report, because "Sodefitex is an enterprise whose interests have to be protected against competitors" (Chapter 10).

A third recurrent theme concerns my *understanding of social order and change in the Mandinka village of Netteboulou.* In my view, the community of Netteboulou is involved in a transition process from a society with hierarchical and interdependent social categories towards a clientelist society, in which practically all participants have become dependent on one patron who controls all social relationships within and outside the village. I concluded Chapter 6 with the metaphor that, in the course of history, all families in Netteboulou, even the Signate, seem to have fallen from the frying pan into the fire.

Originally, all families were locked into a hierarchical social system with different status groups, who were interdependent because certain ritual and economic tasks, regarded as indispensable for society as a whole, were reserved for each category. This division of tasks gave them all a socially recognized place in the sun. Their indispensability is a main reason why members of other categories merit respect.

Regarding the social hierarchy, we may speak of a certain continuity, but in terms of economic rights and obligations, many changes have taken place in the course of history. This weakening interdependency between the status categories must have brought a certain freedom of economic action for all

categories involved: noble people were no longer obliged to lodge and feed their slaves; freedom for the hereditary craft groups to deliver their services to other families than that of the founders; no longer categorical labour obligations for slave families, but use of temporary, outside labourers on a voluntary contract basis. Thus, more room for familial enterprise.

However, national independence abrogated the post of *chef de canton,* with its financial advantages, and in 1982 the Signate had to give up their last governmental function. Moreover, given the introduction of periodical elections, the Signate had to make the transition to the position of political intermediary, with all its uncertainties. They had thus been made dependent on the number of votes they could deliver. On this point they were less successful. In addition, the Signate must have been uncertain about whether or not they could preserve the recognition of their traditional position as founders of the village and owners of the land, on account of two new national laws, according to which the ultimate ownership of the land is vested in the State, and the management of the local State domain is delegated to the rural council (Chapter 6). In particular, the fact that their political destiny had become dependent on their former subjects, incited and reinforced in them the will to keep all initiatives under control, and to allow only those that consolidate their socio-economic position.

To this end, they had at least one key strategy, which they shared with other relatively wealthy households in the village, of noble as well as slave status. They all exploited the effects of the capricious rainfall and of the seasonal food shortage in many households (Chapter 8). When a household head with a food problem comes to see the head of a wealthy household with a demand for help, the latter is said to wait to see what the petitioner proposes to do in exchange for the support. When he proposes sending some of his young men to plough and sow or to weed in time, the other readily accepts, depending, of course, on the labour situation in his household. The desperate begging party may also propose selling one of his machines or animals, or part of his chemical fertilizer, pesticide or insecticide, etc. at a low price. The outcome of the negotiation may also be a financial loan, to be paid back in grains after the harvest, when grain prices are very low. As argued in Chapter 8, this kind of transaction contributes to making the food shortage in many households permanent: the extraction of labour from the poor households would become a permanent process, while the wealthy households would permanently dispose of a pool of labourers, ready to carry out the necessary activities on the farms of the wealthier.

The Signate family had yet other ways to maintain their power and wealth. According to my informants, they received many requests for food. They were said to give food support to poor households, but only on condition that they were strictly loyal to them: no vote, no food support. They also wanted public recognition of their help, and of their status as founders of the village and owners of the land. In addition, they were said to manipulate the movements of the cattle herd to receive more dung on their farms than other farmers (Chapter 7). They also obstructed projects and local initiatives that, in their view, did not respect their historical role and did not contribute sufficiently to their wealth and power (Chapter 6). They are even said to have their spies in Netteboulou and the surrounding villages.

Notwithstanding all this criticism with regard to their behaviour, there is hardly any public protest, and many families vote according to Ansumane's wish, because a vote for Ansumane is form of insurance in case of emergency. Given the rainfall pattern in the district of Tambacounda and the fact that rain-fed agriculture is the most important source of income (Chapters 7 and 8), this insurance is a matter of absolute necessity for most household heads in Netteboulou. Against this background it is also comprehensible why, ultimately, so few farmers participated in the re-opened irrigation scheme in 1987 (Chapter 9).

A fourth theme, recurrent throughout the book, concerns *the role of the government, or the influence of State organizations within the domain of local agriculture.* For the majority of households, practicing agriculture has been the main route to food and financial income since the start of colonial times. In our research, we came across successive governmental interventions in local agriculture that, in the long run, contributed to the enrichment of a small group consisting of local leaders, civil servants, politicians and traders on the one hand, and to the impoverishment of a large number of local farmers on the other. When, on account of these processes, these farmers started to withdraw from groundnut production, the interventions finally were stopped and replaced with new ones.

Already in precolonial times, two competing European powers, France and Great Britain, had a great stake in the cultivation of groundnuts. They wanted an undisturbed production of this crop, which was one of the main reasons why they both decided to abolish the Atlantic slave trade, until that point the most important source of revenue for the Mandinka kingdoms along the River Gambia (Chapter 4). Consequently, the noble Mandinka families

switched to large-scale groundnut growing, making use of large numbers of slaves.

The French colonial government was determined to increase the production of groundnuts, and to prevent the drain of people and produce to The (British) Gambia. To these ends, the government built a railway to facilitate the transport of people, raw materials and products; they introduced in 1912 a system of cooperatives (the SIPs) with obligatory membership and periodical contribution; and, in the 1920s, they started a programme of agricultural mechanization in the cultivation of groundnuts, in order to raise the local productivity of land and labour. In the meantime, they contributed to gradually ending internal slavery, among others by tax measures and by facilitating the arrival of temporary foreign labourers. On account of numerous cases of fraud and corruption and, consequently, the discouragement of the local groundnut producers, the cooperative organization was finally dissolved in 1955 (Chapter 4).

In the 1960s, after national independence, the price of groundnuts on the world market gradually began to decrease. The government reacted by granting the monopoly of the groundnut trade to a newly established state organization, (ONCAD), thereby eliminating in one stroke all French trading companies. This monopoly led in the then one-party state to an extensive use of ONCAD's means for political or private ends. Leaders of the religious brotherhoods and other local leaders received all kinds of gifts and favours in exchange for the votes of their followers or subordinates. Also, the internal organization of the cooperatives left room for manipulation and fraud. ONCAD was finally dissolved in 1980 (Chapter 4).

Faced with ever declining prices for groundnuts on the world market, and in order to diversify the agricultural export production, the government decided to further the cultivation of cotton by local farmers, and to discourage that of groundnuts, which had been for so long the favourite cash crop of generations of Mandinka. The so-called cotton zone was created, and its development on the basis of commercial cotton cultivation has been, since 1974, trusted to Sodefitex (Chapter 11). In doing so, the government introduced a crop that is vulnerable to the climatic and environmental conditions of the zone, which necessitated the use of expensive chemicals that subsequently made the cotton cultivation financially risky as well as dangerous for human health. Moreover, it appears to compete with existing crops for land and labour, which, in the case of a bad cotton harvest, results not only in financial

debts, but also food shortages. In addition, all risks of a bad harvest or health problems were laid at the feet of the local farmers.

In 1984, the government, under Abdou Diouf, enacted a new agricultural policy. According to this policy, the State retreated and local communities and farmers had to accept the responsibility for their own agricultural business. All kinds of agricultural subsidies and credits from the State were abrogated, and farmers were forced to look for loans from their more wealthy co-villagers within their supposedly solidary communities. However, Sodefitex was allowed, probably on account of the cotton export, to continue its delivery of requisites and equipment on credit. With this exception to the rule, the government endowed Sodefitex with a monopolistic position. Sodefitex had become the only supplier of agricultural equipment on credit. Farmers, who needed agricultural equipment for the cultivation of other crops as well, had access to this equipment on credit on the condition that they cultivated cotton and that they became members of the local cooperative. They had to transfer their cotton to the board of their cooperative, who had to sell the aggregated cotton exclusively to Sodefitex, at a producer's price fixed by a committee at Dakar. Moreover, they were supposed to show their solidarity with their less productive fellow farmers who, for whatever reason, had created debts, and to be content with a lower producer's price in order to pay off these debts. Farmers in several villages disagreed with this principle. They preferred social units, smaller than the village cooperatives, composed of friends or family members. Fortunately, Sodefitex and the government appeared to take these issues seriously.

While, in the case of Sodefitex, I did not find any indication of excessive enrichment by the happy few, many local informants argued nonetheless, that the cultivation of cotton contributed to the impoverishment of farmers, among others by the fact that Sodefitex was putting all risks on the farmers.

Another intervention by Sodefitex in the local farming system (Chapters 7 and 8) was the construction and management of a number of small-scale schemes for irrigated rice cultivation (Chapter 9). Only a small number of the original 17 schemes functioned well, albeit with interruptions of one or more years. In the case of Netteboulou, informants traced the failure of their scheme to a combination of factors: the choice by Sodefitex of a bad location with, consequently, low outputs, and the incomprehensibly high costs of

chemical inputs. This resulted in Ansumane Signate, the king of Netteboulou, declaring that, "the project contributed to the impoverishment of our village".

A last recurrent theme concerns the *use and management of natural resources.* The district of Tambacounda belongs to a zone characterized by a long dry period and a short rainy season of about four months, where the rainfall is unreliable and capricious. Sometimes, during this short season, there is insufficient or, conversely, too much rain, leading to crop damage and soil erosion (Chapter 7). It concerns an environment where it is much more difficult for human populations to survive than in more moderate climate zones. On the other hand, it belongs to the area where we find the last remaining forests of Senegal, which must be protected against over-exploitation. In Chapter 12, I presented the policies, ideological and perceived in reality, of a number of governmental and non-governmental organizations with regard to the integration of nature conservation and rural development. On the basis of student research in five villages within the rural municipality of Dialokoto, our conclusion had to be that the conditions for synergy between nature conservation and rural development were not yet optimal in the years 2002/3. Although the developmental effects of nature conservation were highly appreciated by local informants, they saw them as just a first step; so far not enough to prevent poaching and other illegal activities.

This theme was also touched on in other chapters. In the case of Netteboulou, we got an impression of the fertility management within the maize circle around the village, and in the farther remote zone by rotation of the yearly pastures (Chapter 7). We have seen how farmers tried to adapt their rain-fed agriculture to the variable (in time and place) rainfall by massive ploughing and sowing on the day after a good rain, and by weeding in time. However, not all households were equally well adapted on account of a food shortage during the agricultural season, which they first had to overcome by, among others, going to work on the farms of other, wealthier households. Consequently, they could not make use of the optimal germination conditions and so had increased chances of having another food shortage in the next agricultural season (Chapter 8). Probably, a form of agriculture not or less dependent on the rainfall would be a solution to this seasonal food shortage and to food insecurity in general (Chapter 9).

Then there is the cotton cultivation as prescribed by Sodefitex. This necessarily implies the use of several kinds of pesticides, insecticides and chemical fertilizer, which, ultimately, have harmful effects on livestock and human beings (Chapter 11). Finally, there is Sodefitex's susbsidiary Piso,

which established 17 small-scale irrigation schemes, varying in size between 13 and 75 hectares. All these areas were completely stripped of their natural vegetation, while many schemes eventually failed and were abandoned (Chapter 9).

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Chronology of specific research activities

1988 (February/March)
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1988 (June/July)
Conversations with 9 of the 28 participants in the irrigation scheme in Netteboulou, which re-opened and then closed again in 1987, and with 17 non-participants about their personal motivations.

1989 (July)
Exploratory survey among 76 household heads in Netteboulou concerning possible food shortage, and conversations with key informants.

1997 and 1998 (June–September)
Research by six students on the views in six villages in the district of Tambacounda concerning the commercial cultivation of cotton, Sodefitex and the local cotton cooperatives.

2002 and 2003 (June–September)
Research by five students on the views in five villages, neighbouring with the Niokolo Koba National Park and the Forest Reserve of Diambour, concerning the relationship of nature conservation and rural development.

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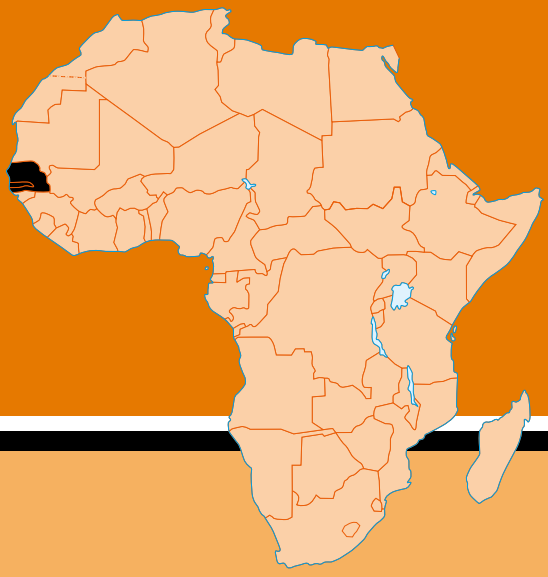

Occasional Publication 35

As an undergraduate in cultural anthropology at Leiden University in 1964, Hans van den Breemer was asked to participate in a research project on the most efficient distribution of new water wells in rural Niger. This brought him unforgettable contact with Hausa people and to some extent also with Fula and Touareg. A second defining experience was his research, from 1972 – 1974, on agricultural innovation among the Aouan of Ivory Coast. This resulted in his doctoral dissertation "Onze Aarde houdt niet van Rijst" (Our Earth does not like Rice). The third phase of his anthropological career began in 1986 with his role in organizing and supervising the research trainings in Senegal and The Gambia for cultural anthropology and development sociology students from Leiden University. This participation led to close contacts with Mandinka people predominantly, but also with people of Diakhanke, Fula, Wolof, Soninke, Serer and other origins.

This book focuses on the third and last phase of his professional career. The dual aim of his participation in the training – coaching students and doing research himself – is reflected in this book. Van den Breemer shares the training staff's ideas and his personal motivations and experiences with regard to the supervision and coaching of young students embarking on their first anthropological research in an unfamiliar culture. He also offers his personal reflections on rural society in Senegal, its structure, social processes and problems. In an account sure to engage anthropologists and non-anthropologists alike, Hans van den Breemer reveals the realities of anthropological fieldwork and the kinds of understandings it may lead to.

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