Mobility, Transnationalism and Contemporary African Societies

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Edited by

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INTRODUCTION: MOBILITY, TRANSNATIONAL CONNECTIONS AND SOCIOCULTURAL CHANGE IN CONTEMPORARY AFRICA[1]

TILO GRÄTZ

Issues of mobility and migration form part of the most salient topics in Africa today, both by their various social and cultural dimensions and effects, but also with regard to the growing anthropological literature these phenomena continue to produce in African Studies (to name but a few: Adepoju & Hammar 1995, Adepoju 2004, Baker & Aina 1995, Bilger & Kraler 2005, Coquery-Vidrovitch et al. 1996, 2003, De Bruijn et al. 2001, Diop et al. 2008, Manchuelle 1997, Lambert 2002, Bakerwell & de Haas 2007, Hahn & Klute 2007, Pellow 2002, Adebayo et al. 2009).

Today, migration as a particular form of mobility is a central feature of many contemporary African societies, contributing to the creation of supra-regional social, political and economic connections. The latter also extend beyond the continent, by way of Africans migrating to Europe, North America or elsewhere, the constitution of new African Diaspora communities (Koser 2003, Orozco 2005) and various modes of integration of Africans into the world economy 'from below' (Mohan & Zack-Williams 2002). Against state policies, spanning from the exclusion, even expulsion of migrants (Bredeloup 1995, Pérouse de Montclos 1999) to the administrative fixation of local populations in some African states, the spatial flexibility of people (apart from enforced displacements) moving back and forth between places and economic sectors, establishing links between distant rural and urban sites, is considerable. Beyond the classical debates on short-term versus long-term systems of migration (Arthur 1991, Guilmoto 1998, Adepoju 2003, 2005), gender aspects (Trager 1995, Meier 2000, Peleikis 2003), so called push - and pull - factors influencing

[1] The contributions to this collective volume primarily adress various forms of voluntary migration.

migrants' decisions and the discussion on structural political positions of migrant minorities, contemporary empirical research has been focussing much more on actual strategies of (trans-) migrants, their institutions, and the subsequent creation of new social spaces related to complex socioeconomic networks across regions and nation-states. Migration is today often a combination of interests and motivations, such as the interrelation of pilgrimage with mobile trading patterns (Grégoire 1993, Yamba 1995, Bava 2003, Kane 2007, Gemmeke 2007) or labour migration connected to visits to kinsmen.

The contributions to this volume are intended to address the political and cultural dimensions of these migratory linkages with regard to issues of citizenship, ethnicity, religiosity and economy. They do not claim to exhaustively discuss all aspects of the phenomena, nor do they represent a comprehensive, overarching theory that might explain causes and effects of migration. Deliberately employing an empirical approach at actual practices and local perspectives on migration, beyond the often narrow media representations, they discuss, however, not only the various opportunities and aspects of socioeconomic change induced by migrants in the respective home and host societies. Beyond the classical issues, such as nomadism and circular dry season labour migration (Rain 1999, Linares 2003), they also address new livelihoods, social and religious practices and lifestyles created by migrants, without neglecting those contexts where migration is rather restricted. Connected by mobile strategies, urban areas and rural homesteads in Africa are no separate worlds; although a certain ambivalence still remains between evolving more stable social structures in new contexts and the flexibility offered by practices of mobility (or, according to the context, enforced by them). The respective new transnational social spaces are not only shaped by movements of people, but also by ideas and memories across nations, landscapes and social fields. Migrants are, to quote Nina Glick-Schiller (2005), transborder citizens, often simultaneously incorporated in various societies, moving between moral fields as well as spheres of exchange (see also Basch et al. 1994, Glick-Schiller et al. 1995, Smith & Guarnizo 1998, Ong 1999, Vertovec 1999, 2001, Pries 1999, Faist 2000, Glick-Schiller & Wimmer 2002, Levitt & Nyberg-Sorensen 2004). This approach questions previous, rather static and localised assumptions about identities, social and ethnic figurations of African societies and consequently also underlines the

necessity of new methodological approaches to migration in and outside Africa[2].

Circulations, Livelihoods, Long-distance networking

Despite the fact that migration, as a particular form of mobility, is historically well established in Africa and is connected to various cultures of mobility (Hahn & Klute 2007), migrants cannot, however, be subsumed under a simple category. Here, the concept of transnationalism has certainly its limits[3], especially with regard to the diversity of degrees and modes of interaction of various migrant groups. Their itineraries as well as their modes of settlement and livelihood, especially in urban centres, are as manifold as their ethnicities, origins and social strategies. Migrants often appropriate niches of urban formal and informal economies (Lo Sardo), in smaller as well as larger cities. In some transitory cities such as Tamanrasset (Badi 2007, Nadi 2007) or Agadez (Brachet 2005) migrants introduced new economic specialisations contributing to the growth of these centres as economic hubs.

Others have meanwhile become rather well-established land-lords or work under official contracts (see Pelican in this volume for Cameroonian teachers in China). Many of these trans-migrants, however, represent, as Boesen and Marfaing (2007)[4] argue, a particular category of "cosmopolitans", creating their own social spaces by connecting various places. In many cases, border regimes may represent contemporary constraints to mobile populations, as Ciavolella shows. In other cases, people living on both sides of a border try to be flexible with regard to

[2] Research on these phenomena often faces the problem that is encouraged by political institutions with their own agenda, e.g. providing answers to illegal migration of Africans to Europe, but its findings often do not propose the expected simple solutions (cf. Bakewell 2008).

[3] For a critical review see Portes et al. (1999), Bommes (2003), Lüthi (2005), Gabaccia (2005).

[4] This concept, previously discussed in anthropology, most of all by Ulf Hannerz (1990), and primarily referring to educated and business elites, has recently been applied to strategies of other social groups, including those operating at the periphery of urban areas, in their "vernacular"(Diouf 2000) cosmopolitanism. Boesen and Marfaing (op.cit) discern the particular aspects of a "cosmopolitanism from below" in West Africa, of actors that form part of urban economies without being fully integrated into these urban polities, featuring particular modes of spatial flexibility and the management of risks, policies of exclusion and public representations of "otherness. For the political consequences of these processes, see Appiah (2005).

potential benefits of political integration into the respective nation states. Giulia Casentini, in her contribution, reports e.g. on the political history of the Konkomba living in two neighbouring African countries of Ghana and Togo, and on the way national politics affect political structures as well as social links across state borders.

Degrees and modes of the integration of migrants into local host societies are, however, quite diverse. In West Africa, there are often particular (often ethnically mixed) migrant quarters, especially in Muslim contexts, offering shelter and social integration, following the *Zongo*-tradition (Lo Sardo; Pellow 2002). In other cases, migrants are closely tied to hosts and landlords, acting as mentors and patrons. This role is often assumed by successful, established migrants towards members of their original communities, meanwhile acting as powerful brokers. Long-established institutions such as migrants associations fulfil both social and political functions, mediating between newcomers and pioneer migrants, use "home" as a resource to maintain cohesion and identification (Quiminal 2001). In many cases, migrants develop particular strategies to cope with their often marginal situation, either in developing new identities, or material culture becomes relevant (Lo Sardo). Migrants use to develop their own infrastructures, such as bars, workshops, teleshops etc. Religious networks such as Islamic brotherhoods (Riccio 2004) or Protestant Churches (Shakhbazyan, see below, Nieswand 2005a, Adogame & Weißköppel 2005) may serve as an important social anchorage for trans-migrants, assuming an additional role of integration in the absence of other institutions and moral references. Ekaterina Shakhbazyan argues, however, that Churches promote both the adaptation of migrants into host societies and guarantee the maintenance of strong links to their countries of origin.

Establishing in the host society thus rarely means abandoning any relations and identifications with communities back home (see also Zongo 2003). While simultaneously adapting to the new circumstances, we often find a reaffirmation, even reconstruction of these ties in the new contexts. However, often there seems to be the danger of becoming too isolated a migrant community, easily excluded and often targeted in times of conflicts. Migrants, whether legally recognised or not, often face forms of xenophobia, even racism (Ciavolella, see also Geschiere 2004, Whitaker 2005, Nyamnjoh 2006, Geschiere 2009, Kersting 2009), and have to find their own ways of dealing with these challenges. Despite the fact that they often live in a precarious situation, most contributors especially focus on migrants agency to create new sociabilities (cf. Youngstedt 2004a, Weiss 1998) and to shape their migratory conditions. One example are Tuareg

migrants, studied by Ines Kohl, that often obtain several passports and change their nationalities according to the circumstances. Political regimes, e.g. with their divergent tax and immigration policies, may even become a resource for those moving back and forth the frontiers, such as smugglers (Nugent 2002) and day labourers. Their practices can only be understood by a complex analysis of the structural options and repertories of action used and constantly enhanced by migrants.

Employing this perspective, several essays, especially the contributions by Pelican, Kohl and Lo Sardo, address practices of networking and cultural exchange between local communities of origin and migrants in the Diaspora, by way of associations, Churches and other institutions and channels enabling the transnational flow of formations, of goods, people and ideas. Ines Kohl follows the strategies of Tuareg migrants and their livelihoods in the transregional area between Libya, Algeria and Niger. She argues that a new migrant lifestyle emerges among young men that considerably differ from former nomadic attitudes. Young Tuareg develop a multitude of borderline-strategies as particular ways to cope with different political and border regimes, and skilfully use the respective opportunities.

Sébastien Lo Sardo studied Hausa migrants both in Belgium and in Niger, exploring their livelihoods and networks, as well as aspects of their material culture that serves as an important vehicle both for identity processes as well as with respect to investments back home. Michaela Pelican retraces diverging trajectories of Cameroonian migrants with respect to "south-south" movements of African migrants, and thus opens a new empirical field of research on African migration towards destinations such as Gabon, but also China and Arab countries (see also Pelican & Tatah 2009).

The often discussed question whether migration is benevolent, in terms of remittances (Arhinful 2001, Smith 2007), transfer of capital, knowledge and experiences, or whether it contributes to social pressure, destabilisation, yet problematic exploitation especially of remaining populations, is, nevertheless, difficult to answer. This depends on the very way migration is socially organised, above all by a system of intermediation between places and sectors, and integrated into the social life of a polity. It is contingent upon lucrative economic activities and the way in which migrants are tied back to their home regions and develop communication and networking strategies in order to assure their control of their assets. Furthermore, income strategies within informal settings are linked to precarious circumstances. This, however, does not preclude the emergence of moral fields among migrants, even of divergent ethnic and

social backgrounds, as Tilo Grätz demonstrates in this chapter on motor taxi drivers and gold miners, both low-threshold options for flexible yet self-conscious migrants, les *débrouillard*s, in the Republic of Benin.

Of bush fallers and exodants

The contributions to this edition, employing a socio-anthropological perspective, reveal that migration is not only a spatial, economic and political development. It is above all a socially and culturally embedded process that depends on the cultural context of migration, the management of identity processes, and the (often tense) relation to established local groups. It seems, however, necessary to underline that in many cases the "culture of mobility" is rather the result of primarily economic and social strategies necessary to cope with problematic circumstances, being in the fore of migratory decisions. For many young people in Africa migration, ideally to one of the major African cities such as Abidjan, Dakar, and Kinshasa or even to Europe (see also Timera 1996, Riccio 2005, Salzbrunn 2007, Schmitz 2008) or to the US (Stoller 2002, Abusharaf 2002, Youngstedt 2004a), has meanwhile become almost a necessity. Inspired by the talks of their fathers, neighbours or peers (Meier 2003), successful returnees and the media representation, leaving home to seek some fortune elsewhere is, however, more than an income opportunity. Such times of journey have become an integral part of juvenile dreams and aspirations projected to urban life (Ferguson 1999), a period of the life-cycle that may be compared to an initiation rite, an element of becoming adult: the experience from leaving their homesteads, through long voyages, passing the adaptation and integration into migrant communities and finally coming back at least as an experienced fellow, often leads to a decisive moment of recognition and self-assertion (see also Timera 2001, Barrett 2004). In this perspective, also those young girls from rural areas who are working as housemaids for wealthier townspeople perceive, as well as their parents, the periods of migration as an extension of their youth, and a way to enhance their social options especially with regard to marriage (Alber & Martin 2007; Sieveking).

Returning migrants face big expectations, are called "*exodants*" (Lo Sardo), "*been-tos*" (Nieswand 2005b; Martin 2007), "*bush fallers*" (Pelican), "*aventuriers*" (Jónsson 2008:18), "*eaters of the dry season*" (Rain 1999), or according to the (former) host countries "*Ivorians*" or "*Russians*". Successful returnees in Ghana are, with regard to their lifestyle, called "*burger*" (Nieswand 2009). Those who failed or had to

come back involuntarily are hardly perceived (Donkor-Kaufmann 1999). Migration entails, however, withstanding challenges and hardships; in the dramatic case of boatpeople also mortal risks, but potentially also the acquisition of languages and social capital. Returning migrants, equipped with experiences and material advantages, may contribute to emancipation processes within a hierarchically organised society back home, as Leservoisier demonstrates in this volume by the example of former slaves in Mauretania. He explores the dynamics introduced by returning migrants of slave origin among the Halpulaar, a society featuring important hierarchies and status differences. Within the context of a new legitimacy of "traditional authorities" during decentralisation processes and the declining importance of the election of chiefs among the Halpulaar society, dissent groups of former slaves tried to contest and formed their own community. Re-migrants considerably contributed to processes of emancipation, of mitigated success though, but added new legitimacy.

Those staying at home often feel uncomfortable, stuck between hope and disenchantment (Graw 2005), and in same cases those still luring to travel to Europe or the US experience a kind of denigration and psychological stress, as described in Gaibazzis paper. He reports about the way immobility is culturally understood in Gambia and refers to the general position of youths in national economic and political life. Immobility is perceived by many young men as a syndrome, commonly called *nerves*, expressing much more than impatience and despair (see also Jónsson 2008:29pp.). Lacking the experience of migration may thus create, together with hope for economic benefit, a feeling of stagnation not only with regard to their economic improvement, but also their individual position among peers. For some groups, mobility has for a long time been both a livelihood and an option, e.g. to evade pressure from central authorities (e.g. Fulbe, see Pelican & Dafinger 2006), contributing to their ambiguous image as a roving yet defiant kind of population. Today, these options are becoming more and more limited, either by official restrictions on migration or the pertinence of state borders with regard to migratory strategies and issues of citizenship.

Finally, most papers remind us that migration is shaped by gender relations, as Nadine Sieveking stresses with regard to the very different perceptions by men and women of causes and effects of migration in Mali and Ghana, and underlines the complex social meanings of mobility, rejecting any simplified policy approaches of fixing populations by localised development projects (see also Bakewell & de Haas 2007,

Bakewell 2008) or seeing migrants as perfect agents of change. Against these backgrounds, any discussion on migration in Africa should take a view at both the ensuing socio-economic and legal aspects, as well as the politics of belonging pertinent to the respective societies. The various modes of mobility discussed in this volume bring about considerable social changes on the continent, induced by socially creative mobile actors.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part looks at migrants´ flexible strategies of adaptation to changing economic and political environments where often cross-ethnic informal associations or religious groups may get particular importance. The second part follows the multiple effects of migration on home societies, but also evaluates problems of immobility caused by political restriction or lacking opportunities. The third part focuses on the way mobile actors respond to and make use of state borders, and discusses transnational relationships shaping migratory practices and discourses.

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CHAPTER ONE:

MOBILITY AND MODES OF FLEXIBLE ADAPTATION

MINERS AND TAXI DRIVERS IN BENIN: EMERGENT MORAL FIELDS IN INFORMAL MIGRANT SETTINGS

TILO GRÄTZ

Introduction

This essay[1] explores two particular socio-economy fields, related to artisanal gold-mining and to motorbike taxi drivers, exemplified by a case study from the Republic of Benin. Frequently, migrants are seeking income through these activities, because in both cases entry into the respective sectors is comparatively easy and not connected to ethnic networks, economic capital or skills. These features make these occupations quite attractive, especially for those hoping to solve a temporal crisis by way of migration. Both settings are characterised by a high degree of social fluctuation, informality and temporality. I argue that despite these features, norms and rules of behaviour are not less demanding and compelling and do not, however, obstruct the establishment of particular moral fields. In both cases, various daily conflicts between individuals occur, but actors have developed institutions of conflict resolution, mostly beyond the state. Referring to recent publications on comparable case studies in Africa, these examples underline the need for a re-assessment of theories of social structuration with regard to occupational roles and emphasize the necessity to discuss more sophisticated approaches to cultures of migration.

First case: migrant gold miners

Artisanal gold booms are resurgent phenomena in West Africa today. Especially in the dry season, numerous migrant miners engage in the

[1] The chapter is based on several field trips to the Republic of Benin between 2000 and 2008 as well as various scientific and media publications on these issues, collected between 2004 and 2008.

small-scale exploitation of mountain shafts as well as alluvial gold fields. At many mining sites, a sudden gold boom triggered massive immigration, the rapid installation of huge mining camps, the establishment of new markets and infrastructures. Subsequently, a variety of conflicts emerged in many such places, inside the mining camps and between local residents and immigrant miners. Generally, artisanal gold mining[2] has been practised in these areas since medieval times. Several regions had local systems of gold exploitation, mainly of alluvial deposits (Kiethega 1983, Dumett 1998). At the end of the Eighties and the beginning of the Nineties of the last century, new booms occurred simultaneously in several regions of West Africa (Carbonnel 1991).[3] Informal modes of exploitation and gold trading (smuggling) developed beside small enterprises controlled by the state or by licence holders. This recent growth of small-scale (artisan) gold mining is related to massive waves of labour migration into rural areas, above all in Mali, Niger, Benin, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire[4] and Guinea.

A second new feature is the massive engagement in reef mining by numerous migrant small-scale miners, which results in more profit and more demanding systems of labour organisation, involving more actors, but also in new ways of sociability in the new, huge mining camps. The exploitation of new mining sites and the reopening of abandoned deposits led in most cases to the rapid establishment of new immigrant communities with new markets, increased circulation of money and the spontaneous development of infrastructures and services. Recently discovered mines also led to the massive immigration of petty businessmen, traders, barkeepers and those offering other services, including prostitution. In a short period of time, small villages have become larger settlements; new communities of settlers have emerged in all mentioned countries.[5] In most cases there is a considerable divergence

[2] The common denomination for all modes of non-industrial gold-mining today is artisanal and small-scale (gold)- mining (ASM).

[3] Migration to the gold mines can be seen as a reaction to a situation of crisis, especially in the agricultural sector, with fewer job opportunities, the effects of structural adjustment and the general devaluation of F CFA in 1994 causing higher living costs ("push factors", for Burkina Faso see Asche (1994:194f); for Benin Bierschenk et al. (2003). Other factors, relevant to some areas, are droughts and civil wars.

[4] For recent case studies on gold-mining in West Africa see Grätz (2009), Werthmann (2009), Hilson (2006, 2009) and Luning (2006, 2008).

[5] I do not employ the term „gold rush" because it infers too much irrational social action and chaos. I would like to focus on the many more regulated social relations in that field that are of more interest for the ethnological discussion. This does not

between official laws – as developed, for example, in the *Code Minier* – and local practices, especially significant as regards the access to resources, labour organisation and the legitimacy of mediators. As a consequence, conflicts often emerge between gold miners and state authorities, but also between the locals and immigrants and between interest groups among the miners themselves concerning the rights to exploitation and settlement.[6]

Small-scale gold-mining in West Africa is carried out in two ways: as a small side-business carried out by the local populations close to mining pits (above all related to alluvial gold extraction), or as a major activity at some mining sites as "hot spots". The latter are linked to the influx of many translocal migrant miners, either leading to the enlargement of previous settlements or to the establishment of new mining camps. The cases discussed here belong to the second category. Such mining sites move from one area to the other, representing scattered, isolated spots of economic micro-systems. In all these cases, however, the number of miners decreases considerably during the agricultural high season and increases considerably in the dry season. They may also change in periods of festivities and religious duties. Rainfalls, the drying of rivers, etc, also trigger the seasonality of activities.[7]

Apart from these changes in numbers, the inner composition of the mining communities differs according to the time spent in the mines and the degree of professionalism, of people who rarely return to their home regions and engage more permanently and exclusively in gold-mining over a longer period of time, when necessary, moving to new mining fields or exploring them. Migration is linked to the diffusion of the special arrangements, norms and roles guiding small-scale mining in several such mining camps. It also sets up new economic circles, related to the circulation of goods, to new traffic connections and the proliferation of skills, financial assets and knowledge. The new mining frontiers constitute

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suggest that I deny the dramatic dimensions caused by the rapid change of consumer practices, alcohol abuse, and the monetisation of everyday life, the production of winners and losers and the use of violence in many gold mining areas.

[6] Often there is a similar scenario: an initial period of serious conflicts is followed by a period of stabilisation and "working arrangements" between all actors.

[7] In the case of Kwatena in Bénin, there is a special pattern of small-scale migration, just a way of commuting, especially from the area of to Kwatena, exercised by some people on a weekly basis, possible because of short distance and frequent transport facilities.

at the same time frontiers of cultural transgression, of promises of consumption and cultural creativity for potential young migrants.

Miners have developed an intricate system of labour organisation, which features role differences, shift work and allowances. Generally, miners work in small teams headed by a team chief, who, in most cases, has the informal right to exploit a shaft or pit. Generally, the rights of the exploitation of shafts and pits are attributed to the person who first discovered and exploited them, assuming he or she has the technical and financial means to do so. In the event that this person does not possess these means, he/she may forge a contractual agreement with a small-scale entrepreneur who, in turn, engages in exploitation in exchange for shares in the yield or the payment of one-off or recurring compensation. Most of these arrangements disregard of the official mining law. The shaft owner usually acquires tools, rents motor pumps, feeds the workers, and when needed, pays medical costs during the exploration cycle, which he may deduct later when it comes to sharing the profits. The majority of shaft owners work on their own account, although many are indebted to moneylenders or wealthier gold traders. The number of workers in a team varies from 6 to 20 according to the size of the pit, the expected gold yield and the available manpower. Often – according to the overall number of workers in the team - there is a further hierarchy including assistants, heads of the work shifts and guards. Every team shares the profits from the gold ore directly on the spot. Usually, the patron gets half of all the stones containing gold and then his assistant and the other workers receive their shares. Everyone then has to extract the gold and in most cases they employ assistants to pound and mill the stones. Women, who are paid either cash or a certain amount of gold-containing materials, carry out some of these activities, especially pounding, milling, and sieving.

This system of risk sharing involves a social contract between the team chief and his workers comprising a kind of ‘trade- off’: the more unpredictable the yield, the greater the possible gain for the team chief in case of success. On the other hand, a chief must satisfy the basic living requirements of mine labourers, regardless of the yield. Miners recognise an effective team leader as someone who possesses knowledge of not only where and how to exploit gold veins and to organise the shifts, but also how to work efficiently, and how to excavate in ways which prevent injuries and accidents. An experienced team leader commands respect and prestige. Team leaders must fulfil their responsibilities to ensure that workers stay with them and do not join another team leader for the next extraction cycle. Hierarchies thus provide security for working arrangements. They are flexible enough so that former gold diggers

potentially may become shaft owners or team leaders when acquiring experience, esteem and, of course, sufficient capital.

Gold-mining camps gather people of extremely heterogeneous social and ethnic origins. They are typical frontier-communities,[8] although they feature many differences to the classical settler-frontiers. A (non-industrial) gold mining frontier represents a particular set of phenomena related to the appropriation of mineral resources by miners and by simple technical means, the establishment of many dispersed mining and processing sites of artisanal production, new massive transnational migratory drifts, the development of miners' camps or mining villages, and finally rapid economic shifts often in rural areas hitherto only partly integrated into the realm of market economy. The new mining camps offer new (although instable) income opportunities; a flourishing gold trade and the emergence of "hot spots" of economic and social change, advanced by the subsequent emergence of markets, infrastructures and businesses of all kinds.[9] Not always gold mining frontiers develop on the periphery of political spaces, but often develop within; nevertheless stetting up completely novel modes of resource use, economic circuits and social fields. In most cases, they represent frontiers of ethnic /and or regional identities, connected to power relations that are negotiated in those interstitial spaces in the light of mining resources. Internally, the respective mining communities develop their own rules, featuring a growing degree of occupational identity, and are marked by various hierarchies and modes of labour division, composed of socially and ethnically heterogeneous actors, including service providers and traders. We have to deal with a relative (semi-) autonomy (Moore 1978) especially of roving groups of gold miners as regards their patterns of migration, the mode of labour organisation, their social norms and lifestyle patterns (Grätz 2002).

Nobody is born a gold miner, but one may gradually grow into that business. Newly arriving migrants are firstly entrusted with minor assistant work at the mining sites, later with more demanding tasks and finally they are integrated as full members of a mining team. This entails withstanding the hardships of work and 'proofs' of all kinds, to withstand the continuous disputes over claims, but also to demonstrate a good

[8] The frontier theorem refers to Turner (1893), and was applied to Africa by Kopytoff (1999; cf. also Grätz 2003, 2004). Different to agrarian settler frontiers (Doevenspeck 2004), mining frontiers are pirmarily related to movements of young people.

[9] For a historical and contemporary account on gold mining in Africa cf. Dumett (1998).

working spirit and providing help when needed. The newcomer will be rewarded by acknowledgement among his fellow miners and participate in male rituals such as collective drinking. Becoming a fully recognised peer also means to behave according to male conspicuous consumption patterns (see below), and to spend free time accordingly. Conflicts are very frequent, over the limits of the mining pits, concerning small treacheries and insults, either between gold miners or team heads and their crews. Meanwhile, most mining sites feature a kind of council, mostly composed of team heads, and sometimes there is even a militia, to police the mining camp. Miners accept their verdicts, in order to continue mining; otherwise they would have to leave the camp, a kind of ultimate solution in serious cases. There is, however, a discourse of comradeship: cheating too much is heavily sanctioned, although small treacheries may be tolerated. Miners show unity especially vis-à-vis adjacent communities and state authorities.

Second case: Motor taxi drivers (Zémidjan)

Motor taxi drivers appeared in Benin at the beginning of the 1980s[10] as a result of the general economic crisis dominating the last decade of the socialist period and the (first) government of Kérekou (1972-1990). Migrants from rural areas and smaller towns, but also employees, students or craftsmen started to offer their driving services, either as a side business or full time (Bancolé 1998, Boko 2003:32pp., Agossou 2003). Today, Zémidjan motor taxis are providing about 70% of the overall urban transport (Trans-Africa Consortium 2008: 34).[11] Initially, the businesses of Zémidjan or Kèkènon, as these drivers are usually called in Benin, were confined to the major economic centre and biggest town, Cotonou, and its suburbs, but at the beginning of the 1990s, as a typical activity of urban survival (Simone & Abouhani 2005), they rapidly spread all over Benin and even abroad.[12] Subsequently, there were several attempts by the governmental authorities to interdict these activities, in favour of cabin

[10] The origins of Zémidjan can be traced back to bicycle taxis in Porto-Novo, called taxi-*kanna* in the 1960s, that used to transport female akassa vendors to the Adjarra market (Agossou 1979, 2003:101).

[11] Generally, the system of public transport in the Republic of Benin is not very well developed. Beside the collective overland taxis (Taxi brousse), there is a growing number of overland busses, but inside the major town, obnly the major avenues are served by reasonable prized minibus- or collective taxi lines.

[12] Motorbike taxis are also known from Togo, from Zinder, the Republic of Niger and Cameroon, where they are also called *bend-skineurs (*Mahamat 1982, Kengne Fodouop 1985, Kaffo et al. 2007).

taxis, but without success. On the contrary, these pressures made Motor taxi drivers associate[13], organise rallies to demand legalisation. [14] Many of them became also formally organised in associations or clubs.[1516] Finally, governmental agencies had to accept their existence, and asked them only to register[17] and being visible as taxi drivers.[18]

Today, motor taxi drivers are estimated to number more than 100.000 (Agossou 2003: 113), half of them in Cotonou alone. They constitute a very visible aspect of urban life[19] in all major towns of the country. They are easily perceptible by their coloured, short sleeved, button down shirts with real or fictitious numbers of registration on their back. [20] In Cotonou, they usually wear yellow shirts, whereas in Porto Novo red and in Grand

[13] There is even a *Syndicat national de Zémidjan du Bénin* and the metropolitain *Union des conducteurs de taxi-moto de Cotonou.*

[14] An important factor was the committment of one of the most popular Benin pop stars, Stan Tohon, creating a special song on that occasion, which soon became widely popular and helped to ally larger parts of the population to the cause of the Zémidjan.

[15] I would argue that even those (numerous) "illegal" Zémidjans who are not officially registered and members of one of the professional associations indirectly profit from this kind of institutions, as the latter occasionally defend the interests of Zémidjans and publicly manifest their strength as a group

[16] In Natitingou, in August 2004 some Zémidjan drivers formed a football team for a competition, although it mostly consisted of young people that had already been peering before becoming Zémidjans (Hahnekamp 2005).

[17] At the time of investigations, costs for registration ran up to 19000 FCFA (Hahnekamp 2005) and meanwhile are probably higher; a comparatively large sum as it represents one up to two weeks of income of a driver. Frequently, violent clashes between informal (non-registered) Zémidjans and the police occur, rencently in Cotonou in October 2009

[18] Zémidjans are frequently objects of cartoons or comic videos, shot e.g. by *Mediateurs sans frontiers*, a collaboration of Beninese and French actors and filmmakers (see e.g.. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwYxR0W_-JU&feature=related; 23.4.09)

[19] During election campaigns, Zémidjans were discovered by NGOs as ideal ambassadors of civil rights and duties. In 2001 e.g. the NGO „Centre Afrika Obota"and the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation vested them with new shirts, carrying slogans such as „*Chère soeur, Cher frère, conserve bien ta carte d'électeur*! or „*Allons tous voter le 4 mars!"*. Similar projects relate to HIV/AIDS protection.

[20] West African (Cab-) taxi drivers in towns or overland services ('bush taxis') feature similar modes of organisation, though mostly they are much better mostly organised, see Stoller (1982) Lawuyi (1988), Grätz (2007). For technical aspects of driving in Africa see the Website (in German) of a research project based at the Institute of Ethnology, University of Munich, URL:
http://www.ethnologie.lmu.de/Africars/index.html (22.7.08).

Popo green ones are usual. Generally, clients simply wait to stop them almost everywhere in town. Services include direct to-door-drives, the transportation of objects and goods; even carrying several people at once. Alike elsewhere in the world, they are also sources of information and rumour (Falola 2009).

The most widespread type of Zémidjan bikes are Yamaha MATE 80, but also Yamaha 100, Suzuki 100 et al. In major agglomerations, most Zémidjans use to run their bikes on smuggled cheaper fuel (but of worse quality) from Nigeria *(Kpayo)*,[21] although recently a Togolese provider (ORYX), supported by governmental charters, has started installing particular small fuelling stations for their purposes. Many motorbikes are decorated with stickers or slogans[22]. Fares are negotiable prior to the ride and vary inside the town between 100 and 2000 FCFA, according to the distance, area of destination, loads, prices of fuel and time of the day. Outside the towns Zémidjan sometimes link some smaller villages, only seldomly served by collective taxis, to markets, crossroads and taxi stations, with prices from 500 even up to 5000 FCFA. Zémidjans may also be hired for a longer time, e.g. for some shopping tours. To become a licensed Zémidjan driver, one usually only needs to register at the municipality to get a numbered shirt. There is no driving licence mandatory. Either one may use one's own bike or a vehicle borrowed from friends or parents. Most of the Zémidjans, however, prefer entering into an informal contract with an owner of a motor bike, to rent the bike either for a fixed sum or a share of the revenues. These kinds of contracts may be established only for a short period, e.g. to let the motor bike one usually needs for driving to a workplace to a Zémidjan in leisure time or at weekends.

Another variant involves leasing a motor bike for a longer period, with the possibility to become the owner of the motor bike one day after having reimbursed a fixed amount of money, in daily or weekly instalments. At times it is, however, hard for Zémidjan drivers to reimburse those credits to the owners, especially in the rainy season (LE MATINAL 2009). Banks and credit institutions as well as entrepreneurs

[21] Recently, Zémidjans have again been targeted by state agencies, this time for being culpable of the high level of air pollution in the Cotonou area. Violent protests followed, with several detentions that again caused new protests by Zémidjan (Kassaraté 2009). Ultimately, the government decided to sponsor the acquisition of 4-stroke-engins, in order to better the environmental condition in the big cities (Soulemane 2009).

[22] For an analysis of the meaning of slogans on taxi cabs or busses etc. cf. Lawuyi (1988) and Seebode (1994).

have recently, however, begun to establish some larger contractual schemes, especially in bigger urban areas, with many contractors and similar bikes, often delivering same-style shirts, equipment, and helmets and providing assistance with repairing and fuelling. Very often, registered Zémidjans may lend their shirts and even bikes *(se faire rouler)* to non-registered colleagues for a temporary use. Thus, it is relatively easy to enter the business, provided some basic driving skills and a knowledge of some basic rules of conduct, that a newcomer continually enhances, to interiorise (see below).[23] At a first glance, the aforementioned arrangements with bike owners seem to be unfair, if not exploitative, but they make it easier to enter these activities from scratch, and are conceived as fair by most Zémidjans.

To my knowledge, there are only a few female Zémidjans.[24] Apparently, these activities are still considered a male domain, although in the Republic of Benin women, especially of the younger generations, and state employees etc. usually drive motorbikes as well. Sometimes Zémidjan drivers quarrel with each other, e.g. over money or bikes lent, over prices etc.[25] In these cases, there are in most cases ad hoc hearings to adjudicate the issue, held at central or meeting places. Zémidjans feature some (shallow) hierarchies. Older, experienced drivers are generally enjoying more esteem, are often elected to councils or intervene as arbiters in those mentioned adjudicating forums. Especially skilled drivers, who own their bikes, are considered more "professional", and are more prestigious. Apart from roles as arbiters, or organisers, this translates e.g. into the possibility to be preferred when two Zémidjans compete over a client, or to lend them a bike for some time, or into trust when they are demanding a loan etc. Generally, Zémidjans are supposed to help each other, e.g. when one needs to fuel, to get to the next filling station, or is not able to fix a broken engine or to get to the next garage. Moreover, Zémidjans inform each other about good opportunities, and sometimes they try to fix timetables for work, e.g. at some central places[26], similar to

[23] Some newcomers in the business are seen by many as more vicious and impolite (Ahovè 2009)

[24] One visible exception of a female Zémidjan became even the object of a radio report on ORTB, Cotonou (4. March 2008; personal recording MP3).

[25] A very frequent kind of quarrel occurs when a client looks out for a Zémidjan, but hires somebody else than the first Zémidjan approached.

[26] Important meeting- and resting places of Zémidjan in Cotonou are e.g. those at Camp Mariés, or at bigger crossroads such as Etoile Rouge or markets such as Dantokpa or Ganhi, at Attiékédrome (quarter of Sikècodji) , near Pharmacie des Cheminots (Jonké) and near Place Québec (Akpakpa).

taxi drivers, over their turns to take a client. Norms of reciprocity apply, however, to different groups of Zémidjan drivers to a different degree (Hahnekamp 2005). These are more important e.g. for those actors that do not use their own bikes, consequently dispose of less final income[27] and need to rely on various kinds of help, from borrowing bikes when the usual bike is in repair, from helping out with spare parts and information about clients. Most Zémidjans do not identify much with this occupation as a prominent, permanent profession, nor is this considered a prestigious job by others. Many of these young men are struck by disjunctions in their lives, ether by abrupt end of schooling or job training, illnesses or those of family members, etc. Migrating to the towns and working as a Zémidjan provides many of them, especially from rural areas, at least temporarily with some means to stabilise their situation. Identification and reasons to exercise the business are, however, not correlated to the durability to exercise the job (Hahnekamp op.cit.).

Common aspects and differences

Gold miners and Zémidjan share some essential features. Both are related to an occupation often chosen by migrants, and to semiautonomous social fields (Moore op.cit)[28]. Both groups feature a pertinent set of actors, distinctive norms and modes of conflict regulation. They are, to a different degree, part of what is generally considered the informal sector, and are composed of many migrants seeking short-term economic opportunities. They are very heterogeneous, in terms of ethnic and social origins of their members which are socially and spatially very mobile and usually operate in economically and politically volatile, precarious contexts. Both fields are gendered fields, in the sense that activities are widely considered a male domain. Women appear, however, more numerously in mining fields, to engage in important assistant works and various catering services. In both cases, access to the field is quite uncomplicated. Everybody may just jump

[27] One advantage of this trade is to be paid immediately. Hahnekamp gives an estimation (in a smaller town) of an income of approximately 55000 FCFA a monthly after subtracting basic living costs and smaller reparations (with one day off per week), a sum that does not include possible instalments for loans/the bike (a used one is 250 000 FCFA) , or the acquisition of more expensive spare parts. In a larger town income may be higher. Bancolé (1998) estimates a monthly income of 80 000 F CFA for the town of Ouidah.

[28] In the Atakora –Region in Northern Benin both occupations were temporary interrelated, as many Zémidjans became gold miners and, especially after the boom, many miners became Zémidjans.

into the business, there are no diploma required, long-acquired skills necessary and the activities are basically not connected to ethnic networks. Provided a basic physical strength and knowledge of the respective locality, it is just about to get access to a motor-bike, an own one, a one on a lease or rent basis. Registration may even be avoided. The same applies to gold-miners- they have, of course, to enjoy some good health and physical strength, but just need to learn some basic rules of behaviour and may gradually acquire more skills to become members of mining teams (Grätz 2003).

Conversely, both groups feature a high degree of social fluctuation, due to many short-term migrants, but also the exhausting work conditions and circumstances, as well as general permanent aspirations of most actors to leave the business. In both cases people do not aspire to work eternally either as miners or motor taxi men. It is a temporary activity. This is not to not say that many continue working in that business because they particularly attracted by it, but it is a way of gaining some cash immediately, thus obtaining some useful (yet limited) consumption opportunities, and being part of a community with features of pride, reciprocity and reliance. In both cases, orientation and initiation into the field may be much favoured by personal relations, help from people already in the business. Both fields feature a high degree of relations of comradeship, even friendships, but also patron-client relations, to the detriment of kinship relations. Furthermore, despite the mentioned high degree of volatility and flexibility, both groups and occupations are nevertheless marked by a set of relevant norms, rules of behaviour, even standards of reciprocity based on a particular morality *in the making*. Both gold miners and taxi drivers do not represent long-established professional corporate groups, trades, or guilds, despite the fact that a kind of business ethics and professional behaviour is more and more developing. These occupations are nevertheless hard to compare with other, more established economic fields or professions. They neither correspond to formal enterprises nor to (agro-pastoral) household economies where kinship relations prevail and generally determine the organisation of labour and patterns of distribution, nor the guilds of craftsmen where entry and distribution patterns come along with patron-client relations.

Both sectors are, in different respects, highly informal, most itinerant rules are far from being officially fixed or even written down, although many more of the gold miners, compared to motor taxi drivers, are not officially licensed. This leads us, beyond the many similarities mentioned above, to detect some substantial differences between both groups. Gold miners are (or have to be) more flexible; they often displace the entire

mining camps. Moreover, their position is often precarious, much more than that of the Zémidjans, and basically depends on the frequently changing policy of the state. In Benin, they are frequently targets of expulsions. The aforementioned differences do not, however, question the argument that both fields are similar with respect to their temporality, openness to migrants, flexible economic and social arrangements, but at the same time constitute moral spaces with distinguishable norms, sanctions and informal institutions. In this regard, we may apply S.F. Moore´s (1978) concept of semi-autonomous social fields, with regard to the particular set of actors, norms and clear categories of actors.

Conclusion

Both examples stress the fact that temporary established socioeconomic settings, marked by the influx of numerous income-seeking migrants, are not incompatible with a high degree of normativity, involving reciprocity, hierarchies but also modes of conflict resolution. Furthermore, the fact that migrants from heterogeneous ethnic backgrounds constitute these new social fields gives rise to the conclusion that ethnicity, pertinent to many other sectors of public life and economy, does not matter here to the same degree. Migrants may arrive e.g. at the mining camps or (if applicable) in towns occasionally together with peers from their home areas, and continue entertaining close relations with them. Yet, this does not lead to an ethnicisation of these occupations, and do not contradict the emergence of an open informal network of co-workers evolving beyond ethnic ties. Apparently, there are factors other than ethnicity providing cohesion in those fields – especially ties of comradeship, pride and sociability in everyday life. Hierarchies exist and are respected, but are shallow, and relate to individual experiences and capacities of conflict adjudication that may involve a particular place for seniority, but they are not restricted to it.

Perhaps it is the fact that it is also quite easy (and an aim) to leave the field that makes their members ready to accept overarching norms, because everybody is willing to earn a substantial income, not to loose too much time on quarrels. The second factor is just the mobility of both miners and drivers who are not tied to more permanent productive assets such as field or craft shops, and the fact that is not a kind of occupation that may become hereditary or transmitted to another generation, thus representing a part of a collective identity and cultural capital to defend. Roles and norms need to be renegotiated and adapted to changing circumstances, e.g. the policy of the state, the market etc. This necessity of

adaptation, however, does not turn these SASF into a space of lawlessness, for many internal rules are anchored and thus also acquirable by newcomers. To a certain degree this may be compared to sports: as long as your are a member of a team in competition you have to obey to particular rules and moral codes, regardless of what you will do once a game is over. Different to sports, however, is the necessity of establishing a multitude of individual reciprocal relations to get one´s venture successful everyday, and the partial creation of spaces of transgression that are to a certain degree tolerated.

Both gold mining and motor taxi driving are open economic fields for migrants, activities that have developed from simple niches to more resilient yet largely unstable economic spaces. Analyses of economic and social structures have to take the existence of such fields into account much more seriously, avoiding placing them under label such as "informal sector" or "migrant cultures" only. Secondly, if we look at individual life-courses, these examples reaffirm a tendency prevailing in West Africa especially pertinent to young men and their modes of diversifying their livelihood patterns. Most of them do not only combine various sources of income, from small gifts from wealthier parents to side-businesses of paid help to assisting a shop-keeper etc., but also constantly shift their occupations. We may often encounter young mobile men that have been working as assistants to drivers, bricklayers, shops vendors, auxiliary teachers, but also on farms owned by their relatives, after school or between various job trainings that are often hard to conclude because the final acquisition of a diploma needs much money. For different reasons than in Europe these are no straight professional careers, rather shifting domains of profitability. Many of these occupations, especially those of migrants, belong to these informal activities, where entry is easy, and regulation comparatively low. Thus, often we cannot speak of professions in the usual sense, but rather of professional ethics pertinent to those economic spaces or fields one may enter into. On the one hand, these informal (from the point of view of governmental authorities mainly illegal) activities, manifold in the Benin economy, do not represent for many migrants the fulfilment of dreams at all, because of their demanding nature and the relatively limited options of social ascension, to become more settled (patrons, family heads). On the other hand, these *activités de débrouille* (muddling through, getting along with financial troubles) as they are usually called in Benin, such as gold mining or driving services, are seen by many mobile young people as better solutions anyhow, when compared to plain criminality (*"se débrouiller est mieux que voler"*).

This also implies that we have to revisit those theories of social structuration in Africa assuming (older) clear-cut categories such as peasants, herders or craftsmen, both with respect to mentioned individual carriers to combine sources of income, or constantly shifting between these modes of livelihood especially by mobile economic actors. We should acknowledge these socioeconomic complexities, entailing a multitude of overlapping SASF enabling especially migrants to shift from one field to the other, according to practical social options and economic opportunities, to sustain their livelihood or to surpass an individual period of economic stress. Analogous to the study of collective identities in Africa, increasingly focussing on the situational, temporal yet contingent nature of ethnic and religious identities, socio-economic identities as well may be quite flexible, but – similar to ethnic identities – not less compelling for the individual mobile actor once becoming integrated into them. Migrants that are absorbed by the "informal sector" develop more than day-to-day coping strategies. Once they have passed a process of adaption and learning, that shares similarities with an initiation rite, they are often integrated into flexible networks of reciprocity and trust.

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FARAWAY SO CLOSE: PRESENCE AND ABSENCE AMONG HAUSA MIGRANTS IN BELGIUM AND URBAN NIGER

SÉBASTIEN LO SARDO

Introduction

Throughout Niger, the anthropologist wanting to be introduced to a village chief, the male head of a household or any other promising informant is constantly confronted with these words: *il a voyagé* (he's gone traveling) which possibly means that the absent person is traveling to a nearby weekly market, visiting relatives in the capital city, flying to Paris or has been working abroad for the last six months[1].

Through his absence, this missing informant embodies an astonishing degree of mobility in Niger. Due to the interplay of economic migration, long-distance trade, and global Islam, this Sahelian country witnesses intense population movements, at both transregional and transnational levels.

Besides human displacement, money, media and various material goods circulate through the same channels. As a result, urban and rural spaces are not only deeply connected but are also filled with material, visual and discursive fragments of 'distant elsewheres' as West African cities, Europe, North-America and increasingly, Asia. Nigerien landscapes are increasingly fashioned by flows of people, goods and images emanating from Asia as illustrated by the hugely popular success of Indian films, or the establishment of Chinese trade communities and the subsequent opening of 'Chinese stores'. Nigerien markets are filled with

[1] The data discussed here are parts of an ongoing doctoral research on the contemporary dynamics of Hausa identities in Niger. This paper focuses more specifically on migration dynamics and practices. The term Hausa refers to a vast ethno-linguistic group. People referring to themselves as Hausa are essentially Muslim and mainly located in Northern Nigeria and Southern Niger. In Niger, research has been conducted among Hausa migrants in the main urban centers, and in the rural areas from which some of these migrants originated. Fieldwork has also been carried out in Belgium among the Nigerien Diaspora.

Chinese commodities such as green tea, motorcycles or various imported goods. As an example, Chinese enamels bowls are nowadays highly significant items in Niger since they are a central part of a bride's dowry and have become a keystone in female economies of social distinction (Gosselain et al. 2009).

Until very recently, „African modernities" have essentially been studied as African understanding and appropriation of cultural flows originating from the West. Such a focus reduces the multiple and heterogeneous African realities to mere responses to the Western world and its so-called cultural domination (for critical accounts see Alidou 2005; Larkin 1997). As the examples above indicate, Non-Western locations shape Nigerien imagination, practices and landscapes as much as the West does.

Beyond Asia, the Middle East, as an imagined world of both economic prosperity and Islamic morality, is nowadays central to the popular culture of Niger as seen with corner stores and barber shops labeled *Dubai stores* or *Al-Qaida*, brand new Mosques funded by Saudi-Arabia or the somewhat generalization of the Saudi-like hijab.

Furthermore, a material culture of the Islamic display is becoming one of the main aesthetics in Nigerien cities: Islamic bumper stickers, electronic Muslim calendars, famous Sheikhs' effigies, framed verses from the Koran, brocade walls hangings, or various imported clothes (see D'Alisera 2001). Such artifacts are sold in specialized *boutiques*, along with Wahhabi literature, prayer rugs, alcohol free perfumes or tapes of recorded sermons. These commodities materialize a recent „Islamic revival" in the dynamics of Hausa identities. This shift is exemplified by the enforcement of Sharia law in the Hausa states of Northern Nigeria in the late 1990's, and the rise of the Nigerien *Izala*, a reformist Islamic movement close to Saudi Wahhabism (Souley 2007).

These shifts are largely mediated by the flow of people linking Hausaland to the Middle East, as, for example, with increased participation of Hausa in the pilgrimage to Mecca whence they returned with the prestigious title *Alhaji*. Pilgrims have to materialize their new status through flows of goods brought back from Mecca or Dubaï: clothes like keffiehs or hijabs, decorated wall hangings of the Great Mosque as well as, for the most well-off, expensive brand new mobile phones, laptops, DVD or MP3 players.

These dynamics highlight how cultural forms and ideologies may circulate along with artifacts to materialize them, and with people to sell them. They also highlight how closely Islam and trade have been, and still are, interrelated in Sahelian Africa (see Grégoire 1993). Beyond the

processes of local appropriation of foreign artifacts, we have to analyze such circulation of people and objects through an ethnography that tracks the ties connecting distant places, persons and communities.

As Lillian Trager has observed among female Yoruba migrants, the migrant's very condition rests on the back and forth movements of „multilocality", that is „ the attachment to and participation in social and economic activities in a number of places" (1995: 285). As migrants shape new material relationships with those left behind, their daily life-worlds are multilocal and distributed across distant physical locations. The idea of multilocality echoes with the insights of material culture theorists, such as Alfred Gell (1998) or Bruno Latour (2006), whose works explore the extent to which personhoods and social agents are shaped through the flow of material objects. Such perspectives invite us to focus on the actual material relations through which migrants are connected to their homelands (see Burrell 2008).

As we shall see, migrants, despite distance and absence, continue to be active in their homelands through flows of gifts, money, information, and strategies of land occupation. Concurrently, while abroad and through similar mediations, the daily life-worlds of migrants are pervaded by their hometowns.

Movements of the Hausa

The Hausa are closely associated with the activity of trade to the extent that, in many parts of Africa, any Sahelian merchant is called „Hausa", regardless of whether he speaks Hausa or not (Nicolas 1975). From their Sahelian homelands, Hausa people have shaped vast diasporic networks of trade-oriented communities throughout West Africa (Agier 1981; Cohen 1969). In the last 20 years, these networks of trade and mobility have spread to Europe, North America and the Middle East (see e.g., Stoller 2002, Yamba 1995, Youngstedt 2004a). The Hausa communities in foreign cities, such as those of Ibaban, Lomé, or even New York City, are quite familiar anthropological objects. Beyond permanent settlement, however, they are also the social and material infrastructure that frame a highly prominent form of Sahelian mobility: the circular labor migration, know as l'*exode* in Nigerien french (see Boyer 2006, Rain 1999).

These migrations are based on the periodicity of Sahelian agriculture: in late October, at the beginning of the dry season after the crops are harvested, thousands of men and women leave their village to work in West African cities. They come back between May and June, at the

beginning of the rainy season. This close relationship between farming and migration periodicity tends nowadays to fade since the *exodus* is becoming longer. Besides the main cities of Niger, Hausa migrants' destinations are Kano (the Hausa metropolis of Northern Nigeria), or coastal cities such as Lagos, Abidjan or Lomé.

Among the Hausa, this circular migration has always been an essentially masculine practice. Recent years however have witnessed its feminization somewhat, notably with the increase of pilgrimage to Mecca. Young women may take the Hajj, a permissible female mobility, as an opportunity to live and earn money in Mecca or Dubai, working as a prostitute or domestic employee for a couple of years.

Abroad, the first course of business for newcomers is to find other Nigeriens and, then, fellows from their hometown, or extended family. In so doing, migrants can be integrated into preexisting sectors of activity and meet wealthy merchants willing to establish patron-client relationships. These networking dynamics explain the ethnic and regional specialization of migrants' destinations and livelihoods. Year after year, the *exodants*' worlds remain unchanged: the very same neighborhoods, where they rent collective rooms or where they build straw-houses in unoccupied spaces; the very same economic activities, which for the men may be night watchman, the sale of clothes or cigarettes; and the preparation of tea, coffee and breakfast from street stalls; and for the women: food preparation, millet pounding, sale of milk or prostitution.

These migrations are rationalized as means of „eating the dry season", that is to conserve food supplies in the village where the money saved in the city is sent back and invested in agriculture (Rain 1999; Youngstedt 2004b). Few migrants, however, are actually able to accumulate savings, this due to the decline of West African economies.

Besides economic strategies, the *exodus* is closely associated with issues of personal desire, agency and identity. *Exodants* leave their villages because they feel that „*One cannot become someone there, there is no work and nothing to do in the village. You can just sit in the dust and wait*", as an informant has pointed out.

For the rural youth, the *exodus* is an opportunity to become someone: that is to enact desired identities through the accumulation of material, social and religious capital. Abroad, most of the *exodants* experience difficult material conditions and very low social status. These feelings of privation are, understood as transitory since their desires remain oriented towards their home, and shaped in anticipation of their return. The return is made possible by the accumulation of financial resources and material goods that have to be displayed and distributed. The savings are not so

much invested in the agriculture than spent to fulfill social obligations and to buy gifts such as radios, cassettes, CD or MP3 players, clothes, shoes, perfumes, or jewelry.

Without such materialities, the *exodant* may feel too ashamed to take the road home. The migrant may also choose to stay abroad for years, if their business is particularly successful. Such settled migrants maintain close relationships with their villages through visits from family and friends, through return trips, and through flows of gifts and money.

Among these settled migrants, the most well-off, may also materialize their presence by the building of houses in their native towns. Officially built for retirement or holy days, these houses remain empty. In the village, they objectify the wealth and the social efficiency of their owner.

These empty houses are also the means of social control since they are not so empty. They may be used to maintain, over distance, a network of dependents: such as those unpaid watchmen whose families are allowed to inhabit the yard[2].

Through such relentless circulation of people and objects distant locations are brought into close juxtaposition. In the village, the distant cities of the exodus are rendered present through the flow of goods, money and narratives which originate from them. They become an integral part of the local social lives and mental landscapes. Those left in the villages, such as wives, children or the elderly, may project their desires on the imagined realities of prosperity carefully constructed by the migrants. Social shifts, or disruptions, may also follow the trails created by the *exodants'* seasonal movements such as those tensions resulting from the introduction of Wahhabi practices in rural areas by migrants who had returned from Northern Nigeria. Mobility may also mediate identity strategies. For example, among the Tuaregs, seasonal migration concerns essentially young men from the lower social classes, who are considered as slaves. The seasonal migration may become a means of passive resistance against the domination of the aristocracy and mediate attempts to acquire a better social status (Boyer 2006)[3].

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[2] While doing fieldwork in a rural area, I was myself host in the empty house of a native who has settled in the capital. The house was of an impressive size, its walls were ornamented with effigies of its owner but it was totally empty. The yard, however, was occupied by 8 young single men who were living in mud brick rooms. They were working for the owner in exchange of the free lodging but were never allowed into the main house.

[3] Mobility and migration may also be used to mediate strategies of ethnic conversion, namely Hausaization (see Salamone 1975). These dynamics are salient among the lower classes Tuareg who have left their rural villages to settle in the

Trapped in Brussels

Let's now turn towards the Nigerien presence in Belgium, which is a quite recent and marginal phenomenon. This community is essentially located in Brussels, roughly made up of 1000 people of whom 75 percent are men. Two groups have to be distinguished: a minority of students, whose stay is channeled by academic networks, and the majority of migrant workers, that is asylum seekers in process or refused asylum seekers who have chosen to stay illegally in Belgium.

Two Nigerien migrant associations have shaped networks of social and financial solidarity. They provide also administrative help in the legal procedures towards regularization. This associative world, however, is less active than the ones of other African communities. The Nigerien presence in Brussels shows an ethnic polarization. The Hausa networks spread towards other neighborhoods and livelihoods than the Tuareg and Fulani ones, oriented towards the sale of craft. Tuareg and Fulani migrant tends to develop close relationships with Europeans whereas Hausa have little, if any. As we shall see, their life-worlds are essentially oriented towards West Africa.

None of the illegal workers seem willing to settle permanently in Belgium. They seek regularization to allow the dynamics of circular migration to spread towards Europe.

Their aspiration is to return home as soon as possible, that is with enough savings to launch an economic activity in Niger, such as a bush taxi business. They actually feel trapped in Brussels: they are unable to save as much money as expected due to expensive living costs and lack of real economic opportunities. They therefore extend their stay in Belgium for years.

Furthermore, due to European immigration policies, a short return trip is not an option. Illegal migrant workers tend to reproduce West African patterns of migration in Europe. Some of them humorously say that their very first concern in Brussels was to find someone with black skin, and to ask him where Muslim Nigeriens are to be found. After a first night usually spent sleeping at the railway station, they are eventually oriented towards the neighborhood where the Nigerien Hausa live and work.

Hausa cities of the south. For these people, to shift to a Hausa identity – by adopting the language, the appearance and the practices of the Hausa people – may be a means to acquire a better social position. Such strategies of identity may be emotionally and personally painful, provoke familial tensions and have a limited success.

Whereas migrants depict their cities and villages as places of vibrant social life, they describe Brussels as a cold succession of people locked up in their houses. While this view reflects indeed an idealization of home, it also captures something of the migrants' everyday life: they experience very small worlds due to disorienting public spaces and lack of social interaction.

For most of them, livelihood, lodgings and social life are confined to a few streets of southern Brussels, where they hang around a Mosque, a Nigerien restaurant that opened two years ago, a weekly open-air market, and the garages and warehouses where they work. The question is: why this neighborhood in particular?

This neighborhood is the hub of the European used car traffic to West Africa. Wealthy Nigerien merchants, who come to Belgium for only a few weeks and for business purposes, organize the trade to Niger. For most Hausa migrants in Brussels, economic activities depend on positioning themselves as the middlemen of these Nigerien traders.

The used cars are not the only source of income in this trade. Before traveling to West Africa, the cars are filled with used goods to be sold in Nigerien markets. The main activity of migrants is to buy, collect and store these goods: used mattresses, old televisions, Hi-Fi equipment, or domestic appliances such as fridges and ovens. The movements of the car trade are also the opportunity to send money and gifts home. Through the relentless circulation of people, goods and information, these migrants' life-worlds are literally covered with Sahelian dust. Their identities are neither in Belgium nor in Niger but in the very channels connecting them. Most of them actually live in the warehouses where they store their commodities, living surrounded by goods about to be sent to Niger.

Due to displacement, migrants have to shape new relationships with those left behind. According to my estimation, Nigeriens in Belgium send roughly 30 % of their monthly income to Niger. Due to the unrealistic vision of the West in Niger, requests for money are an integral part of migrants' everyday lives. Besides the basic needs of the household, much of these remittances are used to fulfill social obligations, such as participation in marriage, baptism, or funeral ceremonies. These remittances are investments to keep up a network of social and affective relations.

Migrants also express painful feelings of loneliness and lack of close relationships. For those who can afford it, e-mails, e-chat and cell-phones are used intensely to keep in touch with friends and family. Facing being uprooted, migrants may also invest emotionally in material objects that become fragments of their homelands, objectifications of their loved ones.

The fabric of certain clothes, the taste of some meals, the sound of Hausa tracks or the use of personal objects are means of re-enchanting the everyday. Migrants use them in order to shape an intimate sphere that reproduces the taste, the sound and the touch of their homes.

This material culture circulates continuously through networks of exchange. For the Nigerien settled in Brussels, any departure for the country, i.e. a fellow returning back home, a merchant or an inquisitive anthropologist – is an opportunity to pack and send parcels of perfume, cosmetics, cell phones or money to those left behind. Symmetrically, the reverse movements allow the migrant's everyday life to be filled with photos, decorative artifacts, audio or videotapes, spices and foodstuffs. Besides the survival strategy cliché, these transnational channels of migration allow the circulation of an economy of leisure, intimacy and attachment.

Conclusion

The „Hausa case" highlights the extent to which cultural landscapes are shaped by the circulation of people, objects and images. The dynamics of Hausa identities have never been confined to their „Hausaland" in what is now Northern Nigeria and Southeastern Niger. They are located in the diasporic communities spread throughout West Africa, in the *exodants*' back and forth movements, and scattered all along the Hajj route to Mecca. They are also located on the stalls of Harlem market, in the circulation of Saudi capitals filling the Sahel with brand new Mosques, and in the flows of used cars, electronic appliances and mattresses linking Brussels and Niamey through the ports of Antwerp and Cotonou.

Hausa mobility highlights the extent to which cultural landscapes are shaped by the circulation of people and objects. The experiences of migration also highlight how local realities and identities cannot be understood without taking into account the mediated presence of other places. A household's house, an urban yard or an individual room are the *loci* towards which many other times, places and agencies converge. Symmetrically, these local sites are themselves multi-locals and distributed around time and space.

As anthropologists facing such dynamics, we need more than a multi-sited ethnography, we need to understand how the sites are actually connected through material relationships. The French social theorist Bruno Latour (2006) has recently advanced, in a semi-metaphorical sense, the idea that we have to re-assemble the social by following the vehicles that are shaping it. In regard to the astonishing degree of mobility throughout

Nigerien landscapes, I would like to take this statement literally and stress the need for an ethnography of the social trails left by imported cars, bush taxis, import-export trucks or the airplanes of the pilgrimage to Mecca.

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AFRICANS IN MOSCOW: 'FOREIGN CHURCHES' AS A FACTOR OF SOCIO-CULTURAL ADAPTATION OR NON-ADAPTATION

EKATERINA V. SHAKHBAZYAN

Introduction

Among the great variety of factors that influence the migrants' socio-cultural adaptation process (educational and professional background, language skills, family status, financial situation, interrelation with the receiving socio-cultural milieu, migration policy of the host state, etc.) the factor of religion stands prominently. This factor includes not only the role beliefs are playing but also the possibilities for performing the religious cult in the host country and the part religion organizations and communities play as a means of the migrants' integration in the receiving society and co-operation with its members and each other. Actually, when a newcomer finds him/herself in the socio-cultural environment with different way of life, interpersonal relations, socio-political system, not to mention another language, he/she begins to seek for the elements of habitual culture that could allow him/her to hold a socio-psychological balance. Bit by bit a new migrant tries out in a host community different interaction models, behavioral techniques and methods of adaptation keeping in his/her cultural stock. Basing on this assertion, we should recognize that one of the best places for such pursuits of elements of the native habitual culture in a host society is a religion institution.

The issues of religion organizations and communities' role in formation of diasporas have been discussed in a significant number of publications, including the questions concerning their role in migrants' social life and gender behavior, their place in the urban socio-cultural landscape, the influence of migrants' religiosity as a part of cultural background on their behavior in a new social and cultural environment (see, *e.g.*, Grumelli, 1965, Winland 1994, Conzen et. al., 1996, Gerloff,

1999, Ebaugh & Chafetz 2000, Myers 2000). It is also stressed that religion continues to play a very important role in social life even in the face of the secularizing forces in contemporary world, contrary to earlier suppositions that these forces can turn out able to eliminate or at least considerably diminish it (Kinvall, 2004). The fact is that the extent to which one appreciates religion influences his/her religious participation and behavior toward religion. According to Myers's (2000: 759) assumption, 'individuals who place more value on religion will consume religion to a greater extent than will individuals who place less value on religion'. Frequent churchgoers value religion higher and report larger social network, more contacts within religion community, more types of social support received, experience their interactions with kin and non-kin associates as more validating than less frequent religious participants or nonreligious persons (Taylor & Chatters 1988, Ellison 1992, Ellison & George 1994).

Indeed, faith and belonging to a religion community is important for many migrants worldwide, including people from sub-Saharan Africa living in Moscow. Undoubtedly, religious life is not separated from other parts of their life but is interlocked and overlaps with them. A local branch of a religion community is able to be one of the ports of call for new migrants. From there new social and economic networks can develop. In addition to ideas and contacts religion communities can provide security in the countries where racial prejudice can make the lives of Africans uncomfortable or even dangerous (Mohan & Zack-Williams 2002). Religion institutions and communities in the Diaspora act as a mechanism of migrants' both adaptation to and socialization in a new environment and maintaining links with native cultures and home countries. A migrant's religion community focused on intergroup social relationships is expected to serve as a factor of promoting ethnic feeling and group solidarity (Williams 1988, Hurh & Kim 1990, Kivisito 1993). For example, numerous studies of the Korean and Vietnamese religion institutions in the USA demonstrate that churches of the Asian migrants play a very important part in maintaining and promoting their ethnic identity and psychological comfort. More so, the migrants' churches frequently serve as a source of ethnic culture for the second generation of the Koreans and Vietnamese (Rutledge 1985, Nash 1993). A recent research on the Christian religion communities of African migrants in Europe shows that in some cases these associations play the role of incorporation mechanisms (Glick Schiller et al. 2005). In examining these pathways of incorporation, the authors note that in fact, migrants often live their lives in more than one nation-state simultaneously. In four of five pathways they describe,

migrants become related through social linkages and various forms of identity to one country but at the same time they connect them with organizations, communication systems or identities that extend transnationally (Glick Schiller et al. 2005: 1–2).

In some specific cases religion can promote a growth of nationalism and racism, according to Frigerio's (2002) study of the Afro-Latin American religions practitioners' strategies, as they may tend to stress the cultural aspects of their religious practices what results in the necessity to overcome these practices' increasing 'problematization'. African communities in Russia do experience hostility from a part of their hosts, based on belief in absolute racial difference, what can be demoralizing for the migrants. This hostility may force a group member to draw on each other and take advantage of shared meanings. Basically, such close connections between community members can generate and strengthen the tendency to cluster in 'enclaves', what in the end leads to the phenomenon of 'a city within the city'. However, this process of cultural and social encapsulation is not only a consequence of cultural kinship and hostile environment, but as a rule is also promoted by others important factors such as the high cost of property for rent, difficulties in finding jobs, sometimes the illegal status of individuals and subsequent tendency to reside in particular districts. In the result, the whole urban space is divided by African migrants into 'known' and 'unknown' areas which may or may not have real presentation in a migrant's mental map of Moscow that 'consists but of a few specific points rather than a city' (Gdaniec 2009: 9).

In this article we discuss the so-called 'foreign churches' as an institution around which a part of the Africans living in Moscow are grouping. In general, churches and mosques are attended by many African migrants in the Russian capital, although not all of them attend a church or a mosque regularly, especially among those of them who are socially well-established and financially well to do, that is those who do not need the moral or practical support a religion institution can provide so badly. African Orthodox Christians (Ethiopians), as well as Muslims can go to the same churches or mosques the native Russian citizens of different ethnic origins and cultural traditions attend and if they like, try to establish informal relations with the respective religion community or parish members. At the same time there also are several Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican churches in Moscow as well as rather many churches of 'new' Protestant congregations including African (created and led by African preachers) that are active in Russia (St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Moscow International Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Our Lady of Hope, Moscow Good News Church, Church of Saint – Louis of the French of

Moscow). The social background of their parishes is mixed and includes among others a lot of persons not so well-adapted in all senses. These churches have no roots in the 'mainstream' Russian culture and are perceived as a rule by the country's native citizens as completely alien. Not by chance they are often called 'foreign churches' in the media and by the public. However, a brief general overview of the African communities in Russia is necessary for the role of these churches could become clearer.

A Brief Description of the African Communities in Russia

The numerous communities of permanent migrants from Africa are a recent social phenomenon for Russia in general and Moscow in particular. Although there were some isolated instances of African presence in Russia in the pre-Soviet and Soviet time, including college and university students since 1960s (see, *e.g.*, Golden-Hanga 1966; Blakely 1986; Fikes & Lemon 2002; Matusevich 2008), Russia has not got such a long-lasting, diversified, and contradictory experience of interaction with the Africans as the West, the experience that by present has resulted there in the firm establishment of Diaspora communities and elaboration of at least basic principles of the receiving societies' attitude to and states' policy toward the newcomers. Accordingly, the literature on the Africans in post-Soviet Russia is very scarce (see particularly Davidson and Ivanova 2003, Kharitonova 2003, Ivanova 2004, Gdaniec 2009).

On the eve of the USSR's break up there obviously were different factors that influenced the Africans' decision to go to that country. For example, the Congolese who has arrived to Moscow to study at a university in those days being attracted by the might of the Soviet Union in the international arena, the scientific and technical achievements of the country relates in the interview:

> "When we came, the Cold War was still on, so we were getting wrong information about the USSR and knew not enough: everything was kept back. Of course, we knew that it is the largest country in the world. We didn't hear anything about positive aspects of the USSR, there was no information about people's life too: it was repeated over and over again that it is the evil communist empire, that its foreign policy is very aggressive. But despite this political propaganda we knew that the USSR was the first to launch a rocket, then that science is advanced there and after all, people live there somehow, and those who were able to realize this came here to study". (Interview 004, 19.02.2007)

One of the most important impetuses for the students from the Third

World to study in the USSR was free high-quality education they could get there. By the end of the Soviet era in the early 1990s almost all the Africans residing in the country had been university and college students, that is non-permanent residents, spread rather evenly among numerous education centres all over the USSR except Siberia and the Far East. However, after the collapse of the USSR in 1991, the situation changed radically. Firstly, it became possible to stay in Russia rather easily after graduating from a university, secondly, an almost uncontrollable influx of migrants from Africa began what was impossible during the Soviet time, and thirdly, a part of the Soviet graduates returned to 'new Russia' due to various reasons. As a result, a substantial increase in the number of 'non-student' Africans in Moscow happened. At the same time, the reverse process was taking place: the number of students from African countries decreased dramatically, first of all due to the cutting of state quotas for free education and introduction of tuition fee that is too high for many of the prospective students. So, students who completely dominated in the social composition of Africans in Russia earlier lost that position. Today the overwhelming majority of Africans in Russia are concentrated in a limited number of megapoleis, Moscow first and foremost. Some of them are refugees from the sites of violent conflicts like the DRC, Ethiopia, Rwanda or Somali are now or were recently, others are economic migrants or students.

After the collapse of the USSR Russia became one of comfortable countries for transit migration, including migration from Africa (Polyakov & Ushkalov 1995: 493 p.). Since it was opened for international migration flows with the 1992 Federal Law on entry and departure, during a very short period of time it has become one of the world's major receiving countries. The 1994 and 1996 surveys revealed that more than half of recent African migrants perceived their stay in Russia as short-term and were planning to move to Western countries seen by them as Land of Hope (Ivanova 1997: 32p., Ivakhnyuk 2008: 1p.). Nowadays almost all our respondents marked that they do not intend to stay in Russia forever and many of them ticked "transit to a third country" as their initial aim of coming to Russia as they saw it as the jumping-off point to Western Europe, Canada, or the USA. Nevertheless, due to lack of sufficient financial recourses or other reasons many African migrants had to remain in Russia for long. This situation has generated a whole set of problems. The migrants were not prepared psychologically and financially to facing numerous practical problems of all sorts in Russia, getting legal jobs being one among many others; they did not have strong motivation for the socio-cultural adaptation including learning the Russian language what

aggravated and complicated problems on their pathway to integration in the host socio-cultural milieu. They have been living in Russia over several years and more but they still prefer to perceive their stay as a mere moment in their lives, something that is not real. As Augй (1995) suggests, the invasion of life by the transit spaces is a distinguishing feature of a modern multidimensional city; in contrast to the 'places' inflated with organic social life and historical meaning, the 'non-places' do not have veiled senses and are characterized by formal and bureaucracy attitude. The majority of African migrants in Moscow demonstrate the vivid desire to move from Russia along with the assurance that they will never be accepted by the host society. Although in practice in most cases their desire remains a declaration, it does influence significantly their auto-perceptions within the country and city socio-cultural landscape, and hence behavioral strategies based on their representation of the city. Marginalization of African migrants is also connected with the host society's representation of the newcomers. As a recent research demonstrates, common Russians are informed insufficiently about African cultures, political and social situation on the Dark Continent and so on (Bondarenko et al. 2009). Russian mass-culture has created and spread an image of a wild, poorely educated African connected with criminal spheres (Shakhbazyan 2009).

Although there are several African communities based on the country of origin in Moscow, only the Nigerian community enjoys the official (registered) status. We also have information about the Angolan, Beninese, Cameroonian, Ethiopian, Ghanaian, and Namibian informal (non-registered) migrant associations. The total number of Africans in Moscow can be estimated by us, basing on different unofficial sources, as from two to three thousand people.

The new migrants make use of the existing contacts with national communities in order either to solve practical issues (accommodation, departure to a third country, etc.) or to get some kind of social support. Again, this varies from case to case depending upon the legality or illegality of a migrant. Particularly, the illegal migrants cannot approach official organizations, so they are forced to rely completely on the informal ties such as interpersonal and family connections, kinship relations, ethnic affiliation, religious grouping. As a political refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo reminds:

> "Yet being in Kinshasa, I thought: where ever I go, I don't know anything there, I have nobody to whom I could go for help, I don't know the language. My father's friend who advised me to go to Russia said: 'There is the Patrice Lumumba Peoples' Friendship University on Miklukho-

> Maklaya street. Go there, find compatriots and ask them for help'. I did it exactly like this. Straight away from the airport I took a taxi and said: 'Go to the RUDN (the Russian abbreviation for the Peoples' Friendship University– E.S.) … When I arrived, it was already dark. I went out from the taxi, paid to the driver and began to roam about the streets and to seek at least somebody from Africa. I found a man and asked him if he spoke French but he spoke only English, I explained him that I was looking for students from the DRC. He led me to the campus where students from Congo lived and told me to sit down and wait. Then after a while there was one person, I told him why I was here. He asked me whether I had relatives or friends here, and I answered that he was my first friend here and I said: 'Help me'. He spoke with receptionists about me and they admitted us. So I lived in his room for two months. Then I found fellow countrymen and rented a flat with them" (Interview 015, 23.01.2008).

Group identity and social capital are forming in response to the hostile treatment by the host society to secure economic and social well being (Portes & Jensen 1987). At the same time a migrant community includes people of various social statuses, and we should realize that the factors influencing socio-cultural adaptation affect them differently.

The Roles of 'Foreign Churches' in Migrants' Lives

Our article is based on the field evidence collected in 2007 and 2008. We examined six 'foreign' (Protestant and Catholic) and three 'traditional' (Orthodox) religion communities in Moscow. The basic methods employed were structured and unstructured interviews, distributing questionnaires with subsequent database making, and observation, participant when possible.

Our evidence shows that belonging to this or that religion does not have impact on migrants' choice of the country of residence. However, it also tells that the role foreign churches play in migrants' lives can be different in different situations and in general can be characterized as dualistic or ambivalent. On the one hand, these churches do help the Africans in their life in Russia by giving migrants consolation and support, providing them with the feelings of psychological comfort, security and stability, and creating the atmosphere in which they can express and reproduce the values of their native cultures, keep their identities, not only religious but cultural in general. On the other hand, just because foreign churches represent not only other religion traditions but also other cultural norms and values at large, other ways of life, affiliation with foreign churches can raise an additional barrier on the migrants' way to integration in the accepting cultural milieu and promotes their parishioners' further

seclusion from the wider Russian society, as it can move them further away from the norms and values accepted in it. Thus the process of the migrants' adaptation becomes more complicated.

Religion and religion institutions do influence different spheres of migrants' life. In terms of social outcomes, they help migrants to feel in the new socio-cultural environment better, as religion community is a good place for establishing new social connections. In the new cultural milieu the migrant tends to recreate social bonds since his/her past socio-cultural solidarity is broken by uprooting from the original (native) environment. The religion community turns out one of the most fruitful fields for such a recreation. For example, a Ghanaian who has been living in Moscow for seven years said to us:

> "It was difficult to find people here in Moscow speaking English well enough. My questions in the streets everybody answered: 'net' (*no* in Russian.– *E.S.*) and tried to go away as quickly as possible. Yes, at first it seemed strange …But in the church everybody knows each other and I have many friends here. We meet every week and talk about the latest news … I feel calmness when I leave the church every Sunday" (Interview 022, 05.03.2008).

Furthermore, religious involvement helps migrants to find their identity what allows to maintain connections with fellow countrymen since a church hall is one of the public places where African migrants can gather without fear. A migrant from Nigeria who came to Moscow five years ago with the dream to transit to Germany reported:

> "I feel discomfort in a public place, in metro, in the street and so on. It seems to me that everybody looks at me because I am black. The sense was especially strong several years ago when I just came … And here (in the church.– *E.S.*) I found friends who are from Nigeria too. We usually meet some time before the church service to have a talk. We all know telephone numbers of each other" (Interview 0023, 20.03.2008).

It is noteworthy that while we were conducting our research several migrants whom we interviewed began to work at church charitable centers or help pastors to hold services. In the context of Russian legislation the getting of legal job for non-Russians is a very time- and effort-consuming process. Perhaps it explains partly why Africans in Moscow usually become unskilled (and illegal) workers and occupy one of the lowest stairs on the social structure staircase. Therefore we can suggest that religious participation influences not only those spheres that are related to religion directly but also those which look very distant from it.

The new African migrant, as a rule, start to visit a church from the very outset of his/her stay in Moscow. There are several reasons for it. Firstly, he/she continues to perform the cult which is habitual for him/her, what gives feeling of confidence. Secondly, it is not necessary for participation in the church services to be competent in the Russian language: the services are held in the one of the well-known to the migrant languages (English, French, Portuguese, or Spanish). There are charitable centres at some foreign churches that give support to migrants with low income (for example, organize distribution of food once a week). The working languages in these centres are English and French. However, all these causes depend on the migrant's legal/illegal status, his/her spiritual need to visit the church; the length of stay in Moscow.

As all the respondents marked, there are no serious obstacles to practice religion in Moscow, except the problems with placement. Not all religion communities have a permanent location for prayer services, therefore the address of the church services changes often what creates some difficulties for those who do not have contacts with the community's leader and cannot keep track of information about the frequent movement. 55% of our respondents prefer to attend the same church while 45% answered that the churches they attend differ depending on circumstances. However, regardless this fact, 33% of the respondents marked that they know by name and communicate with more than 10 parishioners in the religion communities to which they belong, 40% know from five to ten persons and 27% have less than five well-known fellow parishioners. 73 % of the respondents reported about mutual aid in their religion community. The data proves that strong interpersonal bonds are forming in a religion community. These bonds form the background for socio-religious networks which in their turn lead to reinforcement of religious beliefs and practices.

At the same time, the migrants with different social status seem to have different benefits from religion participation. Those migrants who do not have a permanent job and estimate their standard of life as 'below average' tend to mark as more important such aspects of churchgoing as moral and financial support from the religion community members and the opportunity to construct new social bonds. This suggests that religion community participation and churchgoing produce numerous social outputs. This also means that the migrants whose social position is uncertain may deliberately construct such socio-religious networks for the sake of the 'profane' profit they provide. Thus we consider religion communities in Moscow as marginal groups, the members of which follow the most advantageous strategy under the conditions of restricted access to

the economic sphere, namely the strategy of building up and maintaining interpersonal ties predominantly within the migrant milieu. This model of adaptation leads to the Africans' existence in the Russian society as of alien elements and contributes to the appearance of enclaves or "hotbeds" of migrant culture in the city.

Conclusion

Thus, we see that the religion community is an important part of social life of Africans in Moscow. To understand its role in the migrants' integration in the new cultural environment, it is important to realize to what degree these communities conduct and keep Russian culture, impart new social models of behavior and provide the opportunity to construct interpersonal relations in the host society. According to our research, foreign churches in Moscow provide African migrants with the feelings of security and stability. In these churches the values of the migrants own cultures can also be reproduced. At the same time, the foreign churches hardly assist the migrants in 'insertion' in and co operation with the new cultural environment. In our opinion, in the case we have examined the degree institutional completeness of a religion organization is an important factor that works in the direction of the migrants' socio-cultural integration. The migrant and his/her family establish a wide range of institutional attachments in a new milieu. If these attachments are established within the native community, they may create channels through witch the personal relationship within host society will be realized. However, the strength of the religion community and its ability to provide the migrant with necessary boundaries can serve as an obstacle for successful social integration.

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CHAPTER TWO:

EFFECTS AND LIMITS OF MIGRATION

THE INFLUENCE OF EMIGRANTS OF SERVILE ORIGIN ON SOCIAL RENEGOTIATION AND EMANCIPATION IN THE HAALPULAAR SOCIETY (MAURITANIA)

OLIVIER LESERVOISIER

Introduction

The article aims at showing the influence of emigrants of servile origin on social renegotiation in the Haalpulaar society in Mauritania. It will focus on the role of these emigrants in the process of democratization and decentralization, and their effect on the recomposition of power. To illustrate this, one of the hardest conflicts observed these last years in the Senegal river valley will be presented. Through this it can be seen how emigrants of servile origin can support political goals in order to back a social movement. It will also show how in spite of the persistence of the formal hierarchies — divided into three different orders: nobles (*rimße*), professional groups (*neenyße*) and slaves (*maccuße*)[1]—, social categories are the object of renegotiation. Moreover, it will also be necessary to understand the stakes of political participation for the subordinated groups which will allow for a better appreciation of the impact of migration on socio-cultural changes.

But before developing these ideas, the background to the present situation in Mauritania needs to be addressed. In fact, slavery is still a topical issue in the country today (see also Ruf 1999). The latest official abolition of slavery only dates back to 1981 and more recently on August 8th 2007 the Mauritanian National Assembly adopted a law making slavery a crime[2]. Another example is that more and more movements of

[1] The use of the terms «slave" and «noble» refers here to a local use and a social status and not to a condition in life.

[2] This new law makes provision in particular for a prison sentence of five to ten years in the case of the crime of slavery (article 4). It is intended to complete the

emancipation among the descendants of slaves, in Moorish as well as in Haalpularen societies, have developed these last years. Although slavery can not be seen today as it was in the late 19th century when masters exercised their property right over slaves (Miers & Kopytoff 1997), it is nonetheless true that groups of servile origin are still facing various forms of discrimination which, in new contexts, are the object of more and more frequent social conflicts. These conflicts indicate the persistence of inequalities. At the same time, they also show the social changes that are occurring. That is to say that most situations of conflict are less the result of the nobles' power to force slaves to accomplish tasks, as was the case in the past, than the consequence of the claims of the descendants of the slaves to access rights and responsibilities which had been denied them until now.

In fact, in this context, in spite of the political instability in Mauritania[3], democratic reform and decentralization since the beginning of the 1990s have allowed access — not without difficulty — to posts of responsibility for groups of servile origin. The institution of the right to vote and the principle of "one man one vote" played a determining role in the process of the emancipation of subordinated groups. Nevertheless this access to posts of responsibility is not just the result of democratic voting, and this should not be overestimated. In fact, the political advance of groups of servile origin can be justly appreciated if the different resistances to discriminations in other fields of social life are taken into account. Added to this, the wider context of recomposition of local power and the influence of external power, especially the network of emigrants, has to be considered[4].

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edict of 9 November 1981 on the abolition of slavery, which had not been followed by a decree.

[3] The recent „coup d'Etat" of 6 August 2008, which put an end to the presidential power of Sidi Mohamed ould Cheikh Abdallahi, elected democratically in March 2007, is a reminder of the fragility of the democratic process in Mauritania. The previous „coup d'Etat" against the president Maaouya ould sid Ahmed Taya dates back to 3 August 2005.

[4] This article is based on results from fieldwork in the Gorgol area located in the middle valley of the Senegal river. From the wider research context of the situation of slave descendants, my studies led me to consider the issue of migrant networking. This involved a multi-sited approach (Marcus, 1995): villages in the valley, Nouakchott the capital and the suburbs of Paris, the home of numerous emigrants.

Democratization and diversification of local powers

The democratization process has had contrasting effects among subordinated groups. On the one hand, this process has meant their integration as citizens on a national scale, but on the other hand, their frequent eviction from the lists of eligible people have reinforced their sentiment of being marginalised. This situation of inequality has acted as a catalyst for all the forms of discontent and protest among the population of servile origin. These are a direct product of the different discriminations the *maccube* (slaves) are facing today.

The different forms of discrimination today

The first type of discrimination is that of stereotypes. In the Haalpulaar society, slaves are commonly described as having no sense of virtue, no sense of shame. These stereotypes contrast with the values of the nobles which are based on the sense of honour and the control of their emotions (*pulaaku*). These stereotypes present the social and cultural differences as natural ones. This phenomenon creates a biological prejudice which is a major obstacle to the emancipation of the descendants of slaves. Matrimonial discrimination is a further type of discrimination that heightens the dissatisfaction of the descendant of slaves. The latter contest more and more often the fact that marriages between nobles and *maccube* are not reciprocal: the nobles are allowed to take wives among the *maccube* but the reverse is forbidden. Religious discriminations are also contested. Today, in spite of their religious knowledge, the *maccube* still find it difficult to have their religious competence acknowledged by the rest of the society. For instance, the nobles do not generally allow the *maccube* to lead prayer. In certain cases the conflicts are so violent that the *maccube* have had to build their own mosque, sometimes with the money of emigrants. This is the case in the Senegal river valley of the village of Mbumba (*departement* of Podor) where the *maccube* helped by their relatives in France financed and built a mosque by their own means. This questioned the privileges of the Wane family of marabouts (Schmitz & Humery 2008).

Finally, the descendants of slaves also challenge land tenure control. In most cases, the former masters no longer try to recover their land – which was cleared by their former slaves. The former masters now allow the former slaves to pass on the land to their descendants providing the land remains within the lineage which controls the territory. As Roger Botte (1994) observed among the Fulbe of Fuuta Jalon in Guinea, there is

a tacit agreement which combines the principle of land tenure reform of 1983 “the land belongs to the one who works on it” with the principle of the inalienability of the community’s patrimony. In fact, tensions occur especially when the question of land appropriation outside the community is at stake. This is the case when plots of land are allocated within the irrigable areas. This is also the case when plots of land are sold without the preliminary consent of the head of the lineage. In both cases, conflicts can even result in the eviction of farmers.

In this context, political discrimination occurring during the democratization process has triggered different social movements which clearly raise the issue of political participation for subordinated groups. The latter have indeed rapidly realised the importance of their demographic weight, which they use as a means of pressure during elections. In the case of conflict with nobles on the choice of names on the lists, they can choose to transfer their votes to another list. They can even sometimes decide to leave the communities, which are called *leyyi* in Haalpulaar, to which they were attached, to create their own groups. These *leyyi* are political groups of varying sizes, each with a noble family at its head. During the history of settlement, these noble families integrated many other families and different social groups, and notably, servile populations. This grouping into categories therefore appears as one of the most significant tendencies in the democratic game as played by the subordinated groups, as it is often the condition for their recognition and their political participation. This is confirmed by E. Hahonou (2008) in his research on Niger and Benin, where success by slave descendants in elections was especially observed in communities with a strong community commitment, like the former Tuareg and Fulbe slaves. In the region of Gorgol in Mauritania the same phenomenon can be observed. As a result noble lineages are more and more obliged to concede a certain number of posts in the municipality to members of subordinated categories in order not to lose their political following and/or to be faced with opposition. Moreover, the choice to place persons of lower status on the list of eligibles could be a strategy of anticipation practised by the different parties. In this way, a person could be chosen to counterbalance a competitive list presenting one or two candidates from subordinated groups.

The contribution of migration to new legitimacies

Although this grouping into categories seems to be a condition of access to posts of elected representatives, it does raise certain contradictions as regards emancipation. In fact, subordinated social groups are reproduced. In addition, the question of the status of the elected representatives of servile origin is raised as they could be chosen because of their belonging to a category, in order to meet the need for social mixture in the composition of the lists of eligibles. In spite of the importance of the status variable in the political game and its subsequent use, these are not the only factors to be taken into account to explain the access to posts of elected representatives by people of servile origin.

It would be a mistake to apprehend the successes, actions, gestures and speech of the elected representatives through their status only. The following cases of political success for members of subordinated groups will illustrate other criteria, which need to be accounted for, like personal qualities and new forms of legitimacy linked to migration. The case of Abou Cisse, the present deputy mayor of the city of Kaedi, is an example. He launched into politics in the 1980s after studying Law. Now at the age of 46 his political success is due in part to the claims of his social category of servile origin which allow him to assert himself on the local political stage. But, in addition to this, he demonstrates good interpersonal skills which have been acknowledged during his offices as well as his great availability for the public. Besides, he is also very attentive to the development of his town in great economic difficulty. Consequently, he came to France in June 2008 to encourage emigrants from Kaedi to engage in the development of education and health in their hometown. This was not easy because up until then, the emigrants were divided among themselves as to conducting actions together. His initiative seems to have been successful because, in December 2008, young emigrants from Kaédi (Soninké and Haalpulaaren) set up a new association called „Regroupement des jeunes de Kaedi pour le développement (AJKD; The Youth Association from Kaedi for Development). This episode will certainly have positive repercussions on Abou Cisse's renown, especially as political legitimacy today is more and more based on the ability of the elected representatives to act as „development brokers" (Bierschenk et. al. 2000)[5]. Thus, whatever the status of representatives, both experience in migration and economic success play an important role in political recognition.

[5] See also Mosse & Lewis (2006).

A further example is the election of Samba Diarra, the mayor of Djeol since 1999. This shows that the political success of the man, belonging to a category of servile origin, is greatly linked to his financial means and his role in administration. He does in fact represent those new figures in politics (Banégas et Warnier, 2001) who manage to locally reinvest power acquired outside their home village. As a customs officer in Nouakchott, he was able to conduct several actions for the development of his village (installation of solar panels for electricity in the main mosque in Djeol, donation of one of his pieces of land to the village for the building of a school).

This gained the trust of the inhabitants and a certain renown which led him to be approached by the nobles in charge of the village to become involved politically. As observed by J.Schmitz and M.-E Humery (2008), in the case of the "département" of Podor in Senegal, experience in migration and work in development produce real opportunities for the promotion and the recognition of those involved, notably those of servile origin. This new type of legitimacy is more and more significant today in the context of decentralization reforms which force municipalities to find sources of financing. Consequently people capable of being at the interface between the village and the outside world through their activities and their experience in migration possess real criteria for eligibility.

Furthermore, this influence of the migrants on social changes can also be observed in the new principles and values brought by them into the management of local affairs and which have sometimes modified it. For example in the region of Kayes in Mali, as shown by C.Quiminal (2006), migrants, whatever their status, played an active role in the application of new political rules. These were based on the widening of the circles for deliberation and decision making, and on the criteria of competence and public property. In the municipality of Marena Dioumbougou, the mayor, another descendant of slaves, was also elected for his experience of migration and a certain competence acquired in associations founded by migrants.

These associations are the result of the desire of migrants to act collectively and more efficiently to develop their home village. They are open to all social categories and favour the spreading of responsibilities on the basis of competence. These ideas are a result of their life in France and also the consequence of emancipation led by subordinated groups and the young in hostels for workers in the 1970s (Quiminal 1991)[6]. Today, as

[6] Two main sources of tensions in the hostel for workers can be underlined. The first opposed social categories concerning work in the kitchen which in the absence of women fell on the slaves, who refused to accomplish this task alone. The second

indicated before, the migrant associations contribute to introducing new principles for the management of local affairs which can result in certain people of subordinated status playing a political role.

To summarize, access to posts of elected representatives does not depend only on social or genealogical origins, but involves the combination — variable according to the local context — of different types of legitimacy which are witness to the economic and political transformation in process. So in order to better understand the emergence of political men among subordinated groups, these changes need to be taken into account. Indeed, as has been observed elsewhere in Africa[7], the present political configurations are marked by the overlapping of different chains of responsibility and several political logics (lineage, democracy, clientelism). This, on the one hand, produces tensions because of the contradictions entailed, and on the other hand, offers opportunities and leeway for individuals to redefine their place in society. At the same time, in the context of democracy and decentralization, the influence of external power and the intervention of a multitude of actors (migrants, NGOs, youth associations, the administration and new elected representatives in municipalities) contribute to diversifying local power which is favourable for social renogotiation.

In this context, the subordinated groups are perfectly aware that chieftainships — whatever their importance of their role today — have less and less claim on the monopoly over political regulation. Such a situation only strengthens their request for a share not only in municipal power, but also sometimes in traditional village authority, as was the case in the village of Djeol in Mauritania. Here this claim led to a violent conflict between the traditional members of the village authority and certain subordinated families, who had to rely on the help of their relatives abroad to lead their action.

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opposed age groups when the youth wanted to be independent from their elders. Their greater integration in life in France (language learning, studies, collective actions in trade unions) had encouraged their sense of independence.

[7] See Bierschenk & Olivier de Sardan (1998); Fay et al. (2006); Totte et al. (2003).

The influence of migrants in the current restructuring of chieftainships

Democratization and chieftainship

The attempts at restructuring chieftainships by subordinated groups are indeed one of the most evident illustrations of the impact of the social renegotiation in progress. They are a result of the return of chieftainships linked to the introduction of democratic voting. As already observed elsewhere in Africa (Perrot & Fauvelle-Aymar 2003), electoral competition and the creation of new parties looking for legitimacy, have revived the powers of chieftainships perceived as being capable of attracting voters. Far from reproducing a *status quo*, this revival has been accompanied by considerable restructuring which can be observed in the new profile of the chiefs and the way they have redefined their role faced with the new powers of the municipalities. In their logic of power-sharing, the traditional chiefs are similar in a way to an „impersonal electoral college" (Bouju 2000), in so far as they prefer to entrust the responsibilities of the municipalities to other persons within their circle. These persons chosen for their financial means, their education and political links with the central power guarantee the best defence of the chiefs' interests: the protection of land tenure, conservation of social hierarchies, tapping of the proceeds from development.

But chieftainships are also recomposed because new democratic principles have affected them. For instance, R. Banegas (2003) has shown, in the case of Benin, how chieftainships readapted in the democratic game with the growing number of applicants for chieftainship. We can also see this in Mauritania where competition between applicants for chieftainships has become fiercer. These situations of conflict can lead to a modification in the rules for appointing chiefs, and sometimes can end in the nomination of two chiefs in the name of new criteria for legitimacy. In some cases, we can observe the emergence of new criteria for eligibility which are no longer based on seniority but on competence and links with political and administrative authorities[8]. But this political rivalry can also lead to the opening up of negotiation which includes persons from outside the village more and more. In the village of Meri in the Senegal river valley, J. Schmitz (2000) has shown that the chief of Meri was only able to be elected through the mediation of persons from the village settled in

[8] Such is the case at Kaedi where the *subaalße* (fischermen) from the *leynol* of the Kahaydinnaaße have two chiefs with the title of Teen.

Dakar. These migrants, from noble families but not belonging to the traditional voting families[9], managed in the end to reach a decision about the election in an original way by drawing lots to decide between the candidates.

All this restructuring in the chieftainships, whether in their form, their functioning or their prerogatives, has incited subordinated groups even more to claim for reforms in order for them to participate in the traditional power. This is what happened in 2000, in the village of Djeol where some subordinated families, called Safaalße Hormankooße[10] (considered a servile group by the nobles) decided to leave the five *leyyi* to which they were attached, to create their own separate *leynol* with the aim of asserting their rights.

The conflict of Djeol

The decision to create their own leynol is a considerable stake because, it is on the basis of these leyyi, that the life of the village is built. For instance, when it comes to sharing food aid, each leynol must have its share. When it comes to drawing up a list of eligible people for election, each leynol must have a representative among the first five representatives on the list. The fact that these subordinated families wanted to found a new leynol caused violent reactions on the part of governing lineages who then took actions against these families.

For example, at the general assembly meeting, on 15th November 1999, heads of lineage decided to suspend „all the rights and duties in the village" of the Safaalße Hormankooße. They were thus excluded from farming cooperatives, parent teacher associations, and they were deprived of food from the world food aid programme. Some lands which had been lent to them were also confiscated. It was also decided to forbid any person from the village to attend weddings, naming or burial ceremonies.

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[9] In the Haalpulaar society, the chiefs are traditionally appointed either through election or through seniority right. The election system is based on the strict distinction between voting families (*fiilooße*) and eligible (*fiiliteeße*) families. The roles cannot be reversed. In the case of the conflict in Meri, the voting families were not able to play their role because of their discord.

[10] The Saafaalße Hormankooße —which literally means the Horman Moors— might be the descendants of black populations, which had been captured by Horman Moroccan warriors, who were present in the Senegal valley in the early seventeenth century. These captives found refuge in Haalpulaar villages in the valley, where they were given the name of Safaalße Hormankooße.

These repressive measures were even taken in Europe against the emigrants who had supported the cause of these families. In France, relatives of these families were also excluded from emigrant associations the Association for the development of Djeol and the Association for solidarity. This following experience shows the inconvenience of this decision.

> "Me, B., I came to France in November 1995, and I had paid all my subscriptions those years when they excluded me which meant I lost all my subscriptions and they kept my money. My son died and I could not get back my money to pay for his burial."[11.]

Such harsh sanctions applied outside the village can be explained mainly by the fact that these emigrants played a determining role in the rise of the social movement in Djeol. In fact, the families who stayed in Djeol had been able to count on the support of emigrants who had settled in France since the sixties. Following the sanctions in 1999, some of these emigrants opened several shops in Djeol to fight against the embargo. Moreover they financed the building of personal wells because access to the others in the village were forbidden. In addition, in 2002 they arranged the return of an uncle who had migrated to Gambia where he had worked as a prawn fisher for 40 years, and who was asked to assist his elder brother in guarding family property during this period of insecurity. When he returned to Mauritania this uncle was taken in charge by one of his nephews — a journalist settled in Nouakchott — who thanks to his acquaintances in the administration helped him to obtain his Mauritanian identity papers which he no longer possessed[12].

These emigrants also helped their families to set up their own *leynol* in 2000 during an official ceremony. It is interesting to note how these families organised the nomination of their chief. It was exactly the same rules as observed with the nobles. For example their chief received the insignia of power such as the *lefol* (a turban) and the *nguru* (a sheep skin which he sits on). These insignia and also the dress of the chief were all white, a symbol of peace. In addition to this, the *lefol* had a design which represented their belonging to the village and their identity.

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[11] Interview B., Paris, 10/11/04.

[12] See also in Schmitz et Humery (2008) the example of networking between migrants in the village of Thilogne in a study by A. Kane (2002). Here can be seen how village members settled in Dakar acted as intermediaries between emigrants abroad and their home village.

In fact this design shows six hearts in a line representing six lineages. The top one is that of the Safaalße Hormankooße where we can see the initials LSHD (*leynol* Safaalße Hormankooße of Djeol). The six hearts are linked to each other leading down to the main heart which is red[13] and represents the village itself.

This ceremony shows that the Safaalße Hormankooße, even though they were aware of defying the local authorities, were nevertheless looking for a certain acknowledgment from the nobles as is suggested by the use of the symbols of peace. Here is expressed all the difficulty of their social movement which aims at a share in a power which can only be obtained if those who exercise the power agree to it. But the conflict of Djeol also shows the ambivalence of some claims. This can be observed in the fact that the rebel families demand a sharing of powers in the name of democratic principles but, in fact, what these families intend to do is less to topple down the current power than to participate in it, in order to obtain their share. Thus, these families have never stopped asserting that they do not want to question the internal organisation of the *leyyi*.

The external influences on local issues

The example of Djeol is a good illustration of the external influences on local issues. This is shown through the action of international emigrants whose financial help not only serves economic interests but can also be used to serve political goals with the aim of backing a social movement. Hence, international migrants not only support the political goals of social movements financially, but they also influence the local political imagination by introducing new ideas and strategies. Thus, an increasing number of subordinate groups have begun claiming an equal share of political power in the name of the principles of equality, dignity and individual skills. In the case of Djeol, the subordinated groups have adapted the right of citizenship to the power structures of a village, which was unimaginable a few years ago.

This example also shows that power struggles between social groups occur not only at the level of the village but they also concern a wide network of agents (the youth, emigrants, administration employees), different regional spaces (Europe, Africa), as well as several periods in time and a variety of political imaginaries. Thus social renogotiation

[13] Here again, colour is symbolic because red for the Haalpulaar is a color of bravoury and love.

occurs in what could be qualified as a “transnational” context (Appadurai 1991).

This situation shows that social stakes have become more and more complex, because of the variety of modes of action as well as the overlapping of the different contexts which makes the possibilities of conflict resolution more and more difficult. The conflict has not been solved in Djeol and the attempts at mediation have all failed so far. So, one of the stakes that the Haalpular society faces is to find a new form of mediation in order to settle situations of conflict and also to answer the subordinated groups’ growing need for political participation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we have seen that even if different types of discrimination still remain in play, these are being increasingly contested by the claims of subordinated groups to cross social boundaries. These claims are all the more significant because they are backed by the emigrant network. An important sign of the changes in process is that the claims not only concern a participation in the new powers of the municipality but can also aim at a participation in the traditional authorities of the village. However, in this last case, what is interesting is that until now political restructuring has had no chance of being accepted when it is initiated by the subordinated groups, as seen in the example of Djeol. The chieftainships are in fact transformed by the nobles who usually do so in their own interest. However the subordinated groups do have more opportunities of being acknowledged in the new power of the municipality, even if this remains under control. In reality, if a certain overlapping of power does exist between chieftainships and the new municipality, there is a distinct difference between them. Applying for a post in the municipality does not have the same symbolic value as founding a new *leynol*. This explains why the majority of nobles cannot accept the claims made by the subordinated groups in Djeol.

In the case of the new powers of municipalities, the access of certain members of subordinated groups to posts of elected representatives can be seen as part of a wider context of emancipation dynamics already operating in the Mauritanian society. But, it also involves, as seen, the diversification of local powers and the overlapping of different types of legitimacy. This is favourable to the emergence of new actors and a certain redistribution of responsibilities which is beneficial notably to the subordinated groups. Over time, the members of these subordinated categories have in this way been able to enter the political debate to such a

point that their access to posts of municipal councillors or mayors is no longer exceptional. As has been observed by A. N'Gaide (1999), in the region of Kolda in Senegal, or by E. Hahounou (2008) in Niger and Benin, the link between status and political position does not tend to be as systematic as a few years ago. But apart from the role of the emigrants in this evolution, there is the further question about the members of groups of servile origin who manage to obtain responsibilities in the new powers of municipalities. The question remains of whether they will in fact change the way of using power or whether they will reproduce the old patterns of politics.

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FRONTIERS OF MOBILITY, LIMITS OF CITIZENSHIP: POLITICAL MEANINGS OF MOBILITY FOR SOME FULANI GROUPS IN MAURITANIA

RICCARDO CIAVOLELLA

Introduction

In the last decade, anthropological literature on Africa and elsewhere has paid particular attention to mobility. One of the reasons for this is the importance that migration, especially towards Europe, has been given in the public debate. A number of studies on contemporary forms of mobility have allowed for deep reflection on meanings and practices of transnational migration and networks (Vertovec 1999, Baubock 2006; Glick-Schiller 2005). One of the most important theoretical contributions of transnationalism studies is the analysis of the relationship between mobility and belonging, focusing in particular on logics of inclusion and exclusion to citizenship (Hansen & Stepputat 2005; Ong 1999, 2006). With this paper, I will try to shed light on a different point of view on transnationalism and translocality, that is, their impact on those communities which are almost excluded from those transnational networks that are closely linked to social and political capitals on the local basis. Thus, these communities' immobility, rather than mobility, turns out to be the symptom of social and political marginalization.

The paper is partly based on ethnographic and historical evidence collected during a 13 month fieldwork in Mauritania (Ciavolella 2008a, 2009b). In particular, I studied the relationship between a pastoral Fulani group, the FulaaBe, and the State in the southern-central region of the country at the border with Mali. This group has nomadic origins, and their practices of mobility differ from other Pulaar-speaking populations of the near by Senegal River Valley, which are mainly made up of sedentary agriculturalists (see Leservoisier 1994 and this volume). As we will see further on, this distinction is critical in order to understand comparative

changes from agro-pastoral forms of mobility to contemporary translocal and transnational ones, which predominantly affected privileged populations of sedentary origin. For the pastoral Fulani group being analysed, mobility has always been at the core of their cultural and political dynamics. Nevertheless, since the 1980s, their incorporation and then marginalisation into the Mauritanian state provoked a dramatic change in their practices of mobility, constraining these communities to increasing forms of immobility. Stemming from an analysis of FulaaBe's culture of mobility from a historical and emic point of view, this paper aims at studying cultural and political meaning of contemporary immobility for a group which is characterized by a culture and a history of movement, displacement and migration.

Historical and emic perspective on FulaaBe Mobility

In recent years, some scholars found it necessary to avoid considering contemporary migration towards Europe as an exceptional phenomenon for African societies as Western medias sometimes suggest. Mirjam de Bruijn et al. (2001), for example, have demonstrated that mobility is not only a widespread practice in African societies, but that it also represents one of the most important elements in building social relationships. Thus, for Hahn and Klute (2007), the historical dimension of mobility and its relevance in African social and political dynamics even fostered the emergence of what are known as "cultures of migration".

These perspectives clearly intend to establish continuity between past and present forms of mobility. In the last years, scientific effort of replacing contemporary African migrations in the *longue durée* has been critical to deconstruct media simplifications and warnings, and "normalize" contemporary exodus of African populations towards Europe. The issue takes on a special significance if we specifically refer to Sahelian nomadic and pastoral populations, which hold a "culture of mobility". Their mobility is anchored both in historically established practices and in cultural and socio-political representations of space. Historical heritage and cultural representations would affect a predisposition to move and to avoid stable settlings and attachment to a territory, especially when compared with sedentary farmers. In this perspective, Boesen and Marfaing (2007) showed that the Sahel-Saharan nomadic populations are better prepared than others to take advantage of translocal networks built by "modern" forms of mobility. This can be seen both internally, between the countryside and the cities, and internationally, between countries of origin and countries of destination. In these cases, the

cultural experience of mobility as a kind of bourdieusian *habitus*, facilitates the articulation of translocal networks and consolidation of individual life paths culturally inclined to a life "in exile", far from home. In this paper, we tackle the issue of the “culture of mobility” for pastoral populations from another point of view. Instead of focusing on those groups that are already organised translocally or transnationally thanks to contemporary forms of mobility, we consider those populations that find it difficult to move to towns and abroad and have seen their possibility of displacement in rural areas dramatically limited in last decades.

These considerations immediately inspire reflection on what the example of the FulaaBe could bring to this debate about “old” or “new” forms of mobility and to the continuity between pastoral transhumance and contemporary forms of migration. My first standpoint stems from the following idea: despite their pastoral and nomadic “cultures of mobility” which still endure in the emic way in which FulaaBe represent space and movement, contemporary practices and meanings of mobility have dramatically changed in the context of a complete incorporation of these communities into the state which has overlapped with the progressive reduction of pastoral space due to the 70s and 80s Sahelian droughts.

Before the 1980s, mobility was a successful strategy aiming at avoiding state integration and preserving political autonomy. This means that in this paper I take into consideration the cases in which mobility represents both a necessity dictated by pastoralism and a political resource in order to flee political and socio-economic disruption. If we consider oral history and colonial archived evidence, we can suggest that in the 19th century, the FulaaBe were scattered in the Senegalese Ferlo. At that time, this region constituted an African “frontier region”, as Igor Kopytoff put it, where they could benefit from the “relative political vacuum at the peripheries of large polities or wedged between them” (Kopytoff 1987: 28) by living “at the *margins* of these declining states or in areas that were under no governmental control” (Robinson: 27). At the beginning of the 20th century, they escaped French occupation, regional political disruption, and ecological crises. They directed themselves towards the right bank of the Senegal River valley in what was becoming the French territory of Mauritania. For the first decades of the 20th century, Fulani could still protect their political autonomy by taking refuge in the interstices of the colonial administration concentrated in towns. In the Karakoro region, the FulaaBe found a favourable environment because of the lack of extended and centralized political entity. Even the French army and administration found it difficult to penetrate in this region and to subject it to tight control. The only part of this region where the FulaaBe

found it difficult to settle was the narrow corridor of 5 kilometres that constitutes the Karakoro River banks. Because of its fertile lands, this zone was occupied since the 18th century by some farmer groups, such as the sedentary Fulani (ModynallankooBe) and the Soninke. In this narrow strip of land, agricultural exploitation has always been intensive but at that point in time there was still place for transhumance corridors. FulaaBe took these passages during their seasonal migrations eastwards and southwards with their cattle.

Thus, FulaaBe "preferred" the under-exploited lands east of the River bank (between the River and the Assaba mountain). The southern part of this region is quite fertile thanks to the proximity to the Senegal River Valley. This has allowed some groups of Soninke farmers to create dense but dispersed sedentary settlements without any centralized power on them. These Soninke villages, of which origins date back to the 18th century, have always been at the periphery of centralized political entities of the Senegal River left bank, such as Bundu and Gajaaga. In the 40s, this weak centralization allowed some groups of FulaaBe to settle down on free land, even if they were already experiencing a process of sedentarisation, which led to some land conflicts with the Soninke. Nevertheless, the majority of the FulaaBe settled in the northern part of the Karakoro basin. Here, they found an almost uninhabited territory. Only a dozen of Moors' former slaves (Haratin) settlements were situated in this zone that was at the edge of any Moor tribal sphere of control.

Despite the increasing presence of colonial administration in some local urban centres and its will of political control on the territory (Ciavolella 2008b), FulaaBe could benefit from their mobility and marginality in order to preserve their political autonomy and their pastoral activities. This condition of relative political autonomy also continued Mauritanian independence. Despite the efforts of the national elite for a complete nation-state building on the whole territory and on all the Mauritanian populations, FulaaBe could still benefit from their high mobility in order to escape the embryonic administration.

In order to understand these old forms of mobility as a political resource to flee political domination, one might focus on FulaaBe's emic representations of space, in particular on the concept of *ladde* or bush. *Ladde* is a complex and ambiguous notion. On the one hand, it is the place of non-human forces, the domain of danger. In this case, mobility in the bush, both as transhumance or migration, is a heroic experience. On the other hand, it constitutes the most important resource for pastoral economy and for political autonomy, representing the possibility to escape from political centralizations or internal conflicts. In this sense, the ladde

constitutes free space, a space of "frontier", that is, a "pioneer front", a territory for conquest and free expansion. So, mobility in the bush was the best political resource: thanks to the ladde, FulaaBe could flee centralized political entities as the colonial regime, escape their control, avoid taxation, and circumvent their territory.

This situation changed with the dramatic Sahelian droughts of the 70s and 80s, when the state multiplied its efforts to deploy itself in the countryside, while thousands of Mauritanians left their rural villages and settled in regional towns and in the capital city. Since then, the FulaaBe's situation has been characterised by sedentarisation, urbanisation and an increasing state control on peoples' movements with administrative census and state control of land distribution. If we adopt the FulaaBe's point of view on their own history, we see that the FulaaBe mark out a historical rupture in the 80s which represents a distinction between two main periods. The earlier period is referred to as the *uncounted years*, a time that becomes simply *hanki* - the past that predates the present. For the FulaaBe, this was the time of *adaaji* or traditions, that is, of genuine pastoral life based on honour and stability. This vision seems an idealized opposite of the contemporary urban life. The dramatic drought of 1983 constitutes the first factor of incorporation into the Mauritanian state. With this ecological and economic crisis, the FulaaBe could not recur to mobility in the *ladde*. What changed with the shift from an idealized *past* to a dramatic *present* – a time that the FulaaBe now call "modernité" – is the possibility to recur to mobility in order to flee political, economic or ecological disruption. They said, *waawi caaru ko dogu* ("what destroys the cattle's plague is the flight"); and this time, Fulani do not flee" (Join-Lambert 1985, 51). Thus, the time of the bush was over.

From the time of state incorporation on, the FulaaBe experienced two types of socio-political exclusion, which are related to two different types of mobility. On one hand, between 1989 and 1991 the FulaaBe became the principal victims of ethnic persecution by state authorities in the southern central region, with military ethnic deportations to Senengal and thousands of people fleeing to Mali. On the other hand, the FulaaBe communities that who remained on the Mauritanian territory entered into two decades of progressive political and socio-economic marginalization, pushing young generations to migrate to capital city suburbs and rural villages and towards an increasing economic dependence. The next two sections of the article will take into consideration these two different cases: the situation of FulaaBe refugees and returnees and that of FulaaBe Mauritanian citizens.

Refugees and returnees: Immobility and the rhetoric of mobility as "traditional savagery"

Between 1989 and 1991, some Mauritanian authorities under the *baathist* banner of the Arab identity and of a Moor "ethnic" exclusiveness of the country, persecuted tens of thousands of "Negro-Mauritanian" citizens. The FulaaBe became victims of a history of elite ethno-political competition which they had never taken part to. Hundreds were literally displaced to Senegal by the army. Almost half of the communities flew to Mali escaping persecutions while those that remained on the Mauritanian territory became one of the most marginal groups of the country. While entering the Malian territory, and not simply the bush, the FulaaBe "traditional" *migrants* turned out to be also "modern" political *refugees*.

The FulaaBe still settled as refugees in Mali and succeeded in building social and spatial networks spreading out on the two sides of the border despite their exclusion from any recognition of Mauritanian citizenship rights. Some refugees even know how to take advantage from some favourable economic activities, such as cross-border smuggling,but the majority of the refugees have no other choice than raiding cattle on both sides of the border against "local" populations both in Mauritania (Moors and Soninké) and in Mali (Soninké and FulBe).

Immediately after the 1989 "events", the FulaaBe tried to circumvent or "to disengage from" the State (Azarya & Chazan 1987), taking again the way of the bush. In their oral accounts, the crossing of the border with Mali corresponds to an old idea of fleeing political centralization, in this case, the Mauritanian state. Displacement to Mali seemed a renewal of an ancient history of fleeing political disorders and economic deterioration[1]. However, this idea of continuity of flight and displacement as a political "frontier" strategy should be somewhat mitigated. A new element was there, irrevocably changing the space of the bush: the territorial border between the two countries. While entering the Malian territory, and not simply the bush, the FulaaBe "traditional" *migrants* turned out to be also "modern" political *refugees*. Their new villages in Mali were not "free" as they were before, that is to say, subjected exclusively to the migratory groups' choices. From that time onwards, their living space would be governed in accordance with the will of local, national and international institutions.

[1] In 1989, the majority of the FulaaBe had already experienced a migration and a change of their context of life, under the pressure of climatic crisis (1942, 1971 and 1983) and of administrative control (colonial regime and Mauritanian administration)

Anyhow, this idea of "bio-political" control on refugees seemed to be in contradiction with their concrete situation in Mali. Being completely neglected by local, national and international institutions[2], the majority of the new FulaaBe settlements in Mali were on waste lands in some out-of-the-way zones and not in "typical" refugee camps controlled by neither state authorities nor by international institutions. This relative "freedom" for refugees allowed them to move and to easily transgress all the limits imposed by national authorities.

Despite the international border representing the exclusion from Mauritanian citizenship, refugees succeeded in building social and spatial networks spreading out on the two sides of the border. Though limited in time, refugees' cross-border movements enable them to maintain social relationships with their families in Mauritania. That is why it is not unusual to see FulaaBe refugees and those still living in Mauritania visiting each other in their respective villages or even attending marriages between "Mauritanian" and "Malian" FulaaBe. Some refugees even know how to take advantage from some favourable economic activities, which are possible in a trans-boundary context such as the Karakoro borderland. Some youngsters succeed in joining trade networks for small cross-border smuggling activities. This trade develops in spite of the enormous transportation difficulties and thanks in particular to the differences in prices between the CFA market of Mali and the Mauritanian national currency market (ouguiya). However, this job in the cross-border trade employs only a minority of people. In some cases, refugees' villages received some fertile lands as a loan offered by local populations, especially other FulaaBe communities.

Thus, many refugees have no other choice than raiding cattle on the two sides of the border, harming "local" populations both in Mauritania (Moors and Soninké) and in Mali (Soninké and FulBe). In this way, they take advantage of being at the border carrying out raids on the Mauritanian side and then crossing back the border to Mali in order to flee Mauritanian authorities. Refugees' relatives in Mauritania – those who never left their country or those who have already been "repatriated" - follow the same practices but in the opposite direction.

This practice, considered informal and "traditional" by some, and illegal by others, amplifies the aversion of the local populations in Mali and in Mauritania towards these refugees and these returnees who are seen

[2] The HCR intervention in Mali - between 1992 and 1995 - was made of limited food aid delivery to those villages which were formally registered by the UN agency - approximately half of all the refugees' settlements.

as disturbing "allochtones", "aliens" or "strangers" at both sides of the border. In these circumstances, talk on "autochtony" (Bayart et al. 2001; Geschiere 2009) and all the classical stereotypes about FulaaBe nomads considered as wild, brutal and unruly thieves spread very easily. Thus, it is not surprising to hear a local mayor blaming nomadic FulaaBe returnees for threatening his district's order. The mayor expresses this idea by recurring to a mixture of factual and stereotyped considerations about the brutality and wilderness of FulaaBe pastoralists:

> "They come here and ask us to give them lands. But already there are not enough lands for everybody here. And with lands, they want a well and a school, too. And then they arrive with their cattle, some wandering animals which destroy our cultivations. They are "wild". You know, actually FulBe are cattle raiders. After they settle here, they cross the border and go to Mali, they raid the cattle and then come back here. And after, all the Malian authorities, the mayors or even the governors or the ministers come here to complain with me. They do not complain with those robbers or with the Mauritanian government in Nouakchott" (Speech of a Mayor, Karakoro area, September 2006).

On several occasions, the existence of both licit and illicit trans-boundary networks of FulaaBe communities concerned by the 1989 persecutions, allowed the Mauritanian government to declare the border "open" and the cross-border mobility "free". In this perspective, the Mauritanian government often explains the presence of "some" Mauritanians in "some" refugee villages in Mali as the consequence of their own free will: as the border is open, they are free to move between the two sides. Since 1991, the president Ould Taya has repeatedly stated that all the Mauritanians being able to prove their nationality are free to move back. He was relying on the obvious evidence of refugees' and returnees' cross-border mobility and the porosity of the border.

Even the HCR has always shared this idea. In 1994, the HCR stopped any food aid delivery in refugee villages in order to impel them on a "voluntary" basis to go back to Mauritania. This "voluntary repatriation's plan", as they called it, was conceived in collaboration with government authorities in Nouakchott and relied precisely on the idea that Mauritanian refugees in Mali would not meet any concrete obstacles on their way back home. In the HCR representatives' minds, those who were not going to return to Mauritania were explicitly affirming their will to remain in Mali. Thus, in 1995 the HCR justified its complete abandonment of refugees by affirming that the overwhelming majority of Mauritanians who moved to

Mali during the 1989 "events" were not "refugees" *strictu sensu*[3]. The HCR representative for West Africa affirmed that although the refugees are "*strangers* settled in Senegal and Mali […] they are mixed up in the local mass […] in fact, they are the same populations speaking the same idioms".

These words mean nothing but a renewal of the old colonial and post-colonial phantasms of ethnic continuity of "black Mauritanians" with Senegalese and Malian people. These ideas are revived here not by some baathist extremists of Nouakchott, but by a U.N. humanitarian agency's representative for whom cultural and ethnic continuity seems to prevail on citizenship in defining national membership rights. Following the same logic, in 1998, the HCR estimated that social integration was the best solution to solve the "refugees problem" in Mali rather than repatriation and re-settlement. These operations of the HCR were then seen as a great humanitarian success since the Mauritanian FulBe could perfectly integrate into the host society thanks to ethnic affinity. Yet again in 2005, the HCR reiterated the decision to stop any operation in support of refugees:

> "The HCR estimates that its mission of social integration of the Mauritanian refugees is accomplished. Refugees are sufficiently armed to think for themselves. This is also due to the fact that the assistance provided by the HCR cannot be perpetual and that other categories of refugees, whose situation is much more alarming, are still waiting…".

Thus, from the point of view of the Mauritanian authorities and the HCR, the porosity of the border and the relative freedom of movement of FulBe do not justify any policy dealing with the "refugees in Mali" issue any longer. In fact these communities, unlike the Mauritanian refugees in Senegal, are not concerned by the latest plan of repatriation endorsed by the new government of Nouakchott at the beginning of 2008 (Ciavolella & Fresia, 2009).

However, a more accurate analysis shows that the government's and HCR's idea that Mauritanian refugees in Mali are no longer considered refugees because of their freedom of cross-border mobility is too simplistic. One can find other reasons that explain why refugees in Mali do not go back and settle in "their" country. In spite of the myth of perfect "social integration", these communities do not benefit from any citizenship rights recognition by Malian authorities, because they are neither Malians

[3] Moreover, the HCR met the refusal made by Western powers in providing Mauritanian displaced people to Mali the formal international "refugee" status".

nor strangers with a legal refugees status[4]. In order to understand the reasons why most of them still remain in Mali, one should look into the concrete conditions of returnees in Mauritania. Refugees are constantly informed about these conditions thanks to the continuous exchanges they have with their relatives on the other side of the border.

The tough experience of the refugees who chose to go back to Mauritania (*returnees*) certainly represents the main deterrent against any idea to return for the others. In general, returnees' communities could reach the Mauritanian territory without meeting any explicit opposition from national authorities. Nevertheless, they could not benefit from any recognition of their citizenship rights since their "national identity" is not recognized by any administrative census[5]. But this exclusion from formal citizenship is translated into an even more important cause of their marginality, that is, their exclusion from any form of social and political integration in Mauritania. Almost none of the returnees' communities have been allowed to join their villages of origin because newcomers have occupied their lands. Local and national authorities tried to manage the resettlement operations by minimizing their costs and hiding the returnees issue from the public debate, thus benefiting from the FulaaBe's lack of visibility in the national and international public scene. Returnees were nearly literally "stored up" and confined in out-of-the-way zones, subordinated to local populations in acceding to local scarce natural resources.

State central authorities were the principle decision-making bodies in this resettlement operation, but they hardly took into account local authorities' opinions and local populations' concrete attitudes towards the "newcomers". Actually, returnees should be integrated in contexts that already score a high pressure on water and land resources. Consequently, local populations and authorities sometimes consider returnees simply as "hosts" on their lands but they are more often seen as "invaders".

Thus, returnees find themselves to be the target of local chiefs' discourses on belonging and "autochthony" which are spreading, thanks to decentralization and to their control over lands, migratory remittances and development investments. Returnees instead have no political, economic or social capital when compared with other local groups: they do not benefit from any patronage relationships, they have no access to

[4] In the 90s, the Malian government delivered some provisional documents to some refugees. But nowadays, the majority of the Malian documents recognizing the refugees status already expired and had never been renewed.

[5] The majority of refugees' identity cards have been torn, burned or lost before they left the Mauritanian territory.

information, they are completely confined in enclaves and they have no relatives emigrated elsewhere who could help them financially. Finally, their new villages are not given the right to participate to local political debates gathering "civil society" representatives and institutions since returnee settlements are not recognized by the local administration. In practice, returnees do not exist politically. State authorities decide where they must settle but at the same time they do not recognize them.

Mayors admit that they cannot take care of the returnees since any municipal policy of social and political inclusion would not bring any electoral advantage and would only raise the hostility of all the "local" populations. Nevertheless, in order to justify their neglect for returnees, mayors and other local representatives and communities still prefer to use classical stereotypes when referring to the FulBe and nomadic people in general. Thus, they refer to the returnees' "innate" incapacity and unwillingness to integrate into the municipal community and to conform to the laws of the sedentary world, while continuing to practice uncontrolled mobility and illegal practices. Consequently, returnees are considered personally responsible for their own marginality, since their condition is considered as the by-product of their "cultural" opposition to social and political inclusion rather than the effect of political exclusionary practices and attitudes carried out by institutions and other communities against them. This form of stigmatization is quite common everywhere in the world with regard to populations of nomadic origin. However, this prejudice is contradicted by the FulaaBe refugees' and returnees' aspirations as they are formulated in our times.

Returnees seem to refuse integration since they hardly mobilize to claim rights for political participation or resource redistribution, as they are completely occupied in finding expedients for survival and explain their conditions by referring to fate's power. Nevertheless, returnees express their dissatisfaction and explain their claims if and when they are given the opportunity to do so. It is the case of a village of returnees living at five kilometres from the Karakoro River which is their direct supply of drinking water, and at two hours walking distance from the first shop and road. A returnee said:

> "We want to become *sedentary*, to stop being *wild people* who raid cattle. We want lands to cultivate. But especially we want a school. We also want to be *modern* like the others" (Municipal district of Baédiam, October 2006).

This "modernity" seems to interpret some aspirations to a new way of life in a completely different way of the "traditional" nomadic one: "modernity"

refers to land, buildings and schools. Nowadays, nomads have lost any desire to preserve the mobile lifestyle they adopted in the past, since they are facing a context where the force of law or the force *tout court* controls space occupation and human presence on a territory. Being deprived of their right to nomadism by the State, they ask at least for the right to be sedentary.

Governance: rhetoric of translocality, practices of immobility

Since their progressive marginalisation within the Mauritanian state in the 1980s, the FulaaBe had to recur to new forms of mobility in order to cope with the new context. Some youngsters decided to migrate in the *ladde* again, but this time mobility was completely different from the pastoral one. They moved alone, leaving their communities in their fixed Mauritanian villages, and went to places where previous transhumance had never led them to. Small groups of FulaaBe migrated to Libya crossing the Sahara on foot, attracted by the Libyan economic development and Khadafi's projects. The few pilgrimages made by some FulaaBe to the Mecca since their Islamisation in the 1950s, marked an important moment for the whole community as this experience introduced the idea of belonging to larger imagined communities, such as "Africa" or the muslim "Umma". In practice, this affected only a small minority. Especially after the 1989 persecutions, the majority of post-pastoralist youngsters decided to leave their villages and settle in marginal slums of Nouakchott, the Mauritanian capital, inaugurating an assiduous rural-urban mobility, which is literally perceived as a migration, Nouakchott still being considered as "ladde".

These new forms of mobility do not represent any success for the FulaaBe. International migration to Libya, rural-urban mobility and refugees' cross-border smuggling are nothing but a strategy for survival and for coping with dramatic living conditions. Mobility is not an *exit strategy* as it was at the time of the *ladde*, because the state is there as an entity which they inevitably have to deal with with. Mobility is only a *tactic* at times to circumvent the state, at others to take advantage from whatever the Mauritanian or the international contexts they can offer to marginal populations. Actually, the new translocal settings in which the FulaaBe communities live do not turn out to be contexts of large and powerful transnational or translocal networks: translocal communities are too small and suffer from lack of social, economic and political capitals.

This resulted in being deeply prejudicial for the FulaaBe in comparison to other Mauritanian groups with which they have to compete on the social and political scene both on the local and national level. Since the 1990s, local and national politics in Mauritania is particularly exposed to the influence of political and economic networks of migrant communities, associations and lobby groups organized on a translocal basis between rural villages and the capital city, or between Mauritania and countries of the diasporas. Actually, local and national political elites in particular, can compete in politics on the local level only by transforming their translocal networks into social, political and economic capitals.

This dynamic is again closely linked to the issue of what Peter Geschiere calls "autochtony" (Bayart et al. 2001; Geschiere & Nyamnjoh 2000): the predominant relevance given to discourses and practices of belonging to villages and communities of origin. Nowadays, autochtony is spreading in Mauritania as elsewhere in Africa, under the impact of decentralization, land reforms and local development projects. All of these governance policies are affecting local politics by over-stressing the importance of local belonging and promoting reforms which can produce "immobility" of communities in their "villages of origin". Examples are the politics of land entitlements, the investment of migrants' remittances to their sole communities of origin and not to the whole local district and the promotion of agricultural exploitation against pastoral movements. What is striking in this logic of stressing locality is that at the same time, those who govern this process are the local elites who can benefit from translocal networks, and employ, on the local level, all the resources coming from the supra-local national and international context, such as internal and international migrants' remittances, NGOs and other development agencies' investments, and even state funds. As Peter Geschiere and others demonstrate, autochthony is a contradictory phenomenon where the claims for locality and belonging are nourished by translocal and even global dynamics. Inside local administrative entities, this means that local notables have the power to divert exterior resources only to their villages and not to participate to the development of the whole local community. In fact, the FulaaBe and other marginal communities, such as the former Moor slaves, remain excluded from local power and resource redistribution.

The issue of migrants' remittances is a good example of how governance dynamics work producing immobility and autochthony. In the Karakoro region where the FulaaBe are settled, some NGOs introduced a new strategy of local development aimed at mobilizing local resources without the intervention of state development policies (Choplin &

Ciavolella 2008). The preferred strategy to mobilize local resources is to employ financial resources coming from international migration. South-east Mauritania is in fact part of the Upper Senegal River region which is traditionally one of the most important and enduring zones of origin of West African migrants in Europe – that is, the Soninke migration in France (Manchuelle 1997; Quiminal 1991; Timera 1996). The exploitation of migration income opened to new strategies of international cooperation that allows avoiding state implication, such as decentralized cooperation and what is now called co-development. Evidence from the field shows that the NGOs' efforts to divert these remittances collide with the migrants will to keep on converting their resources to personal prestige. On the political level, this means that the Soninké can benefit from the migration remittances to impose their leadership among villages and then compete locally for the control of local politics with those groups, such as the Moors, that are rather hegemonic on the national level. In this context, it is impossible for the FulaaBe to participate to the political competition as they do not benefit from any transnational networks and they cannot even plan to build it, as migration has become impossible for them.

Even a new huge governance project concerning the entire borderland region between Mauritania and Mali in the zone where the FulaaBe are settled seems to reproduce the same logic. This new institutional project created in June 2007, aims at establishing a transboundary region in the Karakoro basin. This project is part of a broader West African transboundary integration project (WABI) created in 2003 and carried out by ECOWAS on different international boundaries (with the Karakoro region, south Senegambia, Mali/Ivory Coast/Burkina Faso and Niger/Nigeria in the "Hausa country")[6] (Enda-Diapol 2006; 2007). After the decision of the European Union to finance the project,

> "ECOWAS Foreign Affairs Ministers met on 14 June 2007 in Abuja and agreed on a regional approach to the management of migration, particularly within the region and to Europe. This approach highlights the

[6] The experts' meeting on border issues organised by the AU on 4 and 5 June 2007 demonstrated the Union's interest in border dynamics fostering integration. The group of experts consisting of representatives of AU member States, regional economic communities as well as intergovernmental organisations discussed and amended the AU Borders Programme's report and draft declaration before its submission to Ministers (Conference of African Ministers responsible for border issues on the topic, "Preventing conflict, promoting integration", held 7 June 2007 in Addis Abeba, Ethiopia), www.afriquefrontieres.org.

> importance of facilitating movement at intra-regional borders, depicting mobility as a development actor".

This means that regional cross-border mobility must represent a substitute strategy for West African migration towards Europe.

The principal transborder practices recognized by governance actors committed in the project are trade and transhumance. Trade is broadly recognized as a social and economic practice bypassing state formal frames. But, this means that transborder trade in the area is developing thanks to the border and not despite of it. For instance, trade flourishes by benefiting from currency differentials between Mali and Mauritania even if currency changes in CFA is illegal in Mauritania. The main paradox is that the transborder integration project insists on relying on the same governance policies that, until now, have produced immobility rather than mobility. By taking a depoliticized approach to local dynamics, governance policies neglect the political situation of Mauritanian Fulani refugees, who are not recognized the right to participate to NGOs and formal decision-bodies. The WABI in Karakoro does not address this problem even if the refugees represent the sole effective transboundary social network. Furthermore, by concentrating on agricultural exploitation governance projects hamper pastoral transhumance that was the only consolidated transboundary practice as recognized by the same WABI partners. And finally, co-development has generally been diverted to small-scale communities of migrants and not on medium-scale institutional entities, excluding immobile populations from the benefits of translocality.

The FulaaBe occupy a prejudicial position on the national level in relation to transnational networks. As the majority of the Mauritanian population, the FulaaBe are excluded from all the benefits coming from the insertion of the country in the globalised economic system, which only concerns socio-political elites (Ciavolella & Fresia 2009). But even in comparison to other groups which endured social and political marginalisation from the state, such as the "Negro-mauritanian" communities of the Senegal River valley, the FulaaBe seem to be excluded from all the advantages which these populations could benefit from thanks to diasporic links. For example, the Negro-Mauritanian elites who were expelled from the country in 1989 in the name of the Arab identity of Mauritania could build large social and political networks in the exile, their status of refugees being recognized by the international community. On the contrary, no FulaaBe has ever been recognized this status, except a few dozens. This explains why all the refugees in Mali lack any lobbying power on Mauritanian authorities from the exile and remained excluded from the new plan of repatriation, which only concerns the refugees of the

Middle Senegal River Valley.

In this situation, the FulaaBe do not remain inactive and try to survive despite their marginalization. They try to create some urban association, which imitates translocal lobby groups of other communities, claiming for "tribal" solidarity under the influence of political discourses on autochtony (Ciavolella 2009a, 2009b). A dozen migrants in the Western country are even trying to build a formal transnational association in order to reinvest migrants' remittances in their villages of origins. Unfortunately, all these strategies lack economic and political capitals.

Coming to the conclusion, the contemporary marginality of Mauritanian FulaaBe shows that contemporary translocality and new forms of mobility are only partially linked to African "cultures of migration" and depend on the logic of inclusion and exclusion to formal and substantial citizenship. The case of FulaaBe refugees and returnees shows that the idea of "traditional mobility" can be explained as the reproduction of an ancient strategy to flee political disruption, but also a reverse rhetoric of power to justify the political marginalization or exclusion from citizenship of "savage people". On the contrary, the case of FulaaBe citizens in a context of governance confirms the ambiguity of "traditional mobility" rhetoric, showing that contemporary migration and translocality can produce immobility for marginalised groups, even if they own a "culture of mobility" as people of nomadic origin. Both cases finally show that mobility is not only a matter of culture, but also a matter of politics.

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CHAPTER THREE:

TRANSNATIONALISM AND BORDERLINE STRATEGIES

SAHARAN "BORDERLINE"- STRATEGIES: TUAREG TRANSNATIONAL MOBILITY

INES KOHL

Introduction

Mobility is nothing new, neither for Africa, nor for the Sahara. Mobility, as an umbrella term encompassing all types of movement ranging from nomadism, travel, and trade, to tourism, refugeeism, and migration, is fundamental to understanding African social life (De Bruijn et. al. 2001: 1). At the same time, the Sahara is not a deserted land, but has been characterized by the movements of people, goods, and ideas throughout time, and there is a dynamic variety of historical and recent relations between Maghreb and Sahel (Marfaing & Wippel 2004). Similarly, transnational mobility is nothing new for Africa and the Sahara, respectively, considering that the whole area is the pasturing radius of nomadic societies. Nomads commonly do not respect national borders and political boundaries. The recent transnational mobility of Tuareg, however, is a relatively new phenomenon. It resulted not only from climatic, political, and economic crises, but is also a consequence of a certain ideology which encourages young people to break out of their nomadic surroundings in Mali and Niger, and head particularly to Algeria and Libya. The transnational mobility of the Tuareg is not a cyclical, "traditional" movement of nomads with their livestock, but refers to situational border crossings of (ex-) nomads who move within the Libyan-Algerian-Malien-Nigerian borderland without papers, passports, or identity cards. These actors operate beyond national loyalties, cross state borders illegally, and use certain strategies in order to pursue their activities of trading and smuggling, or just moving (see Kohl 2007a, 2007b, 2009).

In the following paragraphs[1] I will describe the recent transnational mobility of Tuareg, and I will identify several strategies they use in order to move freely in the borderland between Mali, Niger, Algeria, and Libya. The special group of Tuareg I am referring to is called *Ishumar*[2]. The term derives from the French "chômage", unemployment, and originally describes those Tuareg who gave up their nomadic life and went to the surrounding neighbouring states, particularly to Algeria and Libya, to look for a job. Today, the term has changed: *Ishumar* refers to a generation of "borderliners" whose living conditions have resulted in special strategies.

> "The anthropological term borderliner designates something entirely different from the borderliner syndrome in psychiatry. The psychiatric technical term deals with certain pathological symptoms in individuals. The anthropological term, on the other hand, designates groups of people who live on state borders and who specialize in benefitting from crossing these borders on a regular basis" (Kohl 2009: 9).

Saharan Transnational Mobility

The Tuareg, a pastoral society, at present are connected to five nation states which emerged from the decolonisation process in the 1960s: Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Algeria, and Libya. The postcolonial arrangement was the beginning of a dramatic decrease in the nomadic way of life (Claudot-Hawad 2006: 655) and at the same time the origin of the *Ishumar* movement (Bourgeot 1995: 437; Hawad 1991: 126). Climatic and ecological crises in the Sahel together with political, military, social and economic marginalization in Mali and Niger threatened particularly the nomads. Surviving in the desert became unstable and risky, and many young men, later on also women, tried to find survival strategies in the neighbouring states Libya and Algeria. The *Ishumar* movement was born and the unique form of Tuareg mobility found its origin. In the meantime, those movements have become crucial to a form of Tuareg youth culture (see Kohl 2009) and constitute a certain initiation rite in the life of every

[1] The material for this article originates from the research-project P20790-G14, "Modern Nomads, Cosmopolitans, or Vagabonds? Mobility, Territoriality, Ideology and Belonging among *Ishumar* (Tuareg)", funded by the FWF, the Austrian Science Fund, which was conducted by Akidima Effad and me between August 2008 and July 2009.

[2] *Ishumar* (masculine plural), *Tishumar* (feminine plural), *Ashamur* (masculine. singular.), *Tashamurt* (feminine singular).

Ashamur and every *Tashamurt*. The distinct form of *Ishumar* mobility can be summarized as follows:

> "It can go in all directions, is temporally variable and adapted to individual taste. If one assumes an *Ashamur* in Sebha (Libya), he emerges in Ghat (Libya). Here he remains for several weeks or month before he turns to Djanet (Algeria), returns somewhat later again, moves to Agadez (Niger) and works finally for a couple of month in Tripolis or Benghazi (Libya). His property fits in a small bag. Accommodation he gets with other *Ishumar* who live in families or house-similar structures. He is coming and leaving without lare announcement, one day here, the other there." (Kohl 2007b: 99)

Two characteristics are crucial for all different *Ishumar* movements: They are transnational and they are situational. Furthermore, they are not easily placed into categories in terms of types and definitions: Are *Ishumar* migrants, are they exiles, or even a diaspora community, dissidents, refugees, or just seasonal labourers? Some of them are better described as seasonal workers; others are political or economic refugees. The mobility of some of them can be described as voluntary movements; others are more or less forced by the political and economic circumstances. In the following, let us try to formulate a description and a classification of the(ir) Saharan transnational mobility.

Forced migrants or traveling as culture?

Since "nomadism as a protective way of life can no longer be practised and has been replaced by a series of impoverished activities, which are considered by the Tuareg to be closer to vagrancy" (Claudot-Hawad 2006: 666), the *Ishumar* movement has developed different kinds of mobility. I consciously use the superordinate term mobility and avoid the notion of migration because of the following reasons. First of all, migration is mostly defined as a linear movement with a changing residence. But people who move irregularly between two, three, or more places, have no clearly identifiable place of residence (Van Dijk et al. 2001: 10). *Ishumar* move irregularly, partly seasonally, mostly just according to their individual "taste" between Mali, Niger, Algeria, and Libya and therefore have several places of residence. Consequently, mobility can be considered to be their way of life (ibid.). As a result, mobility is normal. It is necessary to provide economic advantage and to maintain ecological resources, and it creates and strengthens social and

symbolic ties (Claudot-Hawad 2006: 662). Stability and sedentarisation are the exception, whereas mobility is the rule (Klute & Hahn 2007: 10).

Secondly, migration is further defined in terms of nations and state boundaries, although this is less useful because it excludes certain categories of mobile people (Van Dijk 2001: 11). *Ishumar* cross state borders, but still they operate within their former tribal radius, which was only divided due to colonial boundaries. When an *Ashamur* from Mali is heading to Libya via Algeria, for example, he crosses two international borders, but still moves within his former territory. This is one reason why *Ishumar* do not use passports even if they posess one. In their perception crossing these borders clandestinely is not an illegal act, but an expression of their usual habits in traveling through the Sahara.

During the last years, a large number of *Ishumar* from Mali and Niger have settled in Algeria or Libya. With those settlements a new development among *Ishumar* is recognizable: A distinction between those *Ishumar* who still cross the borders between Niger, Mali, Algeria, and Libya irregularly, situationally, temporarily, and according to individual taste, and those *Ishumar* who settle in family structures in Libya or Algeria. The latter even refuse to be called *Ishumar* because the term refers to people acting beyond traditional norms and values, whereas their status of being a family corresponds to their original conception of respect, modesty and honour. It is difficult to distinguish between forced migrants and refugees among those settled *Ishumar*. If we define refugees according to the UNHCR convention[3] in terms of forced movements because of persecution, only few *Ishumar* would get refugee status. Although since the Tuareg rebellion of the 1990s and the recent rebellion which broke out in 2007, people are persecuted, the UNHCR conceptualises the term in a very narrow sense and checks every single case. Forced migration is a more general term that refers to the movements of refugees and internally displaced people as well as to people displaced by natural or environmental disasters, for example famine[4]. Most settled *Ishumar* have been forced to move due to economic and ecological factors since the huge droughts in the Sahel in the 1970s and 1980s, and the recent disastrous economic situation for nomads in the Sahel. Of course there are also young men just trying their luck on the job market in the northern towns of

[3] According to the UNHCR Convention of 1951 (2001: 6), a refugee is a person with a "well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion."

[4] The Forced Migration Learning Module has a good selection of definitions for key terms used in the field of humanitarian relief.

the Maghrebian states, who might better be described as labour migrants, and they are far from being refugees.

But regardless of whether we call *Ishumar* refugees or forced or voluntarily migrants, the main point is that still these settled *Ishumar* have not given up their characteristic movements! Women travel back to their places of origin, and visit their parents and relatives. Men pursue seasonal or permanent movements in order to earn their living. But in the end, their way of still being mobile contrasts with conventional migrants.

To summarize, I argue that neither the term refugee nor the definition migrant is really appropriate for the *Ishumar*. And I believe that it is not important into which concept we try to place them. I agree with Alessandra Giuffrida, that "the study of mobility through conceptually isolated categories (i.e. pastoralists, exiles, refugees and labour migrants) has not been conductive to understanding mobility as an overarching system in all its variations." Mobility itself gives us the clue and shows that "mobility among Tuareg is a system, or subsystem, as well as a strategy" (Giuffrida 2010). Alternatively, the *Ishumar* mobility incorporates all kinds of moving: Their mobility can be described as partly cyclical, partly situational, sometimes seasonal, sometimes permanent, but always irregular. That is why I would rather suggest calling them, following James Clifford's (1992) term, a "traveling culture" for whom moving is the rule. In the following part, let me give some examples of the *Ishumars'* mobility to illustrate their traveling culture and respective strategies.

Permanently mobile

Silimane comes from a small nomad camp in Northern Niger. When his parents' camel and goat herds perished during the droughts in the Sahel in the 1980s, the family decided to move to Arlit. But the absent economic basis, the lacking support by the state, and his father's death resulted in Silimane's, his mother's, and his little sister's movement to Libya, where they arranged a makeshift accommodation in the abandoned and deteriorated old town of Ghat. During the first months they were only able to survive through the help of other *Ishumar*. In the meantime, Silimane has established himself in tourism due to his good command of French and English, which he had taught himself, and has worked his way up from cook to interpreter to local guide.

Aghali is trading in silver jewellery and handicrafts at sights which are of interest to tourists in Libya. For this purpose, he buys silver and leather goods, swords, fabrics, clothes, and also calabashes, old wooden bowls, and dromedary saddles in the summer at comparatively cheap prices in

Agadez, a centre for craftsmanship. In autumn, with the beginning tourism season, he returns to Libya and sells the things which he has previously purchased in Niger to European travellers. At the end of the season, he returns to Niger and visits his family, before going back to Agadez again, buying things there and subsequently setting out for Libya again.

Moussa and Mohamed are "Taxis". Moussa, from Kidal in Mali, owns an old rickety Toyota with which he runs clandestine traffic between Mali and Algeria. He illegally drives potential migrants from West Africa headed for European Union countries as well as many *Ishumar* from Kidal to Tamanghasset in Algeria. He has two wives: One lives in Kidal, the other in Tamanrasset. Mohamed, originally from Niger, but living partly in Libya and partly in Algeria, is a guide who leads migrants and refugees from Algeria to Libya through the mountains. He knows the mountain passages which can be crossed, he knows where even in summer there are still enough water holes, and he anticipates where potential bandits or the military could lie in wait for them.

Assaghid is permanently moving between Arlit in Niger and Tamanrasset in Algeria. His Toyota pick up is equipped with several cans and barrels to transport cheap fuel from Algeria to Niger. He was born in Niger; his car is registered in Algeria, and part of his family lives in Niger, the other in Libya.

Finally, Haruna left the Nigerien Sahara a couple of years ago and moved to Libya. He subsequently lived with relatives in the South of Libya. He tried to work in garden cultivation, but because the hard work does not pay well, he moved to Algeria and spent his time with other relatives. He gets food and small amounts of money from other *Ishumar*, and his days go by with chatting, drinking tee, and listening to *Ishumar* music tapes.

All these different examples of *Ishumar* mobility have several things in common: No matter which job seeking strategies they employ, all of them are moving permanently. These permanent movements are only possible due to multiple places of residence and – as we will see later on - multiple citizenships. A dense net of kinship ties facilitates their mobility strategies across the borders. "Being mobile is not a break with their past or a breakdown of their social environment" (Van Dijk et. al. 2001: 14), but networking takes place in the new surroundings and links people to their places of origin. Regarding gender aspects, moving is an especially "natural thing to do" for men (De Bruijn et. al 2001: 69). Anja Fischer (2008) elaborated the different radii in which male and female Algerian nomads operate and identified six dimensions of the nomadic labour. While the women's radius is concentrated around the tent with a

maximum expansion towards wells, relatives’ tents, and the goat herds, men operate in a much wider dimension (ibid.: 64). Their original duty of herding the camels and being responsible for food and supplies allows them more mobility in terms of traveling and being abroad for months. Finally, the examples mentioned above clarify that “mobility is more than the movement of people alone: also non-human and non-material things such as ideas and values can move or adopt specific forms as a result of the movement of people” (Van Dijk et. al. 2001: 9). Trade, no matter if legal or clandestine, was a constituting element of traditional nomadic life. The huge caravans in the Sahara provided the exchange of dates, salt, millet, and animals and connected the Tuareg with the outer world of Arabs, Hausa, Fulbe, etc. Recent trade activities are mostly illegal. State restrictions, poverty, and a general lack of governmental support have forced *Ishumar* to consider new life strategies in smuggling or clandestine movements.

Why clandestine?

To cross borders it is necessary to have official identification documents (a passport or an identity card) and to pay customs duty, which is impossible for most nomads (Claudot-Hawad 2006: 665). In the meantime, most Saharan and Sahelian States have established national programs to provide their citizens with passports with relatively little effort. While nomads hardly have any use for birth certificates, citizenship documents, or passports, one could argue that *Ishumar* might profit from legal papers, considering that their transnational movements require a legal identity. The contrary is the rule: Either *Ishumar* refuse to deal with legal papers, or - as we will see in the next chapter - they acquire multiple citizenships in order to satisfy all of the Saharan states at the same time. But why do *Ishumar* widely refuse to use legal papers and still cross the Sahara clandestinely? First of all, many *Ishumar* still do not possess any identity cards. Those who are already registered by the respective state in many cases do not understand the necessity of passports or citizenship, since belonging to a state has relatively little importance to them. *Ishumar* often point out that nothing and no one can keep them from roaming freely in the Sahara: neither government restrictions, nor the issuance of passports:

> “We have always been moving like this, “a young *Ashamur* tells me and continues: “in the past with camels, today with Toyotas. What is the difference between Niger, Mali, Algeria, or Libya? It’s still our land (*akal nana*), the land of the Tuareg” (*akal n majeghen*)!

Today, the Tuareg distinguish themselves according to national affiliation, and one speaks of *Kel*[5] Mali, *Kel* Niger, Libyan, or Algerian Tuareg. National socialisation, varying education systems, different lingua francas, unequal integration in politics, and varying economic opportunities have affected the Tuareg´s affiliation. Nowadays, belonging is based less on tribal structures than on national constructs (Kohl 2007: 200). Similarly, the *Ishumar* distinguish themselves through national categories, but due to their shared fate and circumstances are more strongly adopting an ideology of common affiliation and belonging. *Ishumar* are not only the vagabonds of society, but at the same time a sort of a cosmopolitan elite (Lecocq 2004). Due to their transnational moving life, they see, hear, know, and understand more than their nomadic counterparts who just move in cycles in their relatively bounded territory. "The displacement and trans-local lives of men and women in local and global contexts are gradually eroding a normative, ethnic, and political Tuareg identity linked to an imagined stateless nation (tumast)" (Giuffrida 2010). *Ishumar* are much more conscious of this imagined stateless nation than nomads living in the Sahara. A nomadic pastoralist in the Aïr Mountains for example has few ideas about his peers in Algeria or Libya. He knows about them, of course, but in reality he has probably never seen Libyan or Malian Tuareg. *Ishumar* are in constant contact with Tuareg from all other territories, therefore incorporate the idea of *tumast*, and fulfill and implement it through transnational movements between their several territories.

The second major problem of crossing the Saharan borders legally are the states themselves. During his fieldwork Julien Brachet (2007: 229) personally experienced the unfair and unjustifiable sanctions of several police officers when crossing the border between Niger and Algeria. Most *Ishumar* are treated like he was: After getting the visa from the Algerian consulate in Agadez, Brachet went to the Nigerien border post in Assamakka and left the country legally. The Algerian border post is about 20 to 30 kilometers away in a small village named In Guezzam. Together with two Algerian traders, several Nigerien and Malian *Ishumar*, and one man from Guinea, they reached the Algerian border village In Guezzam on a Toyota. After checking his visa and realizing that he was traveling with several migrants, Brachet was sent back to Niger without any official explanation. *Ishumar* trying to get official and legal visas for Libya tell similar stories. Either they wait at the Libyan consulate in Agadez for several weeks or months to obtain their visas, or they just receive the repetitive answer "*come back tomorrow*" until the applicant loses his

[5] *Kel* is Tamasheq and means "the people from".

patience and either abandons the idea of heading to Libya, or travels clandestinely. But also European states are acting like this: The French consulate in Niamey is well known for refusing visas even if the applicant has all the necessary documents and the requested amount of money. As a result, the majority of *Ishumar* as well as all other Sub-Saharan migrants cross the borders without passing the border posts, illegally and clandestinely (Brachet 2007: 230, Kohl 2009: 35pp.).

Borderline - Strategies

Let us focus on the strategies *Ishumar* use to cross the Saharan borders clandestinely. I would like to mention first that *Ishumar* are not just passengers when crossing the borders, but rather the agents in transnational illegal movements. Exclusively *Ishumar* are working in this kind of business*: Ishumar* provide the transport facilities, they organize transportation, and they deliver passengers and goods through the Sahara. Let us examine the reasons and their advantages compared to other ethnic groups (Arabs, Hausa, and Fulbe) in the region.

Desert knowledge and know-how

The Sahara between Niger, Algeria, and Libya is known as the Tenere. Tenere is a Tamasheq word and means "extensive plain desert without elevations, without vegetation." It is indeed a vast plain without any vegetation, people, or water, which is considered the epitome of desert, and is also referred to as *esuf* (loneliness, solitude), as lonesome empty region. In crossing the Tenere one has to have geographical knowledge, a profound sense of orientation relying on few landmarks, and a certain know-how how to survive in arid areas. Similar to the *caravanier* (*madougou*) who to this day crosses the Tenere in order to reach the salt salines of Fachi and Bilma, the clandestine driver (*afrodeur*) has to be equipped with this know-how, as expressed by Moussa, a young *Ashamur* who has crossed the Tenere several times:

> "Most of the drivers know the route between Djanet and Arlit very well and all follow their own track. Although you can see lots of tracks en route, you must not follow any of them, for most of them are smugglers' paths, and you don't know where they lead to. Every driver has his own route. Only shortly before Arlit all the different ways connect into a bundle of tracks." When I asked Moussa how the drivers keep from losing their orientation, he said: "Of course nobody has a compass or maps or even GPS. The drivers know in which direction Arlit is situated and drive

> towards it, but not directly. From Djanet, most of them move eastward and only after one day head west and then drive straight on towards Arlit. Nevertheless, you need to know the Tenere very well and be able to read the stars, or else …" Moussa makes a gesture indicating a cut through the throat. "The Tenere is no playground. The Tenere is dangerous!" (Kohl 2009: 43).

Tuareg receive the necessary know-how already in their early years with their education. Young children are responsible for herding the goats and sheep and move to the boundaries of their territory (Fischer 2008: 101pp.; Claudot-Hawad 2002: 23). At a very young age children learn to read the traces of the Sahara in order not to get lost. The smallest changes in the environment are noticed, tracks of people and animals can be determined, landmarks, the sun and the moon lead the direction, and even in places without wells, Tuareg notice where it pays off to dig holes for water. Living in accordance with nature is an advantage which nomads possess and have to practice in order to survive.

The use of kinship affiliations

Tuareg are a tribal society where belonging is based on kinship and on blood relations. Blood is the key element in defining kinship, creating genealogy, defining descent, and it is connected to identity and group affiliation (Abu-Lughod 1999, Popenoe 2004). During the African nation building process blood relationships were replaced by nationalist ideas and have since then been based on a territorial concept. The soil, the land, and the territory were used as the new binding national factor instead of blood (Lecocq 2004: 104). In the case of *Ishumar* an additional factor of affiliation must be mentioned: Unity through the same destiny, the same fate. *Ishumar* share the same destiny of recurrent droughts, political marginalization, and rebellion. This resulted in a strong sense of unity and mutual loyalty, which is based on shared life experiences. Blood, soil, and destiny are three different elements in the creation of identity. With the issuance of national identity cards for *Ishumar*, the three modes are mixed: The Tuaregs' original conception of blood and kinship affiliation was complemented by an aspect of destiny. In addition, they received documents allowing them to stay within a certain territory. Even though national affiliation has gained more importance as external demarcation, kinship is the major element to define belonging internally. *Ishumar* can count on their tribal affiliations, on kinship, and social and trade networks which have formed across ethnic boundaries and nations (Giuffrida 2010). When crossing borders illegally, they benefit from information from

several relatives working in the military, as policemen or border guards. They tell them when to go, which route to take, or just let them pass without papers, just because they are both Tuareg. Let me clarify this point with Aghalis words:

> "The last time I came from Niger via Algeria to Libya, I walked the last kilometers to the Libyan border by myself, when Libyan border patrols seized me and asked me where I wanted to go. I told them that I was Targi, coming from Algeria and that I wanted to go to Libya. The officer asked me, if I had documents. I answered him that I didn't, as this was my country, after all. The officer nodded – he had two badges on his shoulder! – and said in Tamasheq 'yes, you are right'. He asked me to get onto his Toyota, brought me to the official border post, gave me water to drink and said good bye." Aghali laughs, "they are also just Tuareg, who serve at the border!"

The above mentioned conception of the imagined stateless nation (*tumast*) provides a strong frame of reference and coherence beyond national boundaries. Much more than the other Saharan states, Libya is aware of the Tuaregs transnational component and supports border-crossing Tuareg to some extent. Algeria is much stricter. Through European Union specifications, the Saharan states are used to act as guards in order to stop illegal migration. The European Union does not distinguish between potential migrants to Europe and local borderliners. Illegal migration concerns two completely different strategies and actors: *Ishumar* have been moving for years without passports, aware of the different governments between the borders. But in contrast to the other Sub-Saharan migrants they just move in their created borderland and stay mostly in Algeria and Libya, from where they return to their home countries. The consequences of this not well thought out and inconsiderate policy affects and attacks the Tuareg as a transnational mobile society whose only opportunity is its transnationalism in order to get better living conditions free of poverty, famine, repression, and marginalisation.

The benefit of multiple national identities

In addition to kinship affiliations, national identities play a major role. All Tuareg-inhabited countries (Mali, Niger, Algeria, Libya and partly Burkina Faso) are beginning to count their population and to equip them with identity cards and passports with relatively little effort. *Ishumar* utilise this system and get themselves ID cards in all of these countries, but with different names and varying birth dates. The governments' increasing

efforts to integrate pastoral nomads in their state systems is used by *Ishumar* for their own objectives. Today, many *Ishumar* have several citizenships and a wide variety of different identity-creating cards. Depending on where they go, the pull out the respective document. Let me clarify this point through an example:

> Hamidan was born in Niger, is working in Libya and got married in Algeria. He has two Nigerian birth certificates with different names and dates of birth, a Nigerien passport, and proof of Libyan citizenship under a different name. Depending on where he goes, he pulls the respective document out of his pocket. When he goes to Algeria, he leaves all papers at home, for "if the police catch you, it is better that they catch you without documents and deport you to wherever you want to go...," Hamidan laughs.

Providing evidence of birth for a nomadic society born into the desert without exact references in terms of time and place, and recording an identity based on nation states and citizenship for people scattered across five nations and moving about these borderlands without documents, has become a necessity in an age of states, borders, and control. Yet, *Ishumar* move beyond this global system and transcend national loyalties, without destroying or undermining these (see Kohl 2007a:167pp., 2009: 55). Utilising several ID cards is a strategy in order to pursue their transnational movements which are part of their culture and the only way of escaping their prison of political marginalisation as an effect of French colonialism, corrupt African regimes and still widely supported European policies.

Conclusion

With my Tuareg-*Ishumar*-Borderliner-example I wanted to emphasize several main aspects of trans-national mobility. Transnational mobility is not only structured by push- and pull factors (see Hahn & Klute 2007: 9pp.), and the recent movements are not just the result of socio-structural factors. Instead, the movements are perceived as decisions of migrants themselves, who often embody a societal elite and incorporate cosmopolitan ideals. The example of *Ishumar* illustrates that these ex-nomads indeed are considered to be a certain elite of their society with cosmopolitan thoughts who alter, modify, and sometimes change the ideals, norms, values and imaginations of their society just through their transnational orientation. Consequently, transnational mobility can be described as *agency*. Transnational border crossers and borderliners have the potential for active and creative engagement. Furthermore, we should not forget that

transnational mobility is not an exception to "normal" life and the opposite of sedentary ways of living, but becomes the "rule" and embodies "normality" – especially on the African continent, where mobility has a high value. We can say that transnational mobility is *normal*. Transnational mobility is not a disturbing effect like the European Union suggests, but part of African cultures. One merely has to distinguish between the different forms of mobility-strategies, as I sought to clarify through the *Ishumars'* border crossings and strategies. We have to be aware that transnational mobility is *culture*. *Ishumar,* for example, embody a multiple traveling culture with multiple citizenships, multiple places of residence, and multiple strategies of moving.

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"I'M NERVES!": STRUGGLING WITH IMMOBILITY IN A SONINKE VILLAGE (THE GAMBIA)

PAOLO GAIBAZZI

Introduction

Although transnational migration is often celebrated as the quintessence of contemporary globalization, a large part of the world's population not only stay in their own country, but are unable to migrate internationally even when wishing to do so (Hammar & Tamas 1997:1; Carling 2002). In particular, European and North American countries have curtailed entries from developing countries through restrictive migration policies and border controls, and even in Africa some countries, most notably South Africa, have clamped down on immigration (Nyamnjoh 2006; Gebrewold-Tochalo 2007). In the Gambia, the aspiration to migrate especially, though not exclusively, to the West is captured by the '*nerves syndrome*' or simply '*nerves'*, which has come to epitomise the condition of many youths seeking to emigrate but being stuck. In spite of its seemingly bio-medical terminology, being *nerves* is a way of experiencing and talking about aspirations and frustrations surrounding emigration which has 'contaminated' youths across the board, from the high-school student hoping to go to a European or American University and become professionals, to the uneducated peasant hoping to find better work abroad. Feeling *nerves* is mostly associated with male youth and it is clearly linked to the idea of young men trying to achieve success and provide for their families.

Public discourse oscillates between condemning youths' aspirations as mere illusions and registering their disenchantment with local perspectives of employment. The imperative of migration is held responsible for the flow of pirogues which since 2005 have brought thousands of West Africans from Senegal, Mauritania and Gambia to the Canary Islands (Tall 2008a: 47pp.; Willems 2008). In neighbouring Senegal, the image of despair associated with the dangerous, sometimes fatal, *voie piroguière*

has been rendered by the sinister motto 'Barça ou barzaq'— Barcelona or Hereafter[1]. While many Gambian youth refuse to embark on such journeys and do not necessarily fit into the media representations of despair, they remain in urgent desire to leave the country and look for greener pastures elsewhere.

Carling (2002) has proposed a conceptual model of 'involuntary immobility' to describe situations whereby non migration is undesirable but imposed by barriers to mobility such as migration policies and lack of socio-economic resources. The 'emigration environment', life projects and individual characteristics make up the aspirations to leave one's homeland, which contrast with the inability to do so. The mismatch between aspirations and ability to migrate seems more poignant in those contexts where mobility has been part and parcel of the history, like Cape Verde, where Carling has done research. This seems also true of the Soninke, a diasporic group which has come to be known for their historical and contemporary commercial and labour migrations (Manchuelle 1997), particularly in the upper Senegal valley (Mauritania, Senegal, Mali), a well know sending area to France (Quiminal 1991; Timera 1996). In Soninke society migration is intimately linked to social reproduction and strategies of upward mobility. Aspirations to migrate among young men are consequently shaped by a 'culture of migration' which traces the trajectories of economic and symbolic accumulation associated with masculinity (Jónsson 2008). Thus, the (Malian) Soninke 'involuntary immobility' has recently begun to be analysed as the juxtaposition between the Soninke culture of migration and barriers to mobility in desirable countries, which translates geographical immobility into social immobility, frustrating youths' ambitions to become fully fledged adults (ibid.).

As I set out to describe the *nerves syndrome* from the point of view of Gambian Soninke youths, there is certainly much to gain from the model of 'involuntary immobility', particularly if inscribed in the *long durée* of Soninke mobility. At the same time, I argue that youths' *nerves* stems not only from immobility per se—meaning the impossibility of migrating—but also from the degrading conditions of 'immobility', that is, the conditions by which those who stay behind acquire role and scope within an overall migration process including both migrants and left behind (cf. Toyota et.al. 2007). Paying particular attention to rural young men, I will show that migration both constructs youths who stay as complementary figures to those who migrate and undermines their positions. Local young

[1] Tall (2008a: 47) states that Barça refers to Barcelona Football Team, which is a symbol of success. Thus the motto would be translate as: "success or death/hereafter".

men farm the land, care for the household and nurture the local bases of migrants' identity. However, they have few opportunities to keep up with the high expectations towards money and consumption; yet they are constantly inspected about their willingness to work and not indulge in just waiting idly for an opportunity to leave the country.

I will concentrate on the socio-cultural construction of immobility and the *nerves*, highlighting youths' frustrations in addition to aspirations. This will widen the scope of the analysis beyond the immediate concern with the act of emigration. By investigating youths' trajectories in relation to agricultural work, to earning and circulating money, and to family roles, the first part shows that being *nerves* is part of a wider discourse that articulates Soninke young men's experiences and anxieties about uncertain conditions of immobility and social value. In many ways, the barriers to migration and the pervasive character of migration in Soninke society exasperates given processes of social scrutiny about, precisely, one's aspirations and dispositions as a purposeful (male) subject. Being *nerves* can be described by youths as a disorienting experience, a burden of thoughts and pressures, sometimes a difficulty in interpreting one's own environment and interlocutors (cf. Weiss 2005), and above all in identifying a clear trajectory to the future, which migration seems instead to offer.

The chapter focuses on the rural male youths of the village of Sabi, in the Upper River Region, where I conducted eight months of participant observation, gathered life-histories and oral histories on migration dynamics. As youths are often mobile between countryside and cities, I will also refer to their trajectory in Serekunda (the capital city area) where I conducted another six months of fieldwork. Finally, while most men between 18 and 40 are often *nerves* to travel, youths around their late twenties—early thirties are slightly more represented here; theirs is an age where the interplay between family responsibilities (e.g. marriage), economic resources and travelling begin to emerge in a relevant, if poignant, way.

Migration: proximity and exclusion

The Soninke (or Serahule) of the Upper Gambia are a highly diasporic but tightly-knit group boasting a long history of commercial and labour migration. They have been part of the traditional Muslim trading groups straddling Western Sudan and Senegambia (Pollet & Winter 1971:111pp.; Curtin 1975: 68pp.; Bathily 1989), but settled in the Gambia valley only in the second half of the 19th century. Here they also became eager farmers

participating in the booming groundnut economy. Since the 1950s, their migrant destinations have undergone a progressive internationalisation towards other West African countries and, progressively, towards Europe and America. Compared to the Soninke of the Upper Senegal Valley (Mali, Mauritania, Senegal) who mainly emigrated to France (Quiminal 1991; Timera 1996), Gambian Soninke migration networks spread across Europe, in particular forming sizable communities in the Spanish region of Catalonia (Kaplan 1998). In the Gambia, they are a minority (8%), and have been rather marginal in the civil service and in secular education; however their economic weight and migratory exploits have given them prominence. It is above all in the coastal urban areas (some 400km downstream from their rural homeland), that the Soninke have concentrated their businesses, housing investments and even some factories, thanks to a constant flow of return migrants and migrant investments since the 1970s.

Other Gambians followed the Soninke in their routes, but for the country international migration has generally become a dominant strategy in the 1980s following social and economic difficulties (Gaibazzi & Bellagamba 2009: 90pp.). By the end of the 1970s public finances ran into deficit, while the drought years at the beginning of the decade made rains less abundant and more erratic for the rainfed grain and groundnut agriculture (Sallah 1990; Baker 1995). After a period of unconditional borrowing and over spending, the structural adjustment program inaugurated in 1985 led to cutting public services and downsizing the public civil service; after 1990, subsidies to farmers were suspended (McPherson & Radelet 1995). The mass of the educated unemployed was growing and salaries struggled to keep up with the rising inflation. The middle and upper classes were long used to sending their children abroad for further studies (the university of the Gambia was built only in 2000), but they increasingly looked at the prospect of having them find a job there and send money home, rather than come back with a degree and join the shrinking public sector.

By the end of the 1980s, emigration continued to gather momentum, with Europe and America capturing the aspirations of many Gambian youths, Soninke or otherwise, only Angola has remained comparatively attractive for Soninke youths. Since the early 1990s a number of *diamantaires* and traders fled civil strife in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Congo to find new opportunities in Angola's diamond sector or the commercially flourishing Luanda.

Meagre economic opportunities at home generated growing disillusion and resentment towards the political establishment that had

ruled the country since independence (Bellagamba 2008: 252pp.). In 1994 a military coup toppled President Jawara and his regime (Wiseman 1996). The young soldiers who took over tried to infuse new confidence into the youth, inviting them to give up the idea of migrating and get involved in the patriotic renovation of the country (Bellagamba & Gaibazzi 2008: 54). In the second half of the 1990s spontaneous and state-controlled youth movements helped consolidate the new regime, but as consolidation became firmer, the hopes, and the room, for change became again gloomy. The clamp down on political and civil liberties passed from being justified as a post-coup emergency measure to being a permanent political strategy, actually increasing the emigrations for political reasons. While migration has raised considerably less debate in the public sphere than in neighbouring Senegal, the government intelligentsia has continued to play down youths' aspirations as an illusion:

> "The promise of El Dorado has befuddled the minds of many would-be adventurers, and the glazed-over vision of the West which such a befuddlement entrails, is nothing but the glow of an illusion […]it is difficult to assess whether the current scale of exodus is a direct symptom of our economic under-development, or an excrescence of the psychological morbidities that have been detected in the post-colonial mind. […]
> To some extent, this malaise is constantly renewing itself because of the "display rituals" of " semesters": those who'd managed to get to the West, and who frequently, or not so frequently, come back for holidays. Some of these "semesters", like peacocks, prance about town preening their plumes in an unspoken but comic *concours d'elegance*." (The Daily Observer 2007)

There is no doubt that the West exerts a degree of fascination on Gambian youths. Foreign commodities, as Buckley (2000) has argued, are invested with a particular aura of novelty and modernity which are integrated in an 'accessorizing culture' of the body. Migration is a way to appropriate such commodities and eventually display them upon return, fomenting fantasies as well as critiques around the behaviour of *semesters* in a similar fashion to what happens to the *modou modou* in Senegal (Riccio 2005: 105pp.). Representations of migrant success are indeed more ambivalent than the myth of El Dorado (ibid.); they must be placed in the longer and broader history of 'cultural extraversion' through which these societies have represented and appropriated the foreign (see Fouquet 2008). For instance, male youths in Gambia often spend their free time in informal gatherings and meeting points, usually called *vous* or *ghettos*, where they chat, play cards, listen to music and brew green tea (*ataya*);

similar patterns of socialisation are known as *grin* in urban and rural Mali (Schultz 2002: 811p; Jónsson 2008). Youths in their teens and early twenties in Sabi name their *ghetto* after different transnational icons, from hip hop music, to reggae, to European football teams, and popular migrant destinations are often employed (Barcelona Team, Hannover, Blessed Yard, Los Angeles are but a few examples). If these names represent symbols of success, the very word *ghetto* seems to be adapted from hip hop or cognate genres of reggae evoking images of marginality and hardship in suburban areas across the Atlantic that rural youths employ to express and inhabit their experience of 'suffering' (*tanpiye*) and poverty[2].

Contrasting images also characterise the imaginary of migration. Youths are perfectly aware that travelling is hard, that migrants have to pay rent and bills, and they have to economise on food; that perhaps they have to sleep in a room with many people, and may be bothered by the police and face racial discrimination. Babylon (as the West is sometimes called again via reggae jargon) is the place of exile and humiliation, and yet of material abundance, development and technology which is often invoked to remark on the backwardness of the Gambia. This image of Babylon overlaps with the broader Soninke concept of the foreign, *tuŋa*, a place of the unknown and immorality as well as opportunity (cf. Whitehouse 2003: 21pp.). Moreover, travelling is not only about economy, but about experience, knowing different places and how to deal with other people. The Soninke often compare travelling to a form of 'schooling'. It is said that when one comes back he will have acquired knowledge (*tuwaaxu*) which the 'local' will not: "if you stay in one place, it is like your head [*hakle*] gets locked up"[3]. Such a cosmopolitan attitude is not uncommon in the region (Riccio 2004: 934), and confers an aura of adventure on the travelling experience.

Apart from the construction of place and cosmopolitanism, the history of Soninke migration has sedimented trajectories of success with which youths are overly familiar. I often found that migration, especially migration to Europe and wage labour, inspired in youths the possibility of a linear evolution that is available to all those willing to work hard (I will return to this point later). Popular places like Spain, or better Catalonia,

[2] Elsewhere (Gaibazzi forthcoming) I provide a more detailed account of the evolution of age relations and youth cultures in the Gambia and Sabi more particularly. Reggae, and Rastarianism to some extent, are very popular in the Gambia. Since the 1980s in West Africa, reggae has provided an idiom to express feelings of exclusion, but above all of self-empowerment and self-respect (McNee 2002).

[3] A.K., January 2008, Numuyel.

are often associated with possible migratory patterns bricolated from migrants' stories: people who reached Spain possibly through a work permit (or tourist, business, eventually family reunion visa) thanks to a relative abroad, eventually worked in the *campo* (Spanish for farming field) while waiting to find a work contract to apply for a regular visa (perhaps 1-2 years)[4]; and then, besides sending money home on a regular basis, they built a house in their compound, sometimes only after 5-6 years from leaving home. In Sabi, virtually all concrete houses with tin roofing have been built by migrants, a revealing visual geography of extra-agricultural income across the compounds. But if these are household holdings, one can also save money for himself. Savings are "the money of autonomy" as Quiminal (1991: 142) has called it, the possibility to stand on his own and, eventually, invest. The real estate sector in urban areas attracts the Soninke as well as most other migrants from the region (cf. Tall 2008b). Almost everywhere in Serekunda one can spot buildings whose size and number of storeys is taken as a measure of the success of the migrant or businessman within the Soninke community. And if one glances at the construction site, there will be probably a group of Soninke youths from the same village as the owner earning some money by making cement blocks and hoping that one day they will be on the other side of the pay check. Thus, Soninke migration is less about coming back as *semesters* and engaging in display rituals (criticised by many Soninke), than providing a double trajectory of realisation as household members and as individuals (cf. Timera 2001: 41).

However, the times (up to the late 1960s) when one could sell a couple of bags of groundnut, reach, say, Sierra Leone and start doing business from scratch are way gone. Still today not every youth wants to go to Europe or America. Some want to do business in Africa. After all, the richest men among the Soninke are businessmen, traders and *diamantaires* based in the Gambia, Angola or somewhere else in West-Central Africa. Business has however become more stratified and requires a rather conspicuous amount of start-up capital for someone to stand above the saturated niches of retail trade. Angola is a difficult country to enter,

[4] Farm work was among the first occupations of the first generation of migrants in Spain, which seems to constitute an alternative employment in case of irregular stay. Now many Soninke migrants are employed in the industry and in construction work (Farjas Bonet 2002: 319pp.). Just one year before I began my fieldwork in 2006, there was a mass regularisation in Spain, and several Soninke migrants obtained a visa. This probably fed some optimistic views of at home. In general, many Soninke migrants have reached Spain through work contracts thanks to the help of relatives already established in Spain.

let alone the hazards and deportations weighing on the immigrants (Pearce 2004). Similarly, for those heading to Europe and America, obtaining a visa is as hard as ever. The traditional countries of immigration (France, Germany, Holland, etc.) began to close their borders after 1973-4, while a decade later southern Mediterranean countries began to follow, especially within the frame of the Schengen convention (King & Black 1997). As for the US, while in the past there was a shared belief that once entered one was relatively unbothered by the police, the 2001 USA Patriot Act has not only made entry into the US even harder, but it has also increased controls and made it difficult to find a job without a regular work permit.

In sum, while migration is an historical component of Soninke society, a readily tangible life trajectory of success, today youths are less mobile than their father's generation. Indeed it seems in that he Gambia immobility is one of the main manifestations of the tensions that have been detected in neoliberal Africa, the global connections and flows which traverse social contexts and set off imaginations on the one hand, and the closure, exclusion and marginalisation from such flows and scenarios of modernity on the other (Meyer & Geschiere 1999; Weiss 2004: 7pp.).

The 'nerves syndrome'

The origins of the *nerves syndrome* are obscure. In one of the rare articles on the subject, M.L. Jallow (2006), a Gambian professional and opinion-maker based in America, recalls that:

> "In the summer of 1984, a group of Gambians on short holiday from Oslo, Norway came with a swagger and attitude that forever changed my generation […] Legend has it that in the summer of 1984, a youth in Banjul was so taken by these semesters in their fancy clothes, expensive cars, gold chains, the money and the life style that he remarked that the overwhelming feeling he experience get his NERVES up (sic). Hence the origin of word nerves. The word eventually evolved into the embodiment of the longing to travel, to explore, to hustle, to study abroad, to go beyond the Gambian shores, to try new opportunities and above all to return home and make a difference to yourself, your family, friends and your community."

I have found no comparable evidence for Jallow's legend[5], whose reference to *semesters* is both instructive and problematic, as we saw; the

[5] According to one informant, the term *nerves* is borrowed from Jamaican Patwa (see also below), where, according to him, it refers to a state of impatience towards an outcome or event. The evidence for this hypothesis is still pending.

term was probably to become popular some time later, in the 1990s. Nonetheless, Jallow's definition offers a point of departure for further reflections. The term, to get one's nerve up[6], is in line with the meaning attributed to it by many informants. Soninke youths usually translate it as *hanmi* whose general meaning is concern or worry geared to achieving a positive outcome. In relation to travelling, *hanmi* is also translated as ambition or aim. Having *hanmi* does also refer to a positive attitude, a drive to take steps towards something, implying the feat of moving accordingly (it is sometimes called *curasi*, from the French *courage*). It qualifies the purposeful essence of the individual and therefore accounts for the embodiment part of 'embodiment of longing' which Jallow uses to define the *nerves.* To have no *hanmi* is to be deemed lazy and even helpless (*hanminloxe*). Ambition can be directed towards different goals, but it is especially associated with the determination to earn a living and make money, abroad or at home. In the Soninke milieu, this is framed as a (predominantly) masculine disposition which is conducive to autonomy and self-respect. *Nerves* thus represents a particular application of *hanmi* as a concern or goal-oriented motivation, and as a manifestation of the self.

Hanmi is something cultivated through daily interaction with the world. Youths often say that migrants' investments give them *hanmi* to go 'hustling' abroad in order to be able to do as well as they do. The construction of buildings in the family compound or in the city is often cited as an example of purposeful investment, while pompous and ostentatious display, such as the Oslo *semesters*', is increasingly seen as unproductive and even immoral[7].

Migration is a much discussed topic in *ghettos*. As we saw, these are places of multi-focal imaginations which convey the contrasting experiences of globalisation and local life, at least in the teenagers' group. For older youths, caring less about *ghetto* names, the proximity of migration is nonetheless vivid. No one fails to name a good friend who used to spend time at the *ghetto* and is now in Europe 'hustling' and sending money home. As the companions leave for greener pastures, youths often remark that *ghettos* become deserted while they are still around, sitting and waiting for their chance to go too. In this interplay

[6] Jallow's use of the term *nerves* (plural) is perhaps ambiguous and may be mistaken for nervous. In the introduction to Jallow's piece, nerves is translated as "ambition or determination".

[7] The word *semester* is a rather ironic label applied to migrants, and it can be slightly offensive as it hints at someone who has changed his life style and 'gone Western', adapting to European and American life, forgetting his/her roots.

between presences and absences, proximity and exclusion, youths often manifest a sense of urgency to travel which contrasts with their state of 'immobility'. Among the rural Malian Soninke studied by Jónsson (2008), the slightly denigratory term *tene* has been coined to define immobile youths experiencing similar conditions. No similar term is employed among the Gambian counterparts; they feel *nerves*, longing for travel, for an opportunity to reach their friends abroad and put their *hanmi* into practice. But this 'embodiment of longing' often shades into pining, and their concern becomes preoccupation and frustration at the lack of opportunities.

This introduces us to another connotation of the *nerves syndrome*. While *ghettos* offer places to chat and relax and to take refuge from tight family environments, unemployment and the lack of resources often prolongs the time of 'sitting' and leads to a lot of thinking. The common expression *n do hanmi wa taaxunu* (I and my *hanmi* [concern] are sitting, i.e. I have a problem to solve, or a concern that haunts me) seems to find an apt exemplification here, and not incidentally recalls a common trope of *nerves* youth: one youth sits and restlessly loads his mind with thoughts and preoccupations about travel which often have no straightforward practical solution. The overwhelming stream of thoughts and concerns is often felt as a negative and disabling state, a kind of burden (*likke*) which adds to the experience of hardship (*tanpiye*) in everyday life. Thus the word *nerves* is sometimes associated with the 'nervous system', meaning to the sort of distress and frustration felt by youths.

Preoccupation and anxieties about wealth and future perspectives are not confined to travelling; in a context of widespread economic hardship, they cut across the age spectrum and gender. Distress may even be brought to the attention of marabouts and healers, and pharmaceutical or other remedies may be administered[8]. Some youths do say they may use cannabis to relieve the load of thoughts, something which is however condemned by many other *nerves* youth on religious-moral grounds (it is also apparent that cannabis is part of a much wider youth culture—also among migrants—partially influenced by reggae culture). On the other hand, even if feeling *nerves* could potentially lead to more serious forms of stress, youths do not seem to have a pathological understanding of their state. In ordinary conversation, frustrations about travelling are not usually framed in Soninke categories relating to health matters (*saha*), illness (*jangiro*) or madness (*tuuri*), though the English word *stress* is often used.

[8] M.S., marabout, 24/11/08, Serekunda. Some informants also told me that people, especially elders, take pharmaceutical products to treat anxious states.

Bio-medical discourse is also silent on the *nerves syndrome*[9]. The word *syndrome*, which is only rarely used in conversation, is often employed in a metaphorical way to convey the idea of a contagious phenomenon among youths. This does not mean that thoughts and bodily experiences (e.g. sitting) associated to such frustrations are not relevant, but rather that they constitute an *ordinary* experience of suffering and a ground for social interaction between youths (cf. Weiss 2005:111). *Nerves* is thus part of a broader vocabulary of psychological states through which youths articulate their experiences and concerns about everyday life, from money matters to family pressures. In other words, being *nerves* is about the here-and-now as much as it is about anywhere else. As will emerge more clearly in the following sections, the reason for this is that migration coexists with, or better entails, other paths to realisation and social value. But since youths struggle to show their potential for success and realisation, they often incur into frustration and disorientation in a context which often forecloses their possibilities to 'make a difference', as Jallow would have it.

Whereas migration seemingly offers a linear trajectory out of uncertainty, engaging with it may generate even more perplexities. A man (age: 28) I knew well once told me his experience of being *nerves*. Like most other young men he wished to travel, but he used to say he would not be as *nerves* as to think about it all day. Then he had a chance to apply for a temporary visa through a European contact he happened to make in the Gambia. In order to apply for the first stage of the visa process he needed a relatively affordable financial asset (about 800€) but, however much he visited his friends and family asking for assistance, he could not finally raise the sum and he did not manage to file in the application. For some time, the frustration of having been so close to Europe haunted him, and he felt badly about it. This affected his concentration at work, and he was struck by the fact that he began to have doubts, even a "bad heart", about his acquaintances and their willingness to help him and see him progressing. Thus his experience reached beyond the technicalities of the visa application and brought to surface the social process underlying migration: the pooling of resources, the network of relations, the failed promises of help and the excuses, the ambivalent intentions of others.

[9] In a conversation with a chief executive of the medical services in the Gambia (H.N., February 2008, Serekunda), he drew no direct connection between *nerves* and bio-medical discourse. Having said that, it must be said that I did not conduct research with recognised cases of 'mental disease' and 'depression', where there could be a correlations between failure to travel and 'medical' condition.

Being a 'hustler': to farm or to travel?

In a number of speeches, President Jammeh has addressed the 'attitudinal problem' of youths who have grown disaffected with farm and menial labour, and who leave work opportunities to immigrants from neighbouring countries, but are willing to take up similar jobs in the West. Young people are said to be responsible for their "self-imposed poverty" whereby "you sit down, you don't do anything, and you want to become rich"[10]. In this representation, young men sit in their *ghettos*, drinking *ataya*, playing cards and smoking ganja, while waiting for an opportunity to reach Europe and America. The prospect of migration is an escapist diversion from the patriotic engagement with national self-development. In 2003, the government launched the program 'Back to the land', a campaign more than an agricultural policy, aimed to encourage youths to return to the provinces and work for the country's food self-sufficiency. Senegal followed in 2006 with the REVA plan (*Retour vers l'agriculture*) that during the Presidential campaign (2007) was explicitly envisioned as a solution to clandestine migration to the Canary Islands (Willems 2008: 290).

In the last thirty to forty years, the role of agriculture in household subsistence has declined under degrading environmental conditions, neoliberal reforms, and the vagaries of the international market (Sallah 1990; Baker 1995). Migrant remittances have offset most of the deficiencies in subsistence and it has become almost impossible to think about household budgets without the supplement of extra-agricultural incomes. Rice, which is mostly imported, is eaten once a day and is usually bought by migrants. In the meantime, households have tended to concentrate their male labour force on communal fields to maximise subsistence, to the detriment of individual farms (*saluma*) whereby juniors could own the product of their labour (juniors too giving up the idea of *saluma*) (cf. Timera 2001: 42). In these conditions, there seems to be little cause for juniors to be enthusiastic at the idea of returning to the land. However, when the rainy season breaks out, juniors are recalled from Serekunda and sent to work in the fields. Even within remittance-rich households, going to the farms is almost compulsory, and defections are met with jokes and sarcastic commentaries about manliness and laziness. These are not necessarily echoes of the government discourse on youths, but equally reveal the stakes of the game for youths, an issue which runs

[10] President Jammeh's speech at the Opening of the National Assembly, broadcast by GRTS, 28/03/08.

through the rest of the chapter: however much they claim to have a *hanmi* for travel, youths need to show they are purposeful individuals even at home, something which can be thoroughly checked.

Farming is intimately related to the construction of masculinity and the migration process. It has remained a central socio-cultural reproductive strategy in spite of the growing importance of other types of education (Islamic and secular). Of course, it is a way for elders to discipline youths to work and live under their authority, but it is also a way one can become a 'hustler', which in Gambian English is a popular term for migrant, and more generally for a hard working and determined (i.e. with *hanmi*) individual, energetically and smartly finding the means to support his family. When the young man farms, he trains and strengthens the body by bending to the ground and weeding for long hours under the sun and the rain, until 'his body has come out' (*a faten ri*, also *a foro* [blood] *ri*). The physical prowess required by farming is rendered in Soninke by the word *senbe*. A multivocal concept, in this context *senbe* refers to physical power and resistance. It goes together with the ability to endure fatigue and sufferance, which are central elements in the broadest conception of work in Mande cultures (Diawara 2003: 69p.). Finally, by farming the young man realises the merits and the hardship implied by providing food for the family, something that hardens his moral fibre and leads to self-knowledge (Whitehouse 2003: 35). As a young boy comes back from harvest with a cart full of millets, he is welcomed with a "he's a man now [*yugo ya ni sasa*]". Thus trained, the young man will be able to travel, to endure the challenging living and working conditions in the host country and to know how to obtain something honestly from his own sweat (*futte*).

At the household level, migration and farming are ideally seen as two equivalent modes of 'hustling'. Farmers will go to the bush (*gunne*), migrants will go to the 'travelling bush/field' (*terenden gunne*); both will use their *senbe* to obtain resources (food, remittances) for the subsistence (*biraado*) of the household. Remittances are seen precisely as a complement to agricultural subsistence, so that those who do not migrate will have to hustle for *biraado* in the fields. In other words, farming and migration are normatively seen as complementary activities. The cultural importance of farming and *biraado* cannot be disregarded in this respect. Farming is a matter of identity as well as economy (Whitehouse 2003: 36), a way one shows he belongs to the household, and the household shows it belongs with dignity to the community as an (ideally) self-sufficient unit. Therefore, it is not unusual to see young migrants on a visit to Sabi to readily take up their complementary role and follow their brothers to the

bush, showing they are equal to them and they have are faithful to their origins.

However, it is not difficult to detect other discursive lines that potentially, or actually, unbalance the complementariness between migrants and farmers. The significance of migrants' money has gone much beyond *biraado* and accounts for most of the important monetary expenses at the household level, especially for housing improvements[11]. Migrants often take responsibility for the marriage expenses of their juniors, and even their seniors; a minimum cost of 15-20,000 Dalasi (about €5-600) per marriage (bride-wealth and wedding) still constitutes a considerable hurdle even for youths engaged in small-scale business and seasonal migration. Their contribution to the family cannot be discounted, but it is usually absorbed into daily stream of daily needs for cash (see below), leaving no or little trace. After many years of toil, youths' efforts are often overshadowed by migrants who pay for their bride or build a house in the compound. Once I saw some young men making blocks in a compound. Intrigued, I enquired about their plan: the cement, and some of the labour, had been paid by their brother in Angola who wanted to stock few hundred blocks because, as I was told, "if he has *senbe*, he will build a house in the near future". Speaking of a man with *senbe* today means less talking about his agricultural exploits than about his wealth, his levels of consumption, and, for that matter, his capacity to remit.

Migrants seem no less concerned with *senbe*-strength either. The increasing significance of labour as opposed to commercial migration—paralleling the surge of Europe and the US as migrant destinations in the last three decades—has maintained the emphasis on labour performance due to the fact that Soninke migrants are mostly employed as an unskilled labour force. When visiting their home villages and their *ghettos*, migrants tend to stress the long working hours, the fatigue and the sacrifices they have to endure while abroad. 'There is no time for sitting and drinking *ataya* when you are in Europe', many migrants remark, often referring to the numbers of youths sitting at *ghettos* to brew *ataya*, that the migrants—the 'money men'—are probably expected to sponsor.

On their part, non-migrant youths resent the prolonged sitting, the inability to express their *senbe*-strength and show their capacity as 'hustlers'. They could potentially farm more and develop their own plot. The use of draft animal machinery has actually saved time and facilitated farming in the past forty years. In the past, youths were farming until dusk,

[11] In a 1977-8 survey conducted in Soninke villages in the Upper Senegal valley, migrant remittances constituted on average 71% of the monetary incomes of the households (Weigel 1982: 87).

instead of coming back at around 2p.m. as they do today. But there seems to be little cause for an argument about laziness. Tools date back to the heyday of groundnut cultivation (1960-70s) or earlier, while farmers say that rains are irregular and soils are exhausted after many decades of farming and reduced fallow practice. After structural reforms, fertilisers are no longer credited by any parastatal company, so that raw cash is needed. Most youths feel they are left with their *senbe*-strength and little else to face fields:

> "We don't have good machines here. We just use our senbe, under the rain and under sun. If you do this for long, when you're 50, you will be short of senbe and you'll have nothing […] If you are in Europe, you can do odd jobs, like the bricklaying; you can even work weekends, you'll struggle. But at least the salary is good, 900 or even more than 1000 euros".[12]

In the long run farming wears the body out, leaving unmistakable marks such as calloused hands, the skin burnt and dried by the sun, the back bent by the heavy loads of work. Yet there is no reward as in Europe. It comes close to being the use of mere human energy for its own sake, yielding no progress, eventually expressing no purposeful drive for betterment (*hanmi*)[13]. To be sure many young men hold farming in high repute, but they see it as rather out of pace with their current objectives:

> "Farming is hard, but it is good. Now there is no job I fear. I fear no fatigue…if I go hustling abroad, I can do any job! […] Here in Sabi, we farm, it is our *laada* [tradition], but I want to look for money now."[14]

In the dry season, many young men leave the village to look for jobs in Serekunda, but irregular employment and low pay will often prevent them from saving significant amounts to be remitted home. Some make plans to stay over the rainy season, when the rural exodus reverts back and jobs abound; but frequently their plans have to be aborted as they are recalled home. While many youths feel their efforts and their farm work are not fully acknowledged, they are still under pressure to conform to their complementary role as farmers and go to the fields at the command of the elders.

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[12] I.S., January 2007, Sabi.

[13] While everybody farms and farmed in Sabi, free-men thought that former slaves (*komo*) endured (and were asked to do) the hardest jobs; yet this was also seen as their limit, the only thing, or ambition, they knew.

[14] T.S., December 2007, Sabi.

The Household: solidarities, expectations, rivalries

Household dynamics and authority are central to migration as well as to non-migration. Not only are domestic relations crucial for one to be able to travel, but they also confer meaning to the career of those who stay. The Soninke, like most other groups in the region, are a patrilineal society divided into patrilocal compounds called *ka*, which usually include one or more family nuclei composed of a man, his wives and children, and eventually his married male children with their cohorts; the *ka* is led by the eldest agnatic male of the household, the *kagume* (Pollet & Winter 1971:337pp.; Razy 2007: 71pp.). In the eyes of Gambians, the Soninke have been particularly successful in keeping their families united and solid. Marriage strategies, tightly-knit social networks and transnational fostering of children born in the Diaspora have partially compensated for the great mobility and distribution of households over many localities (cf. Whitehouse 2009). As long as there are elders at home, juniors can go off hustling. Often, however, a younger member has to stay to assist an aging elder, or to look after the sub-section of a household where only the mother and wives of migrants are left. Unlike some migrant-sending areas of Senegambia, it is rare to see Soninke households untended by at least an adult man. Therefore a number of men in their thirties or older, 'sit at home' and look after the family, regardless of whether they still wait for an opportunity to travel. They manage the compound economy, liaise with the elders of the extended family, mediate internal conflicts, and make sure the boys go to the farms.

The importance of family management as an integral element of the migration process cannot be underestimated. Once I had a conversation with a group of men in their thirties; although most were anxious to travel, many declared that if they did not have an opportunity to leave the country, they would stay on behalf of the family—including the migrants—as a whole. When I asked them why they were so sure their brothers would send money and help them, Haji replied: "*If my brother dies, who's going to take care of his children? If he has helped, I would welcome all of them as if they were mine*"[15], accompanying his words with a gesture of embracement. The family compound provides a safe haven in case of affliction or if something goes wrong in migration—as wars, deportations and economic crises have taught the Soninke.

Looking after the family is however more complex than it appears at first sight. Besides solidarities, the family is a site of tensions and

[15] Haji M., September 2007, Serekunda.

competitions for prestige. Agnatic brothers compete for honour, to stand out as successful providers in the eyes of their father. In Mande societies, rivalries between agnatic brothers are a *leitmotiv*, and among the Soninke this is usually known as *faabaremmaaxu* (also *faabanbanaaxu*) (cf. Sidibe & Galloway 1975; Razy 2007: 73). Rivalry is especially evident in polygamous marriages when brothers divide along maternal filiation and split the household (usually) after the death of the father. Mothers have a major role to play in their sons' careers, mobilising their kin (especially their brothers) in order to support them. Migration is of course an instrumental economic resource in competitive *faabaremmaaxu*. Even if the rice and housing improvements which accrue to the household are for the collective good, their provenience is not of course anonymous; on the contrary family investments are a major channel to build up a name for oneself. Competition and tensions are rarely played out in the open, in order to preserve at least a nominal family unity; yet people perceive their environments as full of perils engendered by envies and malignity. Protective amulets and prayers are often sought from marabouts in order to prevent ill-minded kin (or other people) using spells to stop them or their sons from progressing.

Therefore, men who are close to becoming 'family keepers' or *kagumu* do often manifest more uncertainties than Haji. Some can exert considerable influence on their juniors abroad for them to send money and goods, to pay for housing, and send enough pocket money for them. But others warn: for how long? If the history of Soninke migration has proved their great capacity to maintain household unity in spite of dispersal, cases of rivalry and divisions have projected more bleaker scenarios. As elders—the unifying figures—of the compound die out, agnatic brothers may branch off or split the household into sub-sections, reshaping the boundaries of resource pooling. At a certain stage in their life cycle, migrants may also claim more autonomy for their own wives and children; they make take them abroad or to the city in the urban compound they bought with their savings. Most youths do also point to cases of men 'forgetting their family' after they managed to travel, leaving their full brother alone in the family compound. These examples are used in order to claim that 'you have to look for your *own* money' (i.e. migration) rather than place your hope in others.

The intricacies of family settings also shed light on the frustrations of aspirant migrants, and young men in general. The junior is expected to reciprocate the social debt accumulated in years of nurture and care by his

parents, feeding them in turn and enabling them to rest in old age[16] (cf. Timera 2001: 42). By satisfying and showing obedience to his parents, he also acquires *barake* or blessing, which is deemed necessary in order to progress in life[17]. It is necessary to qualify progress here as, in general, a sort of trajectory in which one can benefit in a cumulative way from the fruit of his productive and reproductive power (wealth, children, etc.). If farm work is a paradigmatic way to be devoted to the parents, *barake* dynamics are not exempt from a degree of commodification and competitive *faabaremmaaxu*. Apart from sending presents and money to the parents, the pilgrimage to Mecca (costing € 3-4,000) constitutes a chief investment and advancement strategy by migrants towards their parents.

If non-migrants obviously struggle to keep up with similar achievements in a competitive environment, their abilities are also tested on minor issues, through minute particulars and daily interactions. Youths often feel the eyes of their kin on them as they try to scrutinize their movements and their activities. Parents and other family members may advance petty requests to see their promptness and ultimately check their *hanmi*, or they may make veiled comments and stage provocations in order to evaluate their reaction and see their intentions in the open. Backbiting is also as much criticised as it is practised, even within the peer group; citing the Quran, youths compare backbiting to a bodily torture as if someone sliced off and ate pieces of flesh from their body.

Youths often perceive the expectations, competition and gossip as a cumulative pressure, a suffocating burden (*likke*) to bear within an environment which constantly and subtly reminds them of their duties and of others' achievements. *Ghettos* provide a place to take refuge from pressures; as I have mentioned, however, *ghettos* are ambivalent places, whereby youths can attract the labels of slackers, even ganja smokers. In this respect, migration can work as a semi-escapist inversion of lived reality. Among the merits of Europe is the fact that 'people mind their business', as opposed to 'black people' who are fond of knowing everybody's whereabouts and of backbiting. The desire, more or less

[16] On the reciprocities and construction of mutual indebtedness between generations in the African context see especially Reynolds-Whyte et al. (2008: 6pp.) and Roth (2008).

[17] The concept of barake (from the Arabic baraka) is widespread in Sufi Islam in North and West Africa, and in the region it has been studied with respect to the relation marabout-disciple, particularly in the Sufi order of the Muridiyya, both in Senegal and their transnational networks (Cruise O'Brien 1971; Coulon 1981; Bava 2003; Riccio 2007). The marabout-disciple dyad is also important among tthe Soninke, but *barake* is particularly central to inter-generational relations.

serious, of finding a European fiancée or wife is also widespread, partially animated by known cases among migrants. These images do not perhaps reveal a desire of outright individuation, but of conducting a complementary transnational life (cf. Salih 2002), which carves out spaces of autonomy. However, the most common way of thinking about autonomy in relation to migration is surely in terms of money, a topic which has been mentioned several times in the preceding pages and that begs for clarification.

Conclusion: presence and absence

There is little doubt that in contemporary Gambia many youths harbour a compelling aspiration to migrate but live a condition of 'involuntary immobility' (Carling 2002), which is epitomised by the *nerves* phenomenon. In a context of historical migration flows such as the Soninke village of Sabi, the *nerves syndrome* has been described as a disposition or embodiment of longing (*hanmi*) for travelling, a predominantly masculine experience of the self. It is the prospect of going to 'hustle', enduring hardship and sacrifices to bring money home for the household and for longer-term personal plans. Much as youths are drawn to this prospect, policies and border enforcement leave narrow opportunities for travel to Europe, America and other destinations like Angola. The *nerves* experience has therefore come to embody the frustrations, uncertainties and pressures around this forced immobility. However, by exploring frustrations, the chapter has necessarily questioned the definition of immobility as a lack of migration and enlarged it so as to include the conditions created by an overarching migration process where some leave and others stay. Immobility per se is not bad: it designs complementary roles and masculinities with respect to the household and its productive activities. On the other hand, in the last thirty years, the successes of migration and the deficiencies of local economies have contributed to unbalance the complementariness between migration and staying. Being *nerves* is grounded in these multiple and often contradictory predicaments of travel and non-travel, which can be sometimes disorienting: youths are instigated to go out and look for money while at the same time they are recalled to the fields; they are tested for their willingness to be self-reliant, and yet may be asked to stay on behalf the family and wait for their brothers' remittances.

It is not always easy to distinguish aspirations from pressures and expectations within the family setting, where rivalries and competition raise the stakes of social recognition. Migrants' achievements give youths

hanmi, but also create a rebounding inspection of them; their very embodiment of purposeful aspirations can be called into question as they wait for a chance to travel and try to find a helper.

However caution is needed when speaking of the social absence of youths in their societies. Some authors writing about youths in this region, including in Soninke areas, have read the compelling aspirations to migrate in the light of generational reciprocities and the household needs which youths are expected to fulfil but are unable to, freezing their transition to social adulthood (Timera 2001:42; cf. Schultz 2002: 804pp, Jónsson 2008; Mbodji 2008). For some authors (e.g. Mbodji 2008: 308pp.), the stakes are no less than life itself, for not only have the bases of subsistence deteriorated in many local economies, but the lack of resources inevitably drags youths into invisibility, immaturity, anonymity, in other words into social death. While the analysis of Gambian Soninke views on the nexus between masculinity and the *nerves syndrome* lends some support to these readings of (geo-socially) immobile youths, it is necessary to take stock of multiple trajectories of migration and stay. Rather than a univocal zombification of youths, it would seem more profitable to account for the complex, if contradictory, interplay between absences and presences in young men's lives. It would be otherwise difficult to explain why, in spite of the pervasive importance of mobility, the Soninke are still investing in and holding onto the conditions of immobility or staying (e.g. farming) that shape non-migrant masculinities and sustain the very possibility for some to travel elsewhere.

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MOBILITY AND THE GENDERED DYNAMICS OF MIGRATION – CHALLENGING GERMAN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION IN GHANA AND MALI

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Introduction: Researching the Link Between Migration and Development in West-Africa

This paper is a reflection on doing policy-oriented research on the link between migration and development in West Africa. It is based on a study carried out on behalf of the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).[1] The paper questions the conceptual restrictions and Eurocentric bias of policy related discourses concerning the migration-development nexus. Furthermore it points to the multiple perspectives and voices of actors who should be taken into account in order to tackle the question how migration is related to processes of development. Therefore it refers to the level of local, national and international institutions, where diverse visions of development are articulated. The various and partly conflicting norms and values attached to the issue of migration are analysed, underlining the social significance of mobility and its gendered dimensions. On the level of international politics, the agenda of the so called African-European mobility partnership is linking up migration management with development cooperation in ways that already have effects on transnational as well translocal mobility pattern in the West-African region (Marfaing & Hein 2008). The paper

[1] The study was carried out at the Center on Migration, Citizenship and Development (COMCAD) at the Faculty of Sociology at Bielefeld University (http://www.uni-bielefeld.de/tdrc/ag_comcad/publications/wp.html). The research project was financed by the BMZ over a one year period and included ten weeks of fieldwork in Ghana (March/April 09) and Mali (July/August 09) (Sieveking & Fauser 2009).

thus argues that anthropological research on mobility and social change in contemporary Africa should not leave out the increasingly institutionalised practices of migration related development policies. Methodologically it proposes an empirically grounded approach, focusing on the different perspectives of actors involved in social fields where development policies are applied, including the development institutions[2] that are dealing with the issue of migration on different societal levels.

Current policy-related debates concerning the migration and development nexus are characterised by a strong focus on economic growth, highlighting the importance of the factor of spatial or geographical mobility.[3] Thereby the existence of 'channels' for migration induced flows of (economic, social, human) capital is taken for granted, concealing the complexity of development in terms of social transformation processes. The aspirations for social mobility attached to specific spatial mobility strategies[4] and the changing of social relations through transnational connections are clearly neglected in this debate. Moreover, in this context migration is generally related to a territorially framed notion of development. Particularly with respect to Africa this reflects the heritage of "colonial concern about the control of mobility" and a "fundamentally sedentary" Eurocentric model of how local societies could become "more advanced" (Bakewell 2008: 2). This model of development is expressed in the assumption that populations could and should be "fixed" and migrants would stay "where they belong" if only the economic conditions would allow them to be socially mobile at home – an assumption that is clearly mistaken (de Haas 2006). Moreover it is bound to restrictive norms of gendered mobility patterns, as will be shown below.

Whereas popular media representations of African migrations to Europe often refer to migrants' individual aspirations and prospects, they are seldom related to the broader dimension of structural transformations and increasing social inequalities characterising the societies of origin (or reception). In this respect the paper calls for an opening up and strengthening of public discussions about the link between migration and

[2] Bierschenk (2008) emphasises the urgent need for ethnographies of development institutions – not only for the sake of practice oriented development anthropology but also in terms of the anthropology of development.

[3] This is exemplified by the Worldbank's World-Development-Report 2009 "Reshaping Economic Geography".

[4] Whereas the notion of migration, as it is used here, refers to movements that are followed by a significant period of settlement, the concept of mobility encompasses a broader range of movements. Different forms of migration can thus be understood as different mobility strategies.

development. Qualitative research on the interconnected social dynamics of migration and development can bring out the heterogeneity of perspectives on migration, their inherent contradictions and conflictive potential, articulated by development actors on different societal levels. Such outcomes are not easily operationalised on the project level, but they allow an understanding of how development is negotiated. The paper thus argues that a detailed analysis of the gendered translocal and transnational mobility pattern and their connections to specific economic, social and political transformation processes could be very illuminating with respect to the prospects for a long term success and sustainability or eventual failure of programmes currently promoted by German development cooperation in West-Africa (in particular the established programmes supporting agricultural development, decentralisation, small scale enterprises and self-employment).

In contrast to the almost exclusive focus on international migration that characterises the policy-oriented debates concerning the migration-development nexus,[5] this paper calls for a broader concept of mobility, encompassing movements within and across borders and taking into account their social meanings. Particularly with respect to what is often invoked as "root causes" of migration by policy makers (focusing on poverty, insecurity of livelihoods and lack of job opportunities), it does not make sense to treat internal and external migration separately. Routes and destinations of migrants depend on their resources and on already established networks, which may be very different for people whose migration motives refer to exactly the same "root causes". This becomes very clear when considering the gendered dynamics of migration processes and the different mobility pattern of men and women originating from the same locality. Furthermore, not only the notion of "stepwise migration" (Malmberg 1997: 38), referring mainly to migration from rural areas to urban centres, which then might become transit zones for migration further on to other countries, indicates how internal and international migration dynamics are interrelated. There is also an increasing attention given to rural-urban linkages and interregional migration pattern, which often include frequent but undocumented crossing of national borders. Yet another aspect is the assumption that the

[5] With respect to the West-African region see Black et al. 2004; Bakewell & de Haas 2007; Manuh 2005; Merabet & Gendreau 2007; Zoomers & van Naerssen 2007; reference to the case of Nigeria, because of the demographic weight and complexity of internal migrations, tends to turn the exclusive focus from international to internal migration, although there is also lack of literature and statistics covering this issue (ibid. 17).

"opportunities for internal migration might be one of the most important explanations for why international migration does not occur" (Malmberg 1997: 24). These opportunities largely depend on networks and the socially and culturally embedded, gender structured economic systems (Lachenmann & Dannecker 2001), such as the increasingly interconnected rural and urban labour markets or the translocal and transnational trading networks (Amponsem 1997; Cordell et. al. 1996; Tacoli 2001; Trager 1995). With respect to the effects of migration, research on the destination and redistribution of migrants' remittances also indicate an intricate interrelatedness of internal and international migration processes (Kabki et. al. 2004; Mazzucato et. al. 2005). Remittances from international migrants contribute to growing social inequalities on local and national levels, putting increasing pressure on those parts of the population, which have remained 'immobile' (Jónsson 2008; Gaibazzi, *this volume*).

The paper is based on empirical research on the dynamics of migration and development in West-Africa, focusing on the examples of Ghana and Mali. The reasons of the BMZ for financing a research project on this topic and the increased interest of German development cooperation in the link between migration and development, as well as the criteria for choosing Ghana and Mali as sites for the fieldwork have to be understood in the context of the European Union's migration and development policies.

Migration from Africa in the Context of European and German Development Politics

The current focus of the European Union on migration from Africa and it's initiatives to link up the issue of migration with development has not been without effects on Germany. Although the percentage of immigrants of African background in Germany is rather insignificant[6] as compared to other European countries, the topic has received a lot of media attention, in particular with respect to the dramatic pictures of 'desperate migrants' losing their lives in the attempt to enter the 'fortress Europe'. Because of the publicity surrounding the topic the German government has an interest in presenting a 'humanitarian' answer to the questions raised by these incidents and the embarrassing images. In view of Germany's restrictive immigration politics, the answer is not meant to

[6] German statistics, accounting only for immigrants with foreign nationality, indicate that around 0,3 of the total population (a little more than 4% of the foreign population) have African migration background (Sieveking et.al. 2008: 29pp.).

result in facilitating immigration but rather to prevent migration from Africa to Europe altogether. This vision is in line with the European Union's efforts to push forward the agenda of harmonising migration policies according to the Hague programme that was agreed to in 2004 and which strives to consolidate the European Union as an "area of freedom, security and justice". One of the priorities of the programme is a "proper management of migration flows" demanding a greater cooperation with non-member states with respect to readmission and return of migrants. One of the major strategies to achieve consent over these issues with the governments of African sending countries is to link migration management with development cooperation. This strategy was made explicit on the occasion of the European-African Summits in 2006 (in Rabat and Tripoli), and in particular through the agreement on "The Africa-EU Strategic Partnership" 2007 in Lisbon.[7] Yet, Germany so far has no coherent approach concerning the link between migration from and development in Africa – in contrast to other European countries, which already have and implement such policies.

The idea that there is a link between migration and development is not new (Faist 2008), but only was placed high on the global political agenda rather recently, around the same time as the above mentioned European-African Summits.[8] The basic assumption underlying the increasingly globalised policy agenda addressing the migration-development nexus is that migration can be beneficial for the development of a country, mainly through financial remittances (World Bank 2003), but also through knowledge transmission, human capital transfer and the flows of so called social remittances (Levitt & Nyberg-Sorensen 2004). The other side of the coin is the concern over the detrimental effects of migration if not "properly managed", which are associated with brain drain, trafficking, and increasing insecurities. Although positive effects and potentials of migration and international mobility for development are acknowledged more and more (World Bank 2009), with respect to South-North migration the public discussions and media representations are dominated by a highly normative discourse, suggesting that migration to the developed countries takes place because of failed development and lack of perspectives in the migrants' countries of origin. These assumptions are behind the idea that development cooperation in Africa could prevent

[7] Cf. http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/EAS2007_joint_strategy_en.pdf (last accessed 7.10.09).

[8] This is illustrated by the UN High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development in 2006 and the Global Forum on Migration and Development in 2007.

migration by tackling its supposed 'root causes'. This idea also informed the BMZ's agenda to finance an empirical research project on migration from Africa. Basically, German development cooperation hoped to find concrete answers to the question of whether development-related activities can influence migration dynamics and if so, through which kind of programmes and projects?

So far, existing policy approaches try to combine two basic strategies: 1) creating job perspectives and possibilities for sustainable livelihoods in the migrants' countries of origin, and 2) do this with the help of migrants or through supporting their development activities and transnational cooperation. With respect to these two strategies Ghana and Mali have a different position vis-à-vis the German government, although commonalities with respect to the general orientation of development cooperation exist. Both countries are accorded the status of official 'focus partner countries' for German development cooperation resulting in a relatively high engagement in terms of budget,[9] and in both cases there is a major focus of development cooperation programmes on modernised agriculture and decentralisation.[10] The particular interest of the BMZ in funding research on migration and development in Ghana, however, is related to the fact that it is the country of origin of most of the immigrants in Germany with Sub Saharan African background.[11] Mali, in comparison, is not an important sending country for Germany at all. Yet, in terms of European migration policies it is important, particularly since it was chosen by the European Commission to be the site of a pilot project (a so called Migration Information and Management Centre) translating the idea of a so called Africa-EU Partnership on "Migration, Mobility and Employment" into practice.

[9] In terms of volume of bilateral development aid Germany is in sixth position among the donors for Ghana (Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung 2007: 6) and among the four most important donors for Mali (KfW Entwicklungsbank 2007: 9p.).

[10] The third focus in Ghana is on sustainable economic development (particularly supporting small scale enterprises and private sector development); in Mali, where Germany has a long standing engagement in capacity building for the decentralisation process, there is another focus on programmes supporting water supply and sanitary infrastructure.

[11] More than 20.000 Ghanaian nationals are reported as living in Germany (Sieveking et. al. 2008: 32; Nieswand 2009: 20).

The Migration Information and Management Centre (*Centre d'Information et de Gestion des Migrations*, CIGEM)[12], which is mainly funded by the European Union (with ten million Euros from the 9th European Development Fund), was inaugurated in Bamako in October 2008. Its official agenda includes 1) enhanced knowledge and research on migration, 2) information, reception and orientation of potential and (voluntarily or involuntarily) returned migrants, 3) information about legal conditions of migration to Europe and awareness raising about dangers of illegal migration and 4) facilitating and strengthening the Malian diaspora's engagement for development in Mali, particularly with respect to the transfer of remittances.

However, with respect to the European Union's immigration politics and in view of the negotiations concerning bilateral agreements between Mali and Spain or France that played a role in these countries involvement in the CIGEM, its agenda is not so clear. The supposed benefits for its Malian national partners and local target groups are rather ambivalent. Voices from Malian civil society, particularly from returned migrants' or repatriates' associations, heavily contested and objected to the new centre. On the one hand they criticised the use of the money from the European Development Fund which, from their point of view, could be better invested if more directly allocated to projects supporting returned migrants. On the other hand they denounced the hidden agenda of the CIGEM, pushing forward a policy of selective migration ("*migration choisie*"), such as that already openly promoted by France and strongly rejected by Malian migrants and civil rights activists. This outspoken critique of point 2) and 3) on the centres agenda was complemented by records about conflicts arising through migrants' development activities on the level of local governance and the challenges that the diasporas involvement in local or national politics poses for the official development agenda for the population's participation in democratisation and decentralisation. Hence, from the point of view of Malian actors only the centre's objective of supporting enhanced research on migration seems uncontested.

At the time the research was undertaken, Germany was not officially participating in the CIGEM and representatives of its major development agencies and diplomatic staff in Mali remained very sceptical about the

[12] See http://www.cigem.org/. A paper given by Modibo Keita at the Metropolis Conference, October 2008 in Bonn gave an account of the Malian government's as well as civil society perspectives on the aims of the CIGEM (http://www.metropolis2008.org/pdf/20081030/plenum/20081030_circular-and-temporary_keita-modibo.pdf).

goals of the centre as well as its means. Yet, German development cooperation is not a monolithic institution and there are various perspectives on the agenda of European migration and development politics in Africa even within the BMZ. These diverging perspectives were also reflected in the attitudes of different departments within the BMZ towards the research project. Bridging the gap and communicating between them thus became an important goal of the project. It started with Department 113[13] (located in the BMZ quarters in Berlin with a rather 'short connection' to other ministries, in particular the Ministry of the Interior) where the study was commissioned and a specific interest in the CIGEM was articulated. This stood in contrast to the Country Programme Departments for Ghana and Mali (located like the departments for other countries in the BMZ quarters in Bonn) whose representatives were not convinced of the legitimacy, let alone the necessity of carrying out a research project with the aim of reducing migration to Europe from these countries. When consulted during the preparatory phase of the research, the country programme managers underlined that development cooperation should be implemented with the intention of assisting the German partner countries, reacting to their needs and demands. They therefore insisted that the project should focus on questions concerning the views and perspectives of the Ghanaian and Malian partners of German development cooperation rather than following the European migration management agenda.

Although migration is a prominent issue in terms of public discourses and cultural representations in Mali, the fact that there are almost no reliable demographic data and statistics accounting for international migration is seen by the national government as a major hindrance to coherent policies addressing the migration-development nexus. In Ghana the problem of lacking or insufficient data, though much less acute than in Mali, is also perceived by the government as an obstacle on the way towards a national approach to migration and development. In both countries the governments seem to be willing to enhance and strengthen migration research and improve demographic statistics related to that matter, if means to do it were available. Not knowledge per se is needed, building up national expertise (as is being developed by the Centre for Migration Studies at the University of Ghana)[14] is necessary in order

[13] Department 113 deals with issues concerning the German confederation and Federal States, export-credit-warranties as well as migration and reintegration (the latter partly through a so-called Center for International Migration: CIM).

[14] The centre that was set up in 2006 groups has attracted a lot of international cooperation initiatives and strengthens Ghana's position as the *avant garde* of West-African research on migration (http://cmsgh.org/management.htm).

ensure ownership in the process of developing strategies to mainstream migration into national poverty reduction programmes – an aim that both countries have formulated in the long term (but not yet attained nor significantly approached). In the short term both countries at least hope to be able to facilitate international migrants' remittances.

Thus far neither Ghana nor Mali has a coherent concept for a national approach connecting migration and development policies. In both countries the existing initiatives and efforts to address the migration-development nexus on the level of government do not connect internal and international migration, and tend to concentrate only on the latter. The predominant focus of policy oriented discourses on international migration from African countries to European destinations seems somehow logical from a European immigration-related point of view, because why should the EU be interested in investigating migration dynamics as long as the latter are constricted within the boundaries of the respective African countries or regions? However, this point of view is less understandable with respect to the government's development politics in Ghana or Mali. Yet, a clearly dichotomised discourse on internal and international migration prevails among development actors and agencies on national, regional, and to a certain degree also on local levels in both countries. This dichotomy is based on globally established (still) highly modernistic development discourses, which interpret internal migration as a major problem and a challenge for the planning and administration of local and national development (Bakewell 2008; Diawara 2004: 281pp.). Within this discursive framework internal migration is associated with poverty driven 'rural exodus' and uncontrolled urbanisation (most extreme in the metropolitan areas of the capitals of both countries). International migration, on the other hand, is increasingly perceived in economic terms as a development potential, mainly with respect to the high level of financial remittances, which are often referred to as a kind of counterbalance to the losses suffered through 'brain drain' (Faist 2008). Critical voices from civil society and activists within academia comment on the enthusiasm among policy makers about migrants' commitment for development in their regions of origin rather sceptically, noting that migrants should not be assigned the tasks and responsibilities that belong to the state. Still, public discussions in Mali as in Ghana are clearly dominated by the framework of a migration discourse that separates two apparently different types of movement, internal and external. In how far these forms of mobility are characterised by similar patterns and how their dynamics are related to each other is rarely taken into account.

This reflects the fact that to date there is no straightforward discussion within the international 'development community' (or in the circles of migration policy makers) about the question in which ways internal and international migration dynamics are interwoven with local development processes.[15] With respect to planning this comprehensive question obviously challenges any attempt to simplify the phenomenon of migration and narrow down its complexity in order to produce forms of knowledge and control that would allow for a more easy "legibility" (Scott 1998: 11) of mobility. Certainly, the dichotomy of internal vs. international movements characterising the discourses on migration among development actors conceals their own practical knowledge about the connections between different forms of mobility. It corresponds in many ways to the logic of "Seeing like a state" (Scott 1998) – a logic that may seem adequate and necessary with respect to national governments' attempts to manage migration. Yet, it produces a view of a selective reality that cannot account for the multi-faceted meanings of mobility for development not just in terms of economic growth but in the sense of social transformation processes.

Accounting for Mobility in the Fields of German Development Cooperation: Gendered Perspectives.

Analysing the meaning of mobility in the life-world of people targeted by the programmes of German development cooperation is a possible way of getting a grasp of some streams that contribute to the vast and complex texture of relations between migration and development processes. Different forms of mobility characterise the social fields where programmes of German development cooperation are 'applied' and 'realised'. The processes through which programmes are appropriated and transformed reflect some of the concrete dynamics that connect migration and development on the local level. Development experts working in these fields have gained a great deal of practical knowledge about migration

[15] After the first years of independence research about the dynamics of interconnected migration and development processes (mainly related to questions of urbanisation) and their articulation in West-Africa became more and more concerned with increasing inequalities between centre and periphery (Meillassoux 1971, Mabogunje 1972, Amin 1974). Growing scepticism in regard to modernisation theoretical assumptions came along with a pessimistic view on migration (Nieswand 2009: 20p.). Whereas the latter seems to persist in national development discourses, since the 1990s a positive perception of the potentials of migration dominates within the international development community (ibid.).

dynamics, without necessarily formulating it explicitly or relating it to specific aspects of their projects. In the framework of the study, representatives of German development cooperation who were interviewed in Ghana and Mali stated almost unanimously that migration does not constitute an issue which they deal directly with through the programmes or projects they are engaged in. Yet, indirectly most of them are confronted with various forms of mobility. Migration and the many ways of "travelling" are important issues in the everyday life discourses and practices of individuals as well as for the collective actors and institutions they deal with. Many local institutions and so called "traditional authorities" have reacted on processes of migration, as will be shown below.

Discussing with German development experts about the areas to be covered by the study and identifying criteria for a selection of sites and actors to be included was thus an important step in the process of theoretical sampling. Not less important, of course, were discussions with national experts and cooperation with local research assistants. Apart from practical considerations, related to the restricted time frame of the study, these different voices contributed essentially to the design of the empirical research. 'On the ground', however, accessibility in terms of space and time determined to a large degree who actually participated in the study. Research methods included participant observation but were mainly based on formal and informal interviews and group discussions. The discussions and interviews that took place at the interfaces (Long & Villarreal 1996) with German development cooperation were framed by programmes supporting decentralisation, modernised sustainable agriculture, small-scale-enterprises and self-employment. Empirical research included also fields and events that were framed more explicitly in relation to migration, such as awareness-raising campaigns against "illegal migration", and discussions with different groups of potential and return-migrants. The sites of the empirical research were chosen in a way to cover regions characterised by different migration dynamics, such as Greater Accra, the Ashanti region and the Northern region as well as the Upper East region in Ghana, and the regions of Mopti and Ségou, Sikasso and Kayes in Mali. In Ghana there was a stronger focus on the urban environment (Accra, Kumasi, Tamale), on groups with a higher educational background (secondary high school, academic degrees) and on skilled international (return) migration, whereas in Mali the main focus was on rural environments and populations with a rather low level of formal school education, forming part of the streams of largely unskilled internal and international labour migration.

From the point of view of representatives of the partner institutions of German development cooperation in the two countries, the following topics were considered as particularly relevant in order to address the migration-development nexus: the national approaches and research initiatives, pushed forward by the respective governments (as mentioned in the previous section of this paper), the feminisation of migration, the challenges of urbanisation and the transformation of rural society. From the point of view of other groups and actors the aspect of return migration, re-integration as well as transnational cooperation of migrants were also discussed as crucial aspects in order to better understand the relation between migration and development. Whereas the latter aspect is treated here only in a cursory way, I will concentrate in the following on the gendered dimensions of changing mobility pattern, referring mainly to the aspect of female migration, the social transformations that go along with it as well as their diverse perceptions, expressing migrants' changing development visions and prospects of return.

Discourses on Female Migration: the Vulnerability of Social Order

A feminisation of migration in the sense of an increase of so called independent, un-accompanied female migration that has been perceived as a global trend since the 1980s (Piper 2008: 2pp.) could be observed in both countries. In the framework of the empirical field research it was most strongly highlighted with respect to rural-urban migration and movements that are largely contained within national borders. In Ghana this concerned mainly movements between impoverished rural environments in the north and the growing metropolitan areas in the south. In Mali female migration seemed on the increase particularly between poverty ridden rural areas in Mopti and Ségou and the capital Bamako or other growing cities, such as Gao. Nevertheless female migration is not restricted to poverty-driven internal migration, but can also be observed with respect to international migration.[16] In Ghana for example, women's international migration since the 1980s is reported to be as high as that of men, although more directed towards the neighbouring countries. Female long distance or intercontinental migration is particularly noticeable among Ghanaian nurses, who in spite of national efforts to retain them are still being recruited by countries in

[16] Adepoju indicates that female migration in the West-African region, although steadily on the increase, is still mainly to destinations within the national or regional context (Adepoju 2004; Adepoju 2005).

need of skilled health personnel. This constitutes a national problem, calling for state intervention, as the appointed (female) director of the Migration Unit[17] within the Ministry of the Interior, a body established in order to coordinate migration policies at the national level, underlined. What is striking in the following citation is the fact that the consequences of female migration are not seen in an economic dimension but formulated in purely moral terms:

> We have noticed that more and more women are migrating, which hitherto was not the case. Hitherto women moved to join their husbands and things like that, but now they are the principal migrants. When you look at the turnover of nurses, and most of the nurses who work in our hospitals are women, you know there were schemes set up by the UK and America to attract them. So in the last couple of years, we see that more women move and they leave their husbands to take care of the kids; and nobody has looked at the social implications of what is happening. In the long-run it might have *social consequences for the state*, because about 2 months or so ago there were some swoops on brothels at Circle [a major traffic junction in Accra], and it was publicized in the media all over. There were young girls of the age of 14 in the brothel. So, one cannot really say whether it is because they are losing the control in terms of family control, that is why you find these in such a situation. Because hitherto you could hear about prostitutes but not that young. So *there is a social problem that we are building up gradually*; and of course we see a lot of young girls moving from areas in the northern parts of Ghana to the south, and they end up at these quarters. A lot of them have had children at their [young] age so you could imagine that the vicious circle would continue at a point. So the feminisation of migration is also another issue that must be looked at critically, because the social consequences might be great if we are not taking it into cognizance now; the long time effects might not be very positive. (Ministry of the Interior, Accra, 11.4.08; *author's emphasis*)

The social meaning of mobility and its moral connotations, spelled out in this citation, are particularly salient when it comes to the gendered dimensions of migration. Migration practices of men and women are not only structured differently (through networks and gender specific access to resources) but also conceptualised and legitimised in different ways (Dannecker 2005; Pessar & Mahler 2003). The public perception of increasing female migration in Ghana is reflected in popular discourses on the social problems that are supposed to result from a transformation of the

[17] The Migration Unit or 'National Migration Bureau' within the Ministry of the Interior was not functioning at the time of the field research – it was officially put into place in June 2008.

established gender order: breaking up of families, abandonment of children, spreading of diseases, etc. The following citation is a sequence from a group discussion with female community leaders in a village in the north (Sandema, Bulsa district, Upper East), which centred mainly on the issue of women's (internal) rural-urban migration. The participants of the discussion were partisans of "women's empowerment" who had all been trained in "gender". Their statements show clearly that female migration is criticised – not only by men but at least as obstinately by women – on moral grounds, presupposing that women are particularly "vulnerable", due to their ascribed physical and psychological constitution:

> Mary[18]: I don't support [female migration] because some migrate and they end up breaking; they end up divorcing. You know human beings as we are. Some can control themselves but others when they go they end up messing up with other men so they can't come back to their husbands. When they go and they end up having affairs with other men, […] it will affect their households so they just stay away, and they don't come back home.
>
> Rose: Because we are vulnerable, maybe a woman migrates and gets to the city; if you are a nice and beautiful woman you get to the city and see someone who would be able to take care of your needs and all, you would end up giving up; and you might not know what the person is carrying; so at the end of the day, you come home and you are infected […] Before you realise, you are infected and you have come to infect your husband and anything can happen to the family. If you and your husband die, then the children, yes, there is no one to take care of them; so I also want to add to what Sister Mary has said I don't really support migration. (Women community leaders, Sandema, 31.3.08)

Women's vulnerability, such as referred to here, is a stereotype persistently reproduced in discourses on female migration. From an analytical point of view, however, the supposed causes and effects of female migration rather point to the vulnerability of an established social order, its moral foundations and political legitimacy, challenged in particular by women's independent migration and increased mobility. The two citations show that – from the point of view of local communities as well as national government – the social dynamics going along with female migration are considered as a serious threat. Not only individual families and local communities are seen in danger, but also national development in terms of social cohesion, as the appointed director of the

[18] Names are changed.

government's new Migration Unit cited above made clear. In both citations, female mobility is in no ways interpreted as a step toward women's equal rights and empowerment, nor do they refer to the migrating women's agency and legitimate (as far as official national development strategies are concerned) aspirations for social mobility. That the actors interviewed happened to be quite influential female political actors, yet are reproducing stereotypes of women's weakness and vulnerability, indicates a contradiction inherent in mainstream development discourses, based on territorially bounded notions of development, where spatial mobility is treated separate from aspects of social mobility, thereby blinding out migrants' agency.

Beyond this discursive dimension, the reason why female migration is so unanimously condemned is also due to the fact that it implies an increasing degree of unpredictability. Much more than the longstanding trends of ongoing male migration, women's mobility indicates a definitive dissolution of seasonal migration pattern, which hitherto constituted a framework for male as well as female labour migration characterised by a certain degree of predictability and stability. With the decline of the rural economy, lack of investments in the modernisation of agricultural production (in spite of official development programmes) and persisting unequal spatial development, the cities are attracting rural migrants on a more and more permanent basis. As not only the men, but also now the women are leaving the villages, the seasonal migration pattern is constantly dissipating and disintegrating, creating insecurities on various societal levels, as became quite evident in the case of Mali.

The Dilemma of Rural Communities in Crisis: "In spite of ourselves we have to let them go"

In the regions of Mopti (on the plateau of Dogonland) and Ségou (neighbouring the Office de Niger) in Mali a situation similar to the northern parts of Ghana could be observed, although with even more alarming existential implications (Sieveking 2009). Here the conditions have become quite pathetic since the lack and irregularities of rainfall (in 2006 and 2007), the ongoing degradation of the natural environment and scarcity of fertile land on the one hand, and rising food prices (particularly since 2008) on the other have resulted in food shortages and a "generalised poverty" ("*pauvreté généralisée*"). This situation is portrayed by the population as a reason not only for the "young and able men" ("*les bras valides*") to leave their villages but also for the young unmarried women and girls or even the married women, leaving behind mostly children and

elderly people. In both regions a pattern of socially accepted female labour migration exists, referring to women and young girls participating in the cultivation and harvesting of rice at the sites of large irrigation schemes (mainly in the plains of Dogonland, at the *Office de Niger* or the nearby *Office de Riz*). This kind of rural-rural migration used to be temporary. Moreover the work to be done in the rice fields as well as its remuneration was considered as beneficial, not just in terms of economic or nutritional values (when paid in kind) but also social values (rice constituting the basic foodstuff for important family ceremonies). Apart from this established migration pattern, a new kind of female rural-urban migration is evolving, mainly to Bamako (more and more also to Gao and Kidal, which are growing cities not the least due to their position as hubs for the Trans-Saharan migration routes), where young women and girls look for work as housemaids. This kind of migration is still mainly practiced within the framework of the agricultural calendar. Yet, the girls, most of whom have very little or no schooling at all encounter a lot of difficulties when they try to come back during the rainy season.

In a group discussion with girls who just had returned from Bamako to their village in the region of Ségou, they talked about some of their problems, which make it difficult to come home in time (or return at all). Most of them work under precarious conditions in the city, frequently confronting physical exploitation or sexual abuse. All of them are working in informal job arrangements where insecure or insufficient payment is a recurrent problem. Particularly with the start of the rainy season, when the cheap labour force of housemaids from rural areas becomes scarce in the cities, their employers are often reluctant to give them their pay and let them go. Moreover, return might be difficult for them because of social stigmatisation. Migrating to the city is seen as a rather dangerous endeavour and adventure, not really accepted for girls or women, as it transforms the social status of the person migrating (Jónsson 2008). If there are no legitimate institutions or procedures (such as a marriage) to reintegrate the person in the existing social system and 'fix' her social status, she might either be considered as constituting a challenge to local moral values and power structures or as 'lost' for her family and community altogether. From the point of view of the members of the local community, however, female migration can be legitimised in terms of "the search for the dowry" ("*la recherche du trousseau*"). This motivation is considered as legitimate by all members of the local communities, because the existence of villages which cannot attract candidates for marriages, since there are no marriageable girls, is existentially endangered.

This threat is indeed growing with increasing inequalities on a national level, the marginalisation of rural areas (in spite of economic growth) and the break-down of rural female economic systems, based on trans-local mobility and trading pattern (Lachenmann 1986). A lot of communities in the rural areas of Mopti or Ségou find themselves on the margins of newly evolved routes of trading relations. Without the means to invest in and adapt to the transformed pattern of economically motivated mobility the women cannot withstand the increasing competition in the field of small scale trading. But women still use to complement agricultural production with trading. This contributes to the effects of an increased monetarisation, resulting in the fact that the mothers, who are supposed to equip their daughters for their marriage, cannot fulfil their obligations anymore.[19] Nowadays new, 'modern' items have to be included in the dowry and their prices add up to a much higher amount than the costs of the dowry at the time of their own marriage. Most of the goods – textiles, kitchen utensils, electronic devices, etc. – are imported; almost none of them are still produced locally, in contrast to the items making up the dowry before. Confronted with a situation where whole communities lack food enough for the whole year until the end of the next harvesting season, parents cannot keep the unmarried girls at home. Although the work in the city is associated with the dangers of undesired pregnancies, clandestine abortions, and relations with men "whose origins are not known" to them, they have to give in: "in spite of ourselves we have to let them go" ("*malgré nous on les laisse partir*").

Their outspoken aim to earn money for the dowry, however, might not be their only reason for leaving the village. A girl who has never been to the city is considered by her age-mates as a "savage", she will have to keep quiet when her friends and her fiancée talk about their migration experiences. And particularly in the case of the girls in Dogonland (an area in the region of Mopti where a broad variety of local dialects are spoken), they are eager to learn Bamana (the dominant Malian vernacular, functioning as lingua franca in the capital and in large parts of the country). This knowledge, which is considered as "useless" by many among the elder generation, is valued by the youth in social as well as economic terms, as it is mainly Bamana that is used as a means for communication in translocal trading activities. In Dogonland some of the male dominated family and village councils have reacted to the new migration trends, by introducing official sanctions for women and girls

[19] The monetarisation of bride-prices has created a similar pressure on young men (Nieswand 2009: 19).

leaving the village without authorisation of the male head of the family.[20] The village authorities argue that it is imperative for them to keep the girls in the village because it is the only way to attract the young men – if they leave nobody among the young generation will come back and the village population may implode.

Up to now German development cooperation has addressed the problems posed by the feminisation of rural-urban migration in the framework of programmes supporting women's groups engaged in horticulture or other small scale income generating activities. The established programmes try to empower women and girls through educational means and political participation. Yet, as long as such projects are embedded in a territorialised model of development based on the general idea that it would be best if people could be retained in the places where they belong, they may miss an important chance for the modernisation of agriculture, embodied by a mobile and dynamic rural society. As the reactionary initiatives of male authorities, in order to "protect" their women and girls, show local regulations of mobility can also result in a drawback in terms of women's rights and gender equality. Whereas the new kind of female migration has been on the increase since only recently, it has to be remembered that although male migrations of various kinds have been taking place for a long time, their 'adventures' are also characterised by increasing insecurities and various forms of exploitation challenging their physical and psychological integrity. Yet, the conditions of male migrants are hardly described in terms of 'vulnerability' and the dangers of their ever more permanent migrations or the insecurities related to their return are never put on a par with those associated with women's migration.

[20] Examples given in some villages on the Dogon plateau were fines (around 40.000,- to 50.000,- CFA, corresponding to around 60,- to 76,- Euro, which amounts to almost a years salary for a young illiterate housemaid with rural background, who may earn between 4.000 and 6.000 CFA per month; for married women the fine was reported much higher: 250.00,- CFA, corresponding to more than 380,- Euro) that girls or women leaving the village without the authorisation of the parents were supposed to pay, in addition to social sanctions such as no participation of the village at the occasion of her marriage or the baptism of the first child.

Perspectives on Male Migration: the Paradigm of Capital Accumulation

Popular discourses on male migration in Ghana tend to emphasise the opportunities for the individual rather than the challenges migration might pose to the social order of the community. The formula used almost as a synonym for migration is "searching for greener pastures" and the motto for a male potential migrant, who is challenging his fate and testing his faith by confronting the many difficulties and dangers connected to (most often irregular) migration to Ghana's "second heaven" Europe, the US or Canada is: "try your luck". Religious discourse in Ghana, particularly the extremely popular Pentecostal prosperity gospel, strongly promotes the idea of the faithful believer who, with the help of God, has "been to" somewhere overseas and "made it".[21] The image of the economically successful and potent migrant places strong social pressure on large parts of the Ghanaian society, as the empirical research indicates. This pressure is probably strongest among those parts of the population with a middle income and access to higher education. Peer pressure was considered by many interviewees as a major incentive for international migration:

> It is a peer thing. For instance, you are my mate, and you have finished school and gone to where ever and come back. You are riding [in a vehicle] and I am still walking. What ever it is, no matter what the condition over there, I would also want to go and come back and ride in whatever. […] People with the "been to" label, that is people who have travelled before, are accorded certain respect in society. So everybody wants to be associated with […] that "been to" label "burger"[22] […] When they are talking [among family members in order to take decisions] they call the "burger", and when he speaks that is final. (Group discussion with Graduate Students, Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, 15.5.08)

The citation indicates the social capital that can be accumulated through the migration experience – particularly with respect to overseas migration. However, social reasons are not disconnected from the economic aspects,

[21] In Germany quite extensive research has been done on the Ghanaian "been to" discourses and perceptions (Martin 2005; Martin 2007, Nieswand 2005).

[22] The origin of the notion of "burger" has been traced back to the city of Hamburg, which constitutes a major destination of Ghanaian migration to Germany due to locally established, very dense and long standing migration networks (Martin 2005: 11f.). As the citation indicates, the term "burger" is often used synonymous to the "been to" label.

which were mentioned as the incentives or 'push-factors' behind migration. This applies particularly to those parts of the population who are currently seen by policy makers at the centre of Ghana's recent successful development, namely the self employed entrepreneurs who are asserting themselves in a highly competitive economic and social environment. In view of a general lack of formal employment, self-employment is the most viable option for large parts of Ghana's increasingly urbanised population[23] – provided that there is some capital to start with. However, in a context of prevailing poverty (although to a lesser degree as compared to the situation in Mali) this capital is generally lacking. Access to credit is very difficult for people without collateral and/or the necessary connections to important social or political networks. This particularly concerns the rural population who are becoming increasingly marginalised. Being mobile in order to seek income opportunities through wage labour is thus a very common and socially acceptable strategy (for men) to deal with this problem. To do this 'away from home' has two advantages: As a stranger in a foreign environment, the migrant can do kinds of jobs that would be unacceptable in one's own community. In addition, to stay at a distance creates room for manoeuvring to accumulate some financial capital without the migrant being forced to distribute his income immediately according to local norms of reciprocity and solidarity (Jónsson 2008).

The overall positive image of male migration that is given in the following citation stands in sharp contrast to the images of female migration described above. It sums up the most popular and widespread assumptions concerning the benefits of male migration for individual as well as collective development. Contrary to the negative effects associated with women's labour migration, the effects of men's migration are seen as beneficiary on the level of the family and larger society, not just in economic but also in social terms, thereby vesting the successful return migrant with a particular moral authority. Not less striking is the contrast perceived on the level of individual development, where the visible signs characterising a male return migrant are interpreted in terms of health and physical well-being:

> "Honestly, migrants do a lot for their families. Firstly, they are often the main provider for their families. For this reason, *they command respect and authority* in their families. Even migrants who are younger in their

[23] The urbanisation rate in Ghana is, with almost 50%, higher and more diversified than in Mali (estimated around 30%). Decentralisation policies in Ghana therefore have to be dealing increasingly with developing urban livelihoods.

> families are accorded much respect and authority over older family members. Secondly, *migrants look very healthy and 'fresh'* in comparison with non-migrants. Thirdly, migrants are more able to provide lots of money for their families for various purposes. Thirdly, migrants often undertake bigger investments; for example, they are able to build very large houses that can house entire extended family members. […] In Ghana the most progressive business men […] are all returned migrants. […] So I am convinced that *migration is most beneficial for development.*" (Sub-contractor in the construction sector, potential migrant, Kumasi, 25.3.08, *author's emphasis*)

This means that creating better perspectives for self employment – a strategy strongly supported by German Development Cooperation in order to develop the Private Sector and create alternatives to unemployment – does neither contradict the dynamics of international labour migration nor will it relax migration pressures. At the same time the citation confirms the general assumption that this strategy can indeed be "most beneficial for development".

Conclusion: Challenges of Mainstreaming Migration into National Development Strategies

The examples from Mali and Ghana show, that there are growing national concerns and efforts to address the link between migration and development. Still, the existing initiatives in both countries have not yet been coordinated in a coherent national approach. Policy discourses in both countries are characterised by a dichotomisation of mobility patterns, separating internal and international migrations, spatial and social dimensions, male and female ways towards development. This discursive tendency is reproduced and strengthened through European policy initiatives vis-à-vis Africa and the Eurocentric vision of migration and development, such as exemplified by the agenda of the Migration Information and Management Centre (CIGEM) established as a pilot project by the European Commission in Mali. Although the migration-development nexus has been placed high on the global political agenda as well as in German public discourses, the attitude of German development cooperation is still rather ambivalent. This also reflects the fact that German development agencies do not constitute a homogeneous entity, but involve a lot of interfaces where the legitimacy of specific policies is negotiated. In spite of a legitimate and reasonable scepticism towards new globalised development 'mantras', however, the paper argues that it is necessary and worth while strengthening the discussion about the link

between migration and development, not least because actors on the national government as well as on the local community level in the respective partner countries have an acute interest in these interrelated dynamics. Moreover, it holds that this discussion should not be left to policy makers and activists alone, but be accompanied by empirically grounded social science and research. The latter is important not only in regard to changing gendered mobility patterns but also with respect to the prevailing gender bias of development discourses that are articulated in local arenas where the meaning of global development concepts is negotiated.

In order to understand how migration and development processes are connected to each other 'on the ground' it is essential to analyse the complex patterns of translocal and border crossing mobility, their social significance and the gendered norms and values attached to them (Dannecker 2009). Thereby the conceptual restrictions characterising migration discourses within the public sphere in Ghana and Mali as well as in the European context could be overcome. As the paper has shown, the inherent contradictions of these discourses are due to a strong normative bias depicting (internal, female) migration mainly as a problem, a rupture with and challenge to a supposed social normality. On the other hand, the narrow conception of the migration-development nexus prevailing in discourses which depict (international, male dominated) migration as a development potential, tends to focus exclusively on the flows of (financial, social, human) capital and ignores the complexity of development as a social transformation process. It can neither account for changing mobility patterns and the transformation of social spaces nor can it explain the multiple meanings of spatial and social mobility or clarify their gendered structuration.

The findings from the empirical research in Ghana and Mali show that the geographically bounded notions of development that characterise European policy discourses have to be questioned because they disregard the importance of translocal and transnational relations for the livelihood and coping strategies of local populations. Moreover, the idea that development in a certain territory can "fix the population" there refers back to a normative migration discourse. It cannot but fail to understand the social meaning of mobility and the morally ambivalent position of migrants as agents of change, which is particularly evident when considering the gendered dimensions of migration discourses and practices. The analysis of migration dynamics in the fields of German development cooperation in Mali and Ghana (with focus on decentralisation and rural development programmes) has shown that there

are divergent perceptions of female and male mobility. They reflect the persistence of social norms and values that are in contradiction to international development cooperation's efforts to promote women's rights and empowerment. Dominant public discourses concerning the feminisation of migration in both countries tend to stigmatise female migrants and highlight women's vulnerability, instead of acknowledging their agency. Recognising women as knowledgeable actors and agents of change has been the (obviously still unattained) aim of gender related development policies. In view of the prospects to mainstream migration into the national development and poverty reduction strategies it is important to stress the gendered structure of migration processes and their perceptions, as well as the gender specific dynamics of social transformation processes in general. Because with respect to the current policy debates there is reason to fear that the former intentions of gender mainstreaming will be completely forgotten when it comes to establishing schemes for the management of migration and development according to the so called African-European mobility partnership.

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SOCIO-CULTURAL AND POLITICAL CHANGE IN A TRANSNATIONAL GROUP: THE KONKOMBAS (GHANA-TOGO)

GIULIA CASENTINI

Introduction

This paper provides an analysis of Konkomba politics and political transition. It is an occasion to discuss three crucial aspects of postcolonial state-building in West Africa: the role of traditional institutions; the relationship between "tradition" and "modernity" – in other words, between chieftaincy and the state – and finally, the role of the international frontier in building identities and giving rise to political issues. Long labelled by 20th century anthropology as a "stateless" or "acephalous" society, but surrounded by centralized (chiefly) polities (Dagomba, Nanumba, Mamprusi, Gonja, Chokosi, etc.) that succeeded in imposing their control in the past, the Konkomba are settled across the northern section of the Ghana-Togo border. This frontier can be defined as porous, considering that the Konkomba border communities cross it constantly and regularly – we can say on a daily basis – for a variety of reasons, including market days and visiting relatives. On one hand, the boundary has became an important tool in regulating access to citizenship rights, thus creating a label that separates those included from those excluded. On the other hand, it is a crucial instrument in shaping the process of "chieftaincy-building" which the Konkomba in Ghana and Togo have been undergoing for the past century. Mobility is not only an essential aspect of Konkomba social and economic life, but also a significant source of political transition and change. This mobility follows two fundamental directions: north-south and cross-border.

The poorly resourced, pre-Sahelian savannah dominated region of Ghana and Togo where the Konkomba are located is vastly underdeveloped in comparison with the southern parts of the two countries. Moreover, this region is extremely composite, socially and politically, due to the presence

of different population groups with different languages and social and political structures[1]. Ghana and Togo Konkomba are major yam producers, and over the last three decades they have become the main providers of yam to the flourishing southern metropolitan markets of Accra, Kumasi and Lomé, acquiring substantial control over the flow of this crucial staple. This development has brought about important changes not only in Konkomba society, but also in its relationships with neighbouring groups. Indeed, they have taken away primacy in the yam market from traders belonging to the Dagomba and Nanumba communities, thus marking a main step in the process of economic, political and social emancipation from a history of Konkomba subordination to these powerful neighbours. In the process, violent "inter-ethnic" strife developed, and in 1994, the Northern Region of Ghana was devastated by a true civil conflict.

This north-south mobility is relatively recent, having begun in the 1970s-1980s. One of its most important outcomes has been the change in the Konkomba educational setup (see Bening 1990). The number of Konkomba students in southern schools and universities has increased dramatically for the past twenty years[2]. A "coming back" process has developed in which students' regular visits of to their villages and families contribute very effectively to enhancing consciousness about the importance of education and, crucial for the topic we are discussing, to challenging assertively their position of subordination to neighbouring groups—or better said, their chiefly establishments.

Another important aspect of Konkomba transition is cross-border mobility. The Ghana-Togo border came to know a dramatic change over the course of the 20th century. Before World War I, German Togoland included a large chunk of the current eastern part of Ghana. After the German defeat in the war, Togoland was divided into a French Mandate (current Togo) and a British Mandate, which joined the Gold Coast, now Ghana. (Bening 1999; Ali 1995; Schuerkens 2001). The Anglo-German frontier established in the 1880s-1890s became just little more than an

[1] In the Northern section of the contemporary states of Ghana and Togo are allocated a large number of different populations that belong to different linguistic groups: Mole-Dagbani (Dagomba, Nanumba, Mamprusi, Builsa, Dagari, Kusasi, Nankasi, Wala), Grusi (Kasena, Mo, Sisaala, Vagla), Gurma (Konkomba, Bimoba, Bassari, Tchamba, Tamberma) and Chokosi, Gonja, Nchumuru, Nawuri, Kabyé, Mossi (see Froelich & Cornevin 1963, Tcham 1994, Gyimah-Boadi & Asante 2003).

[2] Interview with T. N., President of the Konkomba Students Union, University of Legon, Accra 11/11/2008.

internal boundary in the British colony, while the international frontier (now with the French) moved further eastward. As far as our area is concerned, the Dagomba and Nanumba, which had been divided by the Anglo-German border, regained their unity. On the contrary, the new provision left the Konkomba split into two halves: one in the British territory and one in French Togo. This "mobile" frontier has strongly influenced not only the perception of the inhabited space (the Konkombaland), but also the shaping and re-shaping of the identity of the Konkomba as a group. The mobility connected with the presence of a shifting border has deeply affected the process of political transition involving the Konkomba and the neighbouring groups and, on a more general level, the conflict dynamics in the wider region.

The Konkomba were labelled by the colonial administrators and social anthropologists as "acephalous" or "stateless" (Cardinall 1927, Rattray 1932, Fortes & Evans-Pritchard 1940, Middleton & Tait 1970) due to the absence of a structured chieftaincy or any identifiable political leaders. According to E. E. Evans-Pritchard in particular, this type of non-centralised political organisation is characterised by the absence of an administrative system and judicial structures. All forms of authority and territorial control are exercised by clans and lineages, to the extent that these societies are called "segmentary systems". Though it is not easy to identify any "supra-clanic" political unit among the Konkomba (Skalnik 2002), it must be said that some individual figures hold considerable power: the elders (*onekpel*) representing the community, and the earth priests (*utindaan*), whose duty is to perform the rituals for preserving fertility and to regulate the use of land (Tait 1953, 1961, Zimon 1992).

But leaving aside all presumed or expected adherence to a "political system" as defined by anthropologists and coming to the current situation, however "acephalous" or "stateless" the Konkomba may be, we are compelled to note that the Ghanaian section of the group currently faces a main political challenge, which revolves, quite paradoxically, around achieving a fully recognised "traditional" chieftaincy in order to secure direct control over the land where they are settled.

A comparison between the different situations of the groups in Ghana and Togo can help address a number of questions concerning, for instance, the current Konkomba perception of the frontier; the role of trans-border mobility in shaping ethnic identities and in defining and re-defining access to citizenship rights; the different answers to the needs and demands of a tiny minority in transition formed in two countries with different colonial heritages and different current political systems (a parliamentary democracy in Ghana and an authoritarian system in Togo).

I will try to consider some consequences of these diverse political processes, while investigating the contemporary relationship between Ghana and Togo and the access to citizenship rights.In attempting to analyse these challenges and the changes the Konkomba community is undergoing, I will consider the effects of the different political processes involving the Konkomba in Ghana and Togo, and two different histories of access to rights deriving from citizenship. I have chosen to link archival research and anthropological fieldwork. My fieldwork-in-progress is based in the Ghanaian District of Saboba and the Togolese villages of Takpamba (in the Sansanne-Mango *Préfecture*) and Kidjaboun (in the Guerin Kouka *Préfecture*). These are significant nodes in the space inhabited by Konkomba, due to their important role as markets and to their key political position. Indeed, Saboba is the cradle of the Ghanaian Konkomba struggle to obtain a recognised chieftaincy, while Takpamba and Kidjaboun are *Préfectures* headquarters (*Cantons*) with fully recognised elected Konkomba "traditional" chiefs.

The Ghanaian situation

In the Northern Region of Ghana the existence of a Konkomba people became evident to public opinion after the outbreak of the 1994 civil war. To be truthful, that conflict was but the last and bloodiest episode in a long and never resolved dispute over land ownership. The 1994 war caused at least fifteen thousand deaths and more than one hundred sixty thousand internally displaced people (Van der Linde and Naylor 1999).

> Indeed, violent outbursts started taking place periodically in the 1980s between the "acephalous" Konkomba and the chiefly Nanumba and Dagomba (see Drucker-Brown 1988-89, 1995, Bogner 2000,; Brukum 2001, Skalnik 2002, Kirby 2003).

These clashes were caused by two main deeply correlated issues. The first was the dispute over ownership and privileged access to land involving Dagomba, Nanumba and Konkomba, the groups with the highest demographic density in the Northern Region of Ghana. The second was the Konkomba struggle to free themselves from political subjection to the "chiefly" groups and to achieve recognised political representation at the local and national levels.

A crucial tool in the Konkomba strategy of breaking the framework of subordination is the nomination of their own chiefs, which means they reject the authority of chiefs representing the Dagomba and Nanumba

rulers and setting up a completely independent paramount chieftaincy institution.

In so doing, Konkomba efforts at becoming politically viable pass through the negation of what a widespread convention – with a real debt to anthropological elaboration – indicates as a presumed, specific and intrinsic characteristic of their own "culture".

In this context it is clear that the clashes between these groups revolve around the difference in political systems and a perceived "eternity" and immobility of such difference. All of this generates and perpetuates an ethnic-based political interplay with deep roots in its colonial past. "Stateless groups" and "chieftaincy" are ambiguous terms that must be thoroughly addressed in their wide implications in order to understand conflict in Northern Ghana. Indeed, they are mobile categories subject to constant variations and redefinitions according to changing local political scenarios.

The dichotomy between chiefly structures and so-called stateless societies came under increasing challenge with the British colonial intervention. When asked by colonial officers about their relationship with non-centralised groups, the rulers of chiefly societies claimed to have control over them. British administrators divided the Northern Region into various areas, each under the influence of a chiefly group whose rulers were duly recognised as having authority over "acephalous" communities. The Konkomba were among them.

The colonial power was an external one. Its authority found expression in nominating chiefs (Amselle 1990), but most importantly in identifying which groups could provide chiefs. The implementation of colonial power played an important role in constructing identity, manipulating concepts of ethnicity (see Werbner & Ranger 1996: 274, Lentz & Nugent 2000) and exasperating the relations between the various groups. This was the beginning of the process which led to the 1994 civil war.

Close to the process of independence, which used such political tools s the concept of citizenship and equality of rights, some important topics started to involve the élite of all groups from the North, in particular the politically and economically subordinate populations: Who has the right to occupy and work the land? Who has the right to handle its use? And consequently, who is autochthonous in Ghana? Who can take advantage of citizenship rights?

Since independence, apart from the initial period in which K. Nkrumah[3] tried to control the powers of traditional chiefs, no relevant changes have

[3] First president of the Republic of Ghana, 1957-66.

been introduced in the political role of chieftaincy. As a matter of fact, the presence of two parallel institutional logics, the governmental and the traditional, has prevented the Konkomba from overcoming the dichotomy between "chiefly" and "stateless", relegating the latter to a subordinate position. It is interesting to see, in fact, that the Konkomba re-discuss their position and organise their political battle with the specific objective of obtaining recognition for a paramount chief within the framework of the "traditional" power structure, and not only with the objective of controlling the apex of district functions in the system of local government in the Republic of Ghana. This political choice suggests a strong inheritance from the British structuring of local authority that, as we can see, remained partially intact during the post-colonial period.

In reality, as far as the Konkomba are concerned, the only way to become politically viable is to comply with the model which is based on the chiefs' decision-making power.

At this point it would be useful to analyse M. Mamdani's intuition and to consider whether we are in the presence of a "bifurcated state" (Mamdani 1996), where there are, he points out, differences in political action and language between civil and so-called traditional societies. The first is concerned with rights and citizenship, while the latter is concerned with tradition and clients. In my opinion, the situation in the Northern Region of Ghana involves a much more complex area, where political debates about citizenship are discussed through the so-called traditional system, the chieftaincy, emphasising the problems related to the dichotomy suggested by Mamdani. In our case, it is clear that traditional power and civil power are two communicating elements within one setting, where the élite groups use now the first and then the latter in order to reach visibility and power on a local political level.

The Togolese context

In Togo the role of the chieftaincy institution has been very different from the position attributed to Ghana. According to the colonial politics of *assimilation*, the French tried to build administrative uniformity and refused to adopt any model of bureaucratic pluralism. Consequently, the chiefs nominated by the colonial authorities acted as simple administrative intermediaries in order to operate on the territory without having to pass through the traditional authorities. In this perspective, practically anybody could be elected chief, as long as he swore total loyalty as a future French citizen. The traditional chief was in charge of collecting taxes and duties, recruiting individuals for forced labour and soldiers for the French army

and maintaining a civil register. It is not surprising that the chiefs were not very popular and were in constant conflict not only with their superiors, but also with their "subjects" (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1998, Rouveroy van Nieuwaal 2000).

The French tried to modify this policy only after the Thirties, when the first signs of opposition to the colonial government became clear. They attempted to adapt the procedures for nominating traditional chiefs to the various local constitutions, even if in the majority of cases it was often too late for any real change. In reality, on the eve of independence the chiefs were not, as far as the French administration was concerned, only an instrument for dispensing orders, but they also played a different public service role and represented the French authorities. The strong opposition to the traditional *chefferie* found in the French colonies close to independence is therefore understandable (Gaiybor 1994, Rouveroy van Nieuwaal 2000).

In reality, along the way from colonial policy to emancipation, it was not possible to ignore or eliminate the chiefs' capillary role in local administrative management. They were legally and politically integrated into the new independent states. Togo is not an exception: the traditional chiefs are still officials who answer to the central authority.

As far as the Konkomba are concerned, this type of administration has had important consequences. Today, in fact, the Konkomba villages in Togo are run by a Konkomba chief recognised by the government. This position can be held by leaders with various political functions, such as Chef du Village, Chef du Canton and Chef du Préfecture. The first two functions are "traditional", which means they are elected according to the traditional system (therefore from among the elderly members of the village's major clan; for the Konkomba of Togo, the same clan that the chief belongs to). The third is an administrative function appointed directly by the central government. In this system the strong level of government centralisation is clear, so much so that the traditional functions and the government appointed function do not constitute two parallel systems of power management, as in Ghana, but they represent different levels of the same administrative system, with the government directly controlling the traditional chiefs.

In the Ghanaian case, characterised by administrative decentralisation, as well as in the Togolese, based on a strong political centralisation, the institution of chieftaincy seems necessary in order to have political representation. Carola Lentz's discourse on the vitality of the chieftaincy institution (2000) is indeed very contemporary also to our situation. Chieftaincy, in fact, seems to be a very effective instrument for representing

the peculiarities of local communities in both of the political systems considered so far, and it also highlights the difficulties for local governments in the handling of citizenship rights in remote, composite and conflict-ridden regions.
A Konkomba elder from a Ghanaian village in told me:

> "We don't care about chieftaincy, we don't understand why should we feed a chief and an institution which has nothing to do with us and which doesn't represent us. But if it is the only way to be politically represented, ok, we want the chieftaincy"[4].

At the same time a Konkomba chief in Togo explained to me:

> "Look, the French came here and declared that they only wanted to deal with our chief. So we had to choose one. The *chefferie* was imposed on us as the French needed it in order to administrate the region"[5].

The relevant point here is not only related to the fact that chieftaincy is still a successful model of political administration in both of the contemporary states of Ghana and Togo, despite their deep historical and political differences, but is also connected to the difficulties experienced by the two nation-states, in particular Ghana, in finding a system that would extend equal access to resources to all citizens.

Today the right to citizenship determinations, such as land access, is essentially based on the ability to demonstrate whether one belongs and has access to the local "traditional" political system (see Dorman et al. 2007). In Ghana and Togo alike, direct land management goes through the so-called traditional chiefs. This clearly shows that the system of central government cannot be considered without the "traditional" political institutions, due to the fact that both systems in contemporary African states, such as Ghana and Togo, are so interconnected and vital to political life. They are different parts of the same discourse that often flows smoothly, but on other occasions experiences clashes due to differences; nevertheless, today they can be considered neither separate nor autonomous dynamics.

[4] M. T., Lepusi village, Bimbilla (Ghana) 17/01/2006.
[5] B. M., Takpamba village, Sansanne-Mango (Togo) 03/05/2008.

Perspectives from the border

In the Northern Region of Ghana the relationship between different groups is strongly affected by subordination, excluding those populations without recognised chieftaincy institutions from the country's political and economic life. The anti-Konkomba propaganda is based on the principle of the non-autochthony of this so-called stateless people, said to come from "outside", in this case from Togo. Therefore, I would like to include a final reflection on the border and its mobility as important aspects in the process of shaping and re-shaping identities.In fact, in the stories told by the Konkomba, especially by the Ghana groups living a much more precarious political condition, there is an evident idealisation of the German colonial period, which has become a mythical past when all of the Konkomba lived together and were united, free to decide politically and economically and in some way immune from the control of their neighbouring groups. This is clearly a result of the Konkomba élite's activities toward constructing a strong group identity over the last twenty years. During the 1994 war, one of the most popular issues used by the educated leaders of the chiefly groups, both in the newspapers and in the public discourse, was based on the non-legitimate nature of the Konkomba claim to the land. The issue of the "non-autochthony" of a group that was "coming from Togo" has represented an element crucial to reinforcing this argument, or at least to causing more confusion about the possibility or impossibility of nominating a Konkomba paramount chief. During that particular moment the border became an important political tool. The shifting character of the Ghana-Togo border, in fact, permitted the anti-Konkomba propaganda to overlap different spatial levels and different time levels, with the aim of defining the Konkomba people as "non-autochthonous" in Ghana, owing to their "Togolese origins". The fact that the Konkomba lived under the same German colonial power until 1914 was up to then a political tool in the hands of chiefly groups, but then was used by the Konkomba elite to create a unified background. [6]

As far as I can determine, having worked with the Konkomba people at the border, there are currently two different levels of representation for this geographic frontier. The family and economic level of perception reveals a porous border, a reality that is constantly crossed by family relations (many people have brothers or sisters living on the other side in Konkomba villages) and the possibility of launching free economic

[6] See especially the activities of KOYA (Konkomba Youth Association) from 1977 to 2000.

exchanges between the various Konkomba markets in Ghana and in Togo. The Konkomba of Ghana and of Togo continue to consider themselves one people: they speak the same language and have constant contacts between the villages, creating a movement of men and goods that can be clearly seen on market day.

From an historical and political point of view, however, the perception of the border has different aspects. All the leaders and *utindaan* (earth priests) with whom I spoke in Ghana and in Togo are perfectly aware that, ever since the colonial period, the presence of the border and the political events experienced by the two different governments have had clear implications on their lives. One of the sub-chiefs of Saboba told me:

> "We are all brothers, this is true, but I really would not feel comfortable in Togo if I had to live there. You know, the English colonisation here and the French colonisation there, the varied local political management system that we currently have... all of this has contributed to the creation of two different realities and I feel much more comfortable here, my history is different, I am a Ghanaian Konkomba"[7].

This point has a dual importance. First of all, it clearly highlights the political construct that attempts to deny the Konkomba people's autochthony by attributing to them origins somewhere in Togo. The border, in fact, is used as a political tool. This leader's words lead us to believe that there is no point in tracing back the course of history in order to define ancestral belonging: what matters is that, in spite of all historical and political manipulations, the Konkomba are living inside the boundary of a state they want to be an integral part of. Secondly, this point allows us to reflect on the importance of the contemporary African state, which is clearly perceived as a real entity, not a mere structure brought by colonisation. In fact, during this African political season of explosive ethnic concerns, the Konkomba don't have the political goal of forming a "Konkombaland", uniting all the Konkomba people and bypassing the Ghana-Togo border. On the contrary, they want to have a space within the system of representation of the states they currently belong to.

Just as Nugent stressed in his work on the southern section of the Ghana-Togo frontier (Nugent 2002), I can say that even in this case a border community is not resistant to the state. Even though the Konkomba are transnational and always very mobile, they are still a group that wishes and aims to be recognised in the states where they live.

[7] E. K., Saboba (Ghana) 28/04/2008.

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LOCAL PERSPECTIVES ON TRANSNATIONAL RELATIONS OF CAMEROONIAN MIGRANTS[1]

MICHAELA PELICAN

Introduction

International migration is a crucial theme widely discussed in Cameroon, both privately and in public. While individuals have long been travelling, studying and living abroad, the vision of finding a better future elsewhere has gained prominence over the past fifteen years. It has become a popular conviction that Cameroon has little to offer to its economically, intellectually and – arguably – politically aspiring citizens. This development has to be seen in the context of the country's economic and political liberalisation of the 1990s. In line with structural adjustment programmes, government employment has decreased significantly, and with the devaluation of the FCFA in 1994, local buying power has drastically reduced (Konings 1996, Monga 1995). Moreover, the country's democratisation has been accompanied by an increase in corrupt and illegal practices (Eboussi Boulaga & Zinga 2002). As the civil unrest of February 2008 confirms[2], many Cameroonians are dissatisfied with the country's "cosmetic democracy" (Nyamnjoh 2002, see also Ngwane 2004). Thus, in the absence of valid prospects of a decent future at home, many Cameroonians have turned to alternatives elsewhere. Most have focused on the West, i.e. the US and Europe, where economic and educational opportunities are thought to be plentiful. However, with

[1] A revised version of the initial paper, now focusing on Cameroonians' migration to the Gulf States and China, has been published in the journal *African Diaspora* (Pelican & Tatah 2009).

[2] For reports on the upheavals responding to rising oil prices and the President's attempts to change the Cameroonian constitution, allowing him to stay in power unlimitedly, see e.g. BBC News, 29.02.08. Deadly violence rages in Cameroon (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7268861.stm), The Post (Buea), 11.04.2008. Cameroon: Amending the Constitution for One Man (http://allafrica.com/stories/200804110638.html).

increasing restrictions on migration to Western countries, alternative destinations within Africa and in the Near and Far East have gained currency.

Research Design and Theoretical Framework

The issue of Cameroonians' urge for international migration and the possible impact of Cameroonian migrants on their home communities was the subject of a collaborative research project involving three anthropologists and ten graduate students of the Universities of Zurich (Switzerland), Yaoundé and Douala (Cameroon).[3] The focus of the project was on transnational relations of Cameroonian migrants within the non-Western world, and the perception of these relations by members of the migrants' communities of origin. Transnationalism here refers to mobility across multiple national borders and to migrants entertaining regular and sustained contacts with individuals/communities in two or more nation states. Starting with the above hypothesis that – besides migration to the West – alternative destinations have gained currency, we centred our investigations on three regional clusters: While a first team focused on intra-African migration, a second engaged with the migration of Muslim Cameroonians to Arab countries, and a third researched Chinese-African exchange relations. All three teams collected data on the motives of migration, preferred destinations, networks of migration, the role of the family in the migration enterprise, communication and exchange relations between migrants and their relatives and friends at home, as well as the perception of migrants in their host and home countries.

The research team on migration to Arab countries further investigated the role of religion for Muslim migrants, while the China-Africa team collected additional information on Chinese presence in Cameroon. In order to diversify our findings, we conducted research in three locations,

[3] The project was conducted in Cameroon in July to September 2007 and entailed a one-week preparatory seminar, four weeks of field research and one week of data analysis. The project was generously supported by the Swiss National Science Foundation and the Laboratoire CASS-RT in Yaoundé. The project participants were Dr. des Michaela Pelican (University of Zurich), Dr. des. Peter Tatah (University of Yaoundé 1), Dr. Basile Ndjio (University of Douala), as well as Achu Owen Teneng, Afu Isaiah, Arrey Marie Tudor, Constance Chamu, Datidjo Ismaila, Deli Teri Tize, Delphine Nchufuan Fongo, Emmanuella Nsaise Maimo, Emuke Nnoko Ngaaje and Laurentine Mefire Mouchingam. Academic and technical support was provided by Prof. Dr. Antoine Socpa (University of Yaoundé 1, Laboratoire CSS-RT) and Francis Njilie (Laboratoire CASS-RT).

i.e. in the two major cities Yaoundé and Douala in francophone Cameroon, and in Bamenda and its rural surroundings in the Anglophone part of the country. In terms of methodology we worked with informal and structured interviews as well as e-mail communication with migrants living abroad. In total, we talked to approximately eighty informants, including migrants' relatives and friends, prospective migrants and return migrants. In researching exchange relations we also used photographic documentation. Due to the brief research period, all project participants were encouraged to capitalise on existing contacts with migrants or their family members. Unfortunately, our attempts at collecting quantitative data from foreign embassies and the Cameroonian immigration service yielded no valid information.

Transnationalism is a relatively new approach to the study of migration which was introduced in the mid-1990s by a group of female anthropologists working on migration from Asia and Central/Southern America to the United States (Glick Schiller et al. 1995, Glick Schiller 2004). Up to then, classical theories of migration have worked with the concepts of assimilation, ethnic pluralism and multiculturalism, thus focusing on various trajectories and frameworks of migrants' economic, legal and cultural integration into the receiving nation state (e.g. Handlin 1951). As classical migration research was informed by the political question of how to ensure migrants' loyalty to their chosen country of residence, most authors ignored the possibility of migrants' simultaneously entertaining social, economic or political relations with both their host and home countries. This latter perspective has been adopted by the proponents of transnationalism who study migrants' contacts and activities across national borders as well as the practicalities of multiple loyalties. Some are also concerned with the question of the degree to which transnational social spaces offer alternative economic, political and social avenues of which not only migrants but also sending and receiving states could benefit. A number of authors have argued that it is no coincidence that the new paradigm of transnational migration emerged in the 1990s, but reflects transformations in migration patterns, linked to new communication technologies, increased mobility and other aspects of globalisation (Portes et al. 1999, Vertovec 1999, 2004). While the majority of classical and contemporary studies have engaged with migration from the South to the North (i.e. the US and Europe), alternative developments have also been documented. For example, over the past twenty years, migration within Africa has increased significantly due to acute political and economic crises, resulting in waves of refugees, irregular migration and increased labour migration (Adepoju 2004, Whitwell 2002). Taking

into account these recent trends in migration and research, we considered it useful to focus on South-South migration and to contribute to the theoretical framework of transnational migration by adding an African perspective to the dominantly Euro- American approach. In the following we will summarise our major findings and relate them to existing research.

'Bush faller': Cameroonians' longing for international migration

Cameroonians' focus on international migration as the only way to a better future has been reflected in many conversations with informants: "Everyone wants to leave – if not legally, then illegally." "Those who are still here are the ones who haven't made it yet." Paradigmatic for the idea of a better life elsewhere is the concept of the bush faller (in Pidgin English, the lingua franca in Anglophone Cameroon). A bush faller is "someone who made it", i.e. who left Cameroon and now leads a good life in the West. As the etymology of the term shows, falling bush implies going to the bush to hunt, gather or harvest; i.e. one never returns from the bush with empty hands. But 'bush' has a double connotation: on the one hand, it is associated with wilderness and backwardness, on the other hand with places of enrichment – thus the US and Europe equally qualify as bush. While bush faller is a novel term, there have been earlier concepts, such as 'been to' which refers to elite members of the post-colonial era who, with the help of mission networks or personal connections, studied abroad, and returned to Cameroon to take up white-collar jobs with the government or international corporations. In comparing the two notions, a shift in ideals of personal success is evident: Whereas been to implies mainly educational achievement and is a term no longer in use, bush faller is associated with adventure and self-enrichment.[4] As most Western countries have fortified their borders with the aim of reducing the number of immigrants, migration to the US and Europe has become more difficult. Many Cameroonians, however, have not given up but have tried alternative, often irregular ways, some successfully, others with negative experiences[5].

[4] The term 'been to' and its vernacular equivalent woyayie (the one who "has arrived") are also used in Ghana (Martin 2005, van Dijk 2002). A similar notion to bush faller, yet with a much longer history, is Jaguar widely used in Western Africa (see Rouch 1954/1976, Stoller 1999).

[5] For example, Olivier Jobard has made a photographic documentation of the irregular migration of Kingsley, a young man from Limbe, Cameroon (available at http://www.mediastorm.org/0010_NST.htm.)

For a long time, migrants have emphasised economic and educational success in recounting their experiences at home; thus international migration until recently, has been considered in a positive light. Over the past years, however, new perspectives have emerged with much more critical and ambivalent undertones. For example, in August 2007 the Cameroonian feature film 'Paris à tout prix' (by Josephine Ndongo) opened nationwide. It tells the story of a young woman who ended up in Europe as a prostitute. Furthermore, a book entitled 'From dust to snow' (edited by Lydia and Wilfred Ngwa) was released and sold in Cameroonian bookstores, in which migrants (predominantly Cameroonian students) told of their positive and negative experiences of living and studying in the West. To which degree and in which ways these novel, critical perspectives have a lasting impact on local perceptions of international migration remains to be seen. While for many Cameroonian migrants the US and Europe remain their "dream destinations", their movements are not limited to the West. Neighbouring countries such as Gabon and Nigeria have long been established migration destinations, and over the past years, other African countries, such as South Africa, as well as destinations in the Near and Far East have gained currency.

Intra-African migration

Migration has been a relevant feature since the pre-colonial period in Africa in general and Cameroon in particular (e.g. Warnier 1985). Most studies, however, have focused on seasonal/labour/urban migration without paying much attention to national borders (e.g. Gluckman 1941, Konings 2001, van Velsen 1961). In line with the recent shift in migration studies, new research projects have emerged that investigate transnational migration within Africa and return migration from Europe to Africa (e.g. Hahn & Klute 2007, Martin 2005).[6] As some researchers have argued, southern Africa (in particular Botswana and South Africa) has become an attractive destination for labour migrants. As a result, discourses on xenophobia have increased in these countries (Crush & McDonald 2000,

[6] See also the African Migrations Programme of the International Migration Institute (IMI) in Oxford, UK (http://www.imi.ox.ac.uk/research/african-migrations-programme); the Special Issue on Africa of the online journal Migration Information Source of the Migration Policy Institute in Washington, US (http://www.migrationinformation.org/issue_sep04.cfm); the Transnational Migration, Return and Development in West Africa (TRANSREDE) research project of the Sussex Centre of Migration Research, UK (http://www.sussex.ac.uk/Units/SCMR/research/transrede/).

Lubkemann 2000, Nyamnjoh 2006). In Cameroon as well, South Africa has become one of the preferred destinations within Africa. Other targets are Gabon, Ghana, Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Many migrants adapt their choice of destination to their financial resources. Those who have enough money and connections to travel to the US or Europe would not choose an African country. South Africa features as a possible alternative, as it may offer opportunities to continue to the West. Cameroonians here are valued as skilled hairdressers and as outstanding in the intellectual domain. The neighbouring country Gabon features as an option for those with limited capital, and also runs an employment programme for English teachers. At the same time, Gabon has the reputation of a country in which Cameroonians are treated as foreigners with very limited rights. Thus African destinations are scaled: South Africa counts as the US of Africa, and migrants living there are considered 'bush fallers'. Other African countries, however, are less valued. Among the reasons for migration are unemployment, poverty, the search for educational opportunities, business, adventure, religious travel and family reunion. Although many migrants may be motivated mainly by economic incentives, we have to assume a mix of different and changing reasons.

The majority of migrants are young men and women, mostly from the middle or lower strata of Cameroonian society. As Fleischer (2006) has argued with regard to Cameroonians living in Germany, the family plays a significant role in the decision making and in the preparation of the journey. Similar to her findings, most of our informants confirmed that families generally support the migrants' endeavour both morally and financially. However, the preparatory phase is generally characterised by extreme secrecy and caution. In the early stage only the closest kin are informed, as migrants fear the possible interference of envious or mischievous relatives. Such interferences may be of practical or occult character, and may lead to the failure of the migration enterprise. Consequently migrants publicise their journey only when all preparations are completed, and the visa stamp is in the passport. Another reason for their secrecy is their apprehension that close relatives may disagree with their planned adventure. For many, a break with their family is unacceptable, and the blessings of their parents are absolutely necessary, as no one can be sure of his/her future success. Most migrants have regular contact with their relatives and friends at home. Frequently, however, they need time to establish themselves, before they initiate contact. Mobile phones are the most common way of communication, while letters and e-mails are used to a lesser degree. Mobile phone networks have been

operative in Cameroon since the late 1990s, and the latest mobile phone models are among the most wanted presents. A large number of migrants regularly send money or goods to Cameroon. Those who live in distant places normally take the opportunity of money transfer e.g. via Western Union. The distribution of the money is entrusted to a close relative or friend at home (often stationed in Douala or Yaoundé) with detailed instructions of the amount of money to be paid to each person or the goods to be bought. Conversely, migrants living in nearby countries request fellow Cameroonians travelling home to take money or goods along. Frequently, however, these items do not arrive at their intended destination. Thus many migrants prefer to save their presents, until they themselves travel home. A number of informants remarked that incessant or exaggerated requests for goods and remittances by members of the extended family are a nuisance and burden to migrants. Consequently, some limit their communication to a minimum. Similarly, Nyamnjoh (2005) reported that Cameroonians living in 'Whiteman Kontri' (the West) compare themselves to zombies – threatened by their relatives with witchcraft attacks and enslaved to work for the latters' enrichment without consideration for their personal wellbeing. It is important to remark, however, that exchange relations between migrants and their families are not one-sided. Frequently, relatives also support the migrants with goods, such as spices or food items, to give them a flavour of home. Moreover, they provide spiritual services, such as blessings, prayers, rituals, thanksgiving and almsgiving (sarika), to ensure their success and spiritual fortification. This spiritual support is considered crucial and is highly valued by its recepients.

Migration of Cameroonian Muslims to Arab countries

The migration desires and experiences of Muslim West Africans is a subject that merits further research. One body of literature related to this field is concerned with historical slavery and forced migration mostly from Eastern Africa to the Mediterranean and Arab world (e.g. Alpers 1997, Hunwick & Powell 2001, Lewis 1976). Another group of studies examines the pilgrimage of West African' Muslims to Mecca (hajj in Arabic) and the creation of new settlements along the pilgrimage route (e.g. Bawa Yamba 1995, Birks 1977). A third group of studies deals with contemporary transnat ional relations of Muslim migrants from West Africa, concentrating mainly on brotherhoods from Senegal and Mali and their connections to Europe and the US (e.g. Babou 2002, O. Kane 1997, Riccio 2001, Soares 2004). Among other things, these studies indicate that

the Islamic networks create a transnational public space which migrants employ for economic activities. Furthermore, they offer them social and moral support, and confirm their construction of a distinct West African Muslim identity.

In Cameroon there is no comparably strong and well organised brotherhood as, for example, the Murid order of Senegal. Nonetheless, Muslim Cameroonians participate in international migration, and among their favoured destinations are Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, in particular Dubai. The Gulf States constitute a region with a high demand for foreign labour (Whitwell 2002); and while most labour migrants there are from South Asia or the Middle East, opportunities also open up for West Africans. Our research team on Muslim migration to the Arab world concentrated its inquiries on the Briquetterie, considered the main Muslim quarter of Yaoundé. For many of its inhabitants, Arab countries are preferred destinations of migration. Primary motives for migrating to Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Libya or the Sudan include education, trade and prospective marriage partners. For example, the Saudi Arabian embassy offers stipends for Islamic Studies to African Muslims. While men may study in Saudi Arabia or other Muslim countries, women are offered stipends only for the International University of Africa in Khartoum. In Yaoundé there are a number of national and international Islamic networks which may assist the aspiring migrants in the preparations for their journey. One well established means of travelling is the pilgrimage to Mecca which, besides religious accomplishment, may offer also economic incentives. Many pilgrims take along trade goods which they sell during their journey and then return with souvenirs from Mecca (e.g. perfumes, clothes, decorative items), widely desired among the Muslim community in Yaoundé. The pilgrimage is one of the few travel options also available to single women. As mentioned by some informants, the latter may even aspire to find an appropriate husband during their journey. However, to which degree single African women may remain in Saudi Arabia and establish contacts with Arab men is an open question which requires further research in Saudi Arabia.[7]

In addition to Islamic networks, family relations play a significant role in the planning and execution of the journey. Unlike the case of intra-African migration, Muslim migrants seem less apprehensive and secretive in the planning of their travels, as the possibility of studying in Saudi Arabia or Sudan is seen as a blessing for the whole community.

[7] In an article on Nigerian sex workers, Onyeonoru (2004: 116) mentions that the Saudi Arabian authorities protested against the influx of Nigerian prostitutes into Saudi Arabia.

Frequently, the stipends offered to the migrants are too little to cover even their living expenses and, in the absence of work opportunities, they remain dependent on the financial support of their families. Thus many students have regular contact with their relatives and friends – mainly through letters, since mobile phones are not easily accessible or relatively expensive. Here as well, the support is mutual and pilgrims often act as carriers of presents in both directions. For Muslim students their stay abroad is limited in time; after finishing their studies, they are required to return home. Back in Cameroon there are only very few jobs where they can apply their acquired training. Some are lucky to be employed with Islamic organisations; others work voluntarily or for a small salary as Koranic teachers.

Chinese-Cameroonian exchange relations [8]

Substantial Chinese presence in Africa is a relatively recent but significant phenomenon. While academic interest in Chinese-African relations has started only recently, the body of literature is growing at a constant rate.[9] China has shown a growing interest in opening up new markets and investment opportunities and in accessing the energy resources of the African continent. In return, it has offered dept forgiveness and development assistance as well as strategic partnerships with African governments (Alden 2005, van den Looy 2006). The latter are equally interested in collaborating with China as they envision new business opportunities and ways to bolster regime stability. As Alden (2005) argues, several African countries have benefited from Chinese investment and tourism. Moreover, China's policy of 'cooperation free of political conditionality' has opened new avenues for those governments notorious for human-rights violations or engagement in armed conflict. Yet members of the public may perceive the presence of Chinese workers and entrepreneurs less positively than African governments. As Dobler (2007) has noted with regard to Oshikango in northern Namibia, locals have responded to the rapid expansion of Chinese enterprises with discourses of xenophobia. Increased Chinese presence can also be noted in Cameroon, mainly in the country's major cities Yaoundé and Douala. Many Chinese are entrepreneurs running shops with Chinese import

[8] China here refers to mainland China.

[9] The African Studies Centre (ASC) in Leiden put together a web dossier on China-Africa relations, available on their library homepage (http://www.ascleiden.nl/Library/Webdossiers/ChinaAndAfrica.aspx).

goods, selling Chinese medicine or operating Chinese restaurants. Some of the latter are exclusively for Chinese customers and also offer opportunities to Chinese sex workers (Ndjio 2009). Others engage in the agricultural sector, growing vegetables, raising chickens or fishing; their products are destined primarily for Chinese customers in Cameroon. A third group are workers in Chinese construction companies, employed to build roads and public buildings, such as the new football stadium in Yaoundé.

Compared to the business opportunities Chinese encounter in Africa, their country offers little migration incentives to Cameroonians. Nonetheless some have moved to China and work as translators or coordinate trade with African customers. Over the past years there has been a demand for English teachers, which motivated Anglophone Cameroonians to move to China. This option, however, has turned out to be ambiguous. Many of the teachers are sent to rural areas where they have to work long hours for little money. In addition, they face considerable communication problems, as only few made an attempt to learn Chinese before leaving Cameroon. Some informants also complained about latent racism. In China an American accent is in demand and so they saw it necessary to pretend to be Afro-Americans. But although China is considered "no bed of roses", it is seen as offering the possibility of moving on to the US.

Local perspectives on Chinese-Cameroonian relations are ambivalent. Many parents support the decision of migrants, hoping for their economic success in China. Concurrently, the strong presence of Chinese and their goods in Cameroon has produced frequent criticism, particularly by Cameroonian businesspeople who see their interests endangered. Cameroonian consumers, as well, have expressed their dissatisfaction; on the one hand, the Chinese offer a wide range of goods at all prices, so "there is something for every purse". On the other, the quality of the cheap items is often so poor that Cameroonians complain about being dumped with substandard goods. Finally, the attempt of Chinese individuals to enter the informal sector has raised criticism and incomprehension among Cameroonians. Many are wondering, why these 'whites' (Asians as well as Europeans and Americans are considered 'whites' on the basis of their skin complexion) debase themselves to such a degree that they even sell homemade cakes in the streets. Seemingly, China must be even poorer than Cameroon. This consideration contributed to China's decreasing attraction for Cameroonian migrants, as compared to other destinations in Africa, the Near East and the West.

Conclusion

This paper represents the results of a research project to gain a basic overview over Cameroonians' ideas and experiences of international migration, particularly with regard to South-South migration, and to identify subject areas that merit further research. One such area concerns the relevance of spiritual or occult aspects of migration. As outlined above, the preparatory phase of migration is characterised by secrecy and caution due to migrants' apprehension of practical or occult interferences. Yet the threat of occult aggression also remains valid during the migrants' stay abroad. Relatives play a significant role in this regard, both as possible sources of occult aggression and in providing spiritual protection. In-depth research into the ambivalent role of the family and practices of secrecy surrounding the migration enterprise may prove informative. As concerns the study of exchange relations between migrants and their families, there has been a one-sided focus on remittances and goods sent by migrants, while the economic, moral and spiritual support provided by relatives and friends has largely been neglected. We suggest that both directions of exchange relations ought to be considered. Moreover, researchers of transnationalism concern themselves with national frameworks of migration. In this respect, we believe detailed research into the migration of Muslim Africans to Arab countries will yield valuable information. In particular, researchers may investigate the motives of Muslim governments for supporting African students, as well as the impact of the migrants' experience and Islamic training on ideals and realities at home. Finally, as concerns research on Chinese-African relations, this is a vibrant field – particularly for anthropologists, as the majority of observations, so far, have been contributed by economic and political scientists. On the basis of our own experiences, we see the potential for a very fruitful collaboration of Chinese and African social scientists, thus integrating both perspectives.

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