Bush Bound

YOUNG MEN AND RURAL PERMANENCE IN MIGRANT WEST AFRICA

Paolo Gaibazzi

Bush Bound

Bush Bound

Young Men and Rural Permanence in Migrant West Africa

By
Paolo Gaibazzi

berghahn
NEW YORK • OXFORD
www.berghahnbooks.com

First published by
Berghahn Books
www.berghahnbooks.com

First paperback edition published in 2018

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Gaibazzi, Paolo, author.
Bush bound: young men and rural permanence in migrant West Africa / by Paolo Gaibazzi.
pages cm
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-1-78238-779-4 (hardback: alk. paper) –
ISBN 978-1-78238-780-0 (ebook)
1. Gambia–Rural conditions. 2. Young men–Gambia–Social conditions. 3. Rural-urban migration–Gambia. 4. Rural development–Gambia. I. Title.
HN834.G35 G34 2015
307.2'4096651–dc23

2015002991

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-78238-779-4 hardback
ISBN 978-1-78533-827-4 paperback
ISBN 978-1-80539-022-0 open access ebook

https://doi.org/10.3167/9781782387794

This open access edition is made possible with the financial support of the University of Bayreuth and the Heisenberg Programme of the German Research Council (DFG, funding id. 439753334).

For my parents,
migrants and stayers

Contents

Illustrations

Figures

Table

Acknowledgements

This book has been a long journey, in which I travelled to, and stationed myself at, various sites of research and academic work. Originally conceived and undertaken at the 'Riccardo Massa' Human Sciences Department, University of Milan-Bicocca, this journey has traversed several other institutions. In addition to the Milan-Bicocca departmental unit in sociocultural anthropology led by Prof. Ugo Fabietti, my sincere thanks go to my colleagues at the Department of Anthropology and Philology, University of Latvia, and at the Centre of African Studies, ISCTE, in Lisbon. I am grateful to have received from the Zentrum Moderner Orient in Berlin the opportunity to write up the book in such an intellectually stimulating environment. In the Gambia, the National Centre for Arts and Culture (NCAC) hosted me as a visiting researcher and offered professional advice on archival material. Field research was financed by Unidea Foundation via CREAM (Milan Centre for Ethno-Anthropological Research) and the University of Milan-Bicocca; the Ethnological Mission in Benin and West Africa (MEBAO) of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Germany's Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF, funding code 01UG0713). The author is, however, entirely responsible for the content of this publication.

I wish to express my deep gratitude to Prof. Alice Bellagamba for her unstinting support, valuable advice and illuminating insights throughout this journey. Numerous people have provided critical commentary on earlier versions of this work or parts of it; in particular, I gratefully acknowledge: Riccardo Ciavolella, Knut Graw, Claudia Mattalucci, Laura Menin, Filippo Osella and Pierluigi Valsecchi; and three anonymous reviewers selected by Berghahn. Jonah Wedeking and Nigjar Marduchaeva helped me with editorial issues, while Penny Ann McKeon and Theo Barry-Born provided linguistic assistance; although any flaw is solely the responsibility of the author, I thank them for their help. I also offer this book as a humble homage to a passionate scholar and teacher, the person who taught me what anthropology is a long time ago: Umberto Primo Censi.

Countless persons have contributed to my research in the Gambia. For hospitality I warmly thank the Sidibe family in Serekunda and the Sumbunu family in Sabi. My hosts – Alhaji Bakari Sidibe and Alhaji Suleyman 'Junkung' Sumbunu – have not only provided assistance with logistical and research-related issues; they have been true mentors in my fieldwork. I am deeply saddened by the premature loss of Junkung and my inability to show him the product of our innumerable conversations. May the pages that follow bear memory of this exceptional man and his advice for the future generations of Sabinko. I am most indebted to Musa Sumbunu, Amara Kaira and Alagie BK Sillah, my closest collaborators and friends; without them I would not have been able to continue my fieldwork. I also thank Facuru Sillah, Ibrahima Silla, Billay Tunkara, Fatumata Kamaso and Haji Sumbunu for translating some of the audio material. The Sabi branch of Youth With A Mission (YWAM) has provided me with invaluable support and information; a special thank goes to Erik Brohaugh for his assistance with maps and data. It would be simply impossible to name and acknowledge all the people who have helped me during my time in the Gambia, nor can the few pages that make up this book do justice to the wealth of their knowledge and the depth of their insight. To all the Sabinko and all the Gambians who shared their ideas with me and spared their time for the sake of my research, I simply say: *nuwari moxo siri*.

A journey is above all a human endeavour. I am therefore grateful to my friends in Italy and elsewhere for making it a more humane task through their warmth and their cheerful presence… and for trying to keep me away from my laptop from time to time. I could not have pursued the profession of an academic without the unfailing support of my family, my parents, Francesco and Giuseppina, and my siblings, Lisa and Nicola, as well as their partners and their beautiful children. Words cannot suffice to thank them for what they have done for me; I carry their values, love and encouragement with me during my peregrinations. Finally, appearing at the end of this journey, Imke has not only helped me in completing this manuscript; she has taught me what walking together along the path to the future means.

Notes on Transliteration

In transcribing Soninke terms, I generally follow the spelling convention in Ousmane Diagana's (2011) dictionary, except for accents and the '*ñ*', which will be substituted by '*ny*'.

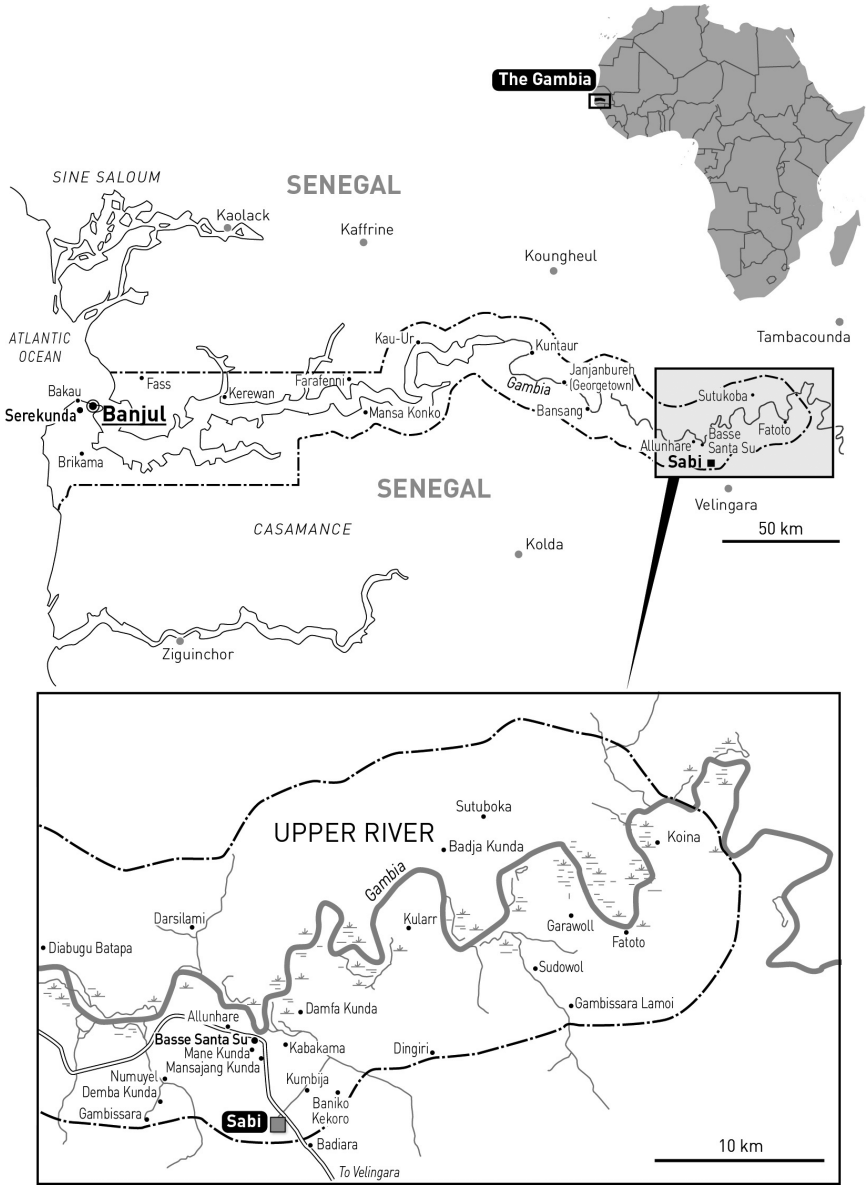
The names of all people and places are spelled according to this convention, except when these are more widely recognized by another designation, or when people explicitly asked that a different spelling be used for their name. Particular cases of Soninke consonants are:

- *c* – pronounced as *ch* in 'church';
- *x* – pronounced as a sort of guttural *r* (or *kh*); when preceded by *n*, it is pronounced as *k*
- *ŋ* – nasal and guttural sound, approximately as in *ng*
- *n*y – pronounced as the *ñ* in Spanish (e.g., España)

Please note that some Soninke words in this book are spelled in a slightly different way from Diagana's (2011) dictionary, which is based on the Soninke spoken in Mauritania; differences reflect Gambian variations as I understood them. The Gambian Soninke tend to pronounce the *f* as an *h*, yet I did not write *h* in place of *f* unless specific words require an *h* (e.g., *hoore*).

Abbreviations

APRC	Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
GCU	Gambian Cooperative Union
GGU	Gambia Groundnut Corporation
GOMB	Gambia Oilseed Marketing Board
GPMB	Gambia Produce Marketing Board
PPP	People's Progressive Party
SYC	Sabi Youth Committee
SYDO	Serahule Youth Development Organization
URR	Upper River Region (formerly Upper River Division)
VDC	Village Development Committee
YWAM	Youth With A Mission



Sabi, Upper River Region, The Gambia

Introduction

From Ploughing the Sea to Navigating the Bush

> Everything passes and everything remains,
> but our task is to pass,
> to pass making trails,
> trails on the sea.
>
> Antonio Machado, *Proverbios y Cantares*
> (my translation)[1]

Exodus is among one of the all-time favourite tropes invoked to narrate epochal events, whether historical or mythical. In 2006, an upsurge of undocumented boat migration from the coasts of Mauritania, Senegal and the Gambia to the Canary Islands took Europe by surprise. Images of dramatic arrivals and rescue operations on the high seas flooded the European media, spreading moral panic about invasion as well as humanitarian pleas to improve the conditions of young men allegedly so desperate as to gamble their lives in pirogues originally built for coastline fishing.[2] No sooner had European and West African governments begun to deploy hard and soft power to prevent migrants from taking to the sea than skyrocketing food prices in the world market exacerbated the fears of more departures, especially from communities surviving in a barren ecology and a long-neglected agricultural sector. The governments of Senegal and the Gambia, among others, responded to this double crisis by offering the prospect of return to

the land for youth who had allegedly become disaffected towards farming and enchanted by the dream of Europe as a kind of Eldorado. Moreover, believing that improving food security would contribute to securing borders, the European Union and some of its member states have since financed several projects in West African agriculture to provide youths with an alternative to emigration. As a result, curbing or managing migration from Africa to Europe became partly wedded to a rhetoric of stemming the exodus from the African countryside and improving the lot of the rural poor, thus echoing the increasingly popular belief among donors and development organizations that, depending on the viewpoint, either agriculture will save young people or young people will save agriculture (Sumberg et al. 2012: 2).

Amidst such growing political and popular concerns, scholarly work has attempted to recast the premises on which the relation between West African youth and migration is assessed. While some scholars have unveiled the 'inconvenient realities' behind the 'myth of invasion' of African migration to Europe (de Haas 2008b), others have moved further 'beyond exodus' as a narrative of migration 'by repositioning the analysis on Africa's side' (Bellagamba 2011: 12, my translation). Historical and ethnographic research has proved especially useful for retrieving the background of migration to Europe (Schmitz 2008), as well as that of many other, often more significant, travel routes chosen by West Africans in order to craft and supplement their rural livelihoods.[3] Even where the aspiration to leave for Europe appears to express directly the plight of young people dispossessed of a dignified future, empirical studies have revealed despair and dreams of Europe to be too simplistic an explanation for making sense of their fantasies, let alone their practices, of travel.[4]

Highlighting the historical depth and social pervasiveness of mobility in West Africa has done much to recapture it as a properly West African trajectory. However, in addition to describing what sets young people on the move, the present circumstances call for an explanation of why and how they stay at home. The growing agrarian agenda in Europe's migration management meets and revitalizes concerns with a rural exodus that have periodically haunted West Africa, at least since colonial times.[5] Albeit largely rhetorical in nature, this governance discourse betrays a will to normalize stasis (Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013: 184), acting as if rural dwellers had no willingness or no power to manage emigration on their own terms and were therefore in need not simply of better resources but also of external tutelage in order to persuade their young people to remain farmers. And this is despite the fact that in many places where leaving for greener pastures has become a default option, more young people still persist in living on the land than the bewildering economic and ecological conditions of agricultural production and survival

would lead one to believe. If scholarly research can help in redressing distorted views of exodus and, more importantly, regaining a fuller picture of migrant West Africa, one possibility is therefore to begin by asking not what makes young people jump on a boat to plough the high seas but whether and how they will stay put and manage to navigate the vagaries of the savannah.

This book tells a different story of West African migration, one that begins not with departures and arrivals but with permanence. It seeks to bring a different perspective to public and especially to scholarly debates on migration by describing how young men stay put in a Gambian village. The village is Sabi, a Soninke-speaking community of about five thousand inhabitants in the upper Gambia River valley, a place of bygone agricultural prosperity and momentous but forestalled international emigration. In Sabi, men grow up with a herd ambition to travel, to work in the West and do business in a number of other countries across the world; they dream of making money and sending it home, and of cosmopolitan discoveries in foreign cultures. As the legal right to travel to the outer world has, however, become highly restricted in recent decades, fewer and fewer of them manage to emigrate. Excluded from the circuits of global mobility, and pressurized by daunting economic prospects at home, Sabi's young men neither venture out to sea nor enthusiastically embrace the Gambian government's clarion call to go 'back to the land'. Many would rather 'sit' (*taaxu*) in the village and seek recognition as 'stayers' by holding the fort while their brothers and relatives are away. As this ethnographic study shows, therefore, far from being solely en route to elsewhere, young men in Sabi are 'bound to the bush' in a double sense, as they are farming in lieu of travelling and are under a social and moral injunction to continue being farmers and villagers.

By shifting attention from sea- to bush-bound young men, this book sheds light on the creation of stillness amidst movement. Too often have scholars been solely preoccupied with explaining emigration and following the migrants, thus relegating stayers to the background of social analysis and taking their settled lives for granted. In a context in which men's livelihoods have been so peripatetic and village life so permeated by flows originating from elsewhere, staying in Sabi has little of the flavour of a bucolic attachment to place; nor can the sedentary lives of young men be thought of as a normal state of being, as if it were prior, external and diametrically opposed to migration. By contrast, this study suggests ways in which we can conceive of and investigate sedentary livelihoods as an integral element of migration. It disturbs the received views of immobility as a static, natural or residual category and instead shows how movement and stillness combine to animate social life.

At stake in the making of sedentary life is the very foundation of rural life-worlds. Since the 1990s, scholars have registered unrelenting rates of de-agrarianization in Africa, whereby peasants facing economic and ecological insecurity have opted for off-farm occupations, including labour migration (Bryceson and Jamal 1997). In Sabi, constraints on mobile livelihood strategies raise the opposite concern; namely, how subjects who would have normally left for foreign countries become, in contrast, involved in reviving the peasantry. Through the lens of immobility, age and masculinity, *Bush Bound* places social reproduction at the centre of its anthropological inquiry. It shows how the young generations of rural dwellers follow the bush trails walked by their family and village predecessors, striving to create agrarian futures in a space and time where the resources for renewal are increasingly found and diverted elsewhere.

This ethnography consequently provokes reflection on the meaning of being and becoming a migrant and a peasant in twenty-first century West Africa and in the world at large. Upon hearing the title of this book, a colleague wittily confessed that she thought of George W. Bush and the way his politics constrained the lives of young West Africans. In a way, she was right. The former President of the United States is the iconic figure of the post-9/11 world order, the leader of a war on terror whose majority of victims have been ordinary Muslims living in poor countries rather than shrewd terrorists. The securitarian paranoia emanating from the neo-con circles in Washington was eagerly taken up by European governments, and eventually appeared in spectacular form both off and on the coasts of Senegambia when the EU decided to bring boat migration to a halt. The fieldwork for this book was mainly conducted between 2006 and 2008, during the peak of boat migration and the rhetoric on normative agrarianism. In the vicissitudes of young men living in a globally remote village in West Africa, one can vividly sense the powerful forces directing this historical moment. Sabi young men forge their trajectories in a system in which free-market capitalism coexists side by side with illiberal restrictions on the right of movement. In this Janus-faced scenario, they discover that as farmers, they are poor competitors in a world market dominated by corporate capital, and as migrants they are second-class world citizens unworthy of being issued a visa to the West on suspicion of wishing to overstay their allotted time. The implications of this global edifice of power of which the Bush administration was an architect might not be felt, however, solely in the form of exclusion and marginalization. In the bewilderment of young men who remain in Sabi one sees the less visible mechanisms that strain sedentary life as a constitutive element of migration. Sabi was never the recipient of an agricultural project from the EU, nor the main target of any other concrete means of persuasion to

remain on the land. Yet families organized, in largely autonomous ways, both movement and stillness to the extent that, as will be shown, some members might have to withhold their dreams of emigration in order to stay. Paradoxically, therefore, together with arrivals, the global politics of mobility also curtails and overburdens self-managed modes of creating and maintaining rural permanence.

Soninke Migration and the Young Men Who Stay Put

To the reader familiar with the region, associating Soninke men with non-migration might sound like an oxymoron. For centuries, people of Soninke ethnicity have been represented as eager travellers with a flair for long-distance trade. Soninke speakers featured prominently among the itinerant Muslim traders (*juula*) who travelled between the lower Gambia River and the Niger Delta, connecting the Atlantic and the trans-Saharan commercial systems, during the age of the slave trade (sixteenth to nineteenth century), forming settlements along the Western Sahel–Sahara frontier, in the upper Senegal River valley and later in the upper Gambia River (Bathily 1989; Manchuelle 1997). 'The Serawoollies [Soninke]', wrote British explorer Mungo Park (1816: 62), the first European to travel to the interior of Senegambia at the end of the eighteenth century, 'are habitually a trading people'. Numerous British and French travellers echoed Park's observation over subsequent decades, variously describing the Soninke as 'a trading nation', 'the peddlers of West Africa' or even as the 'Jews of West Africa' (see Pollet and Winter 1971: 111–13), the last one being a label which has curiously remained over time and is occasionally used by contemporary Gambian Soninke as well. Little of the stereotypical image of the rooted, static African so recurrent in colonial accounts was reserved to the Soninke, whom some Europeans and autochthones alike sometimes depicted as a distinctive *ethnie migratrice* (cf. Amselle 1976: 19; Jónsson 2007: 9).[6]

Although anthropologists have since disputed essentialist representations of Soninke ethnicity and migration, mobility has remained at the heart of scholarly research on the Soninke (but cf. Adams 1977, 1985). As one of the first and largest sub-Saharan immigrant groups in France, the Soninke from Upper Senegal, a borderland between Mauritania, Senegal and Mali, have been one of the most thoroughly researched case studies (see, among others: Quiminal 1991; Timera 1996). In his comprehensive historiography on Soninke labour diasporas, François Manchuelle (1997) showed Soninke migrants to be not mere pawns pushed by poverty and pulled by industrial capitalism but willing subjects building on a century

of labour migration. By travelling, Soninke men have found the money to support their families, together with opportunities to achieve maturity and find new cultural experiences (Timera 2001a). So tight is the relation between migration and male emancipation that some scholars have described emigration as a rite of passage for Soninke young men (Konate 1997: 8; Timera 2001a: 41; Jónsson 2007: 50).

The situation in Sabi strikes one as no particular exception to what has been observed in other Soninke-speaking milieus. France is not as popular a destination as it is among the eastern communities, but trade and labour migration to other European and worldwide destinations has been equally ongoing for decades. From the rice the villagers buy with remittances, to the brick houses in which they sleep, to the schools and clinics that migrant associations have developed, most aspects of everyday life have a faraway origin. Boys grow up in households where grandparents, parents and elder brothers have been or still are dispersed across Africa, Europe and North America. Before their eyes are the success stories of diamond traders, African art dealers and businessmen selling Asian products, as well as of hundreds of men who work for a salary in Europe and the United States. Virtually all young men wish to follow in their footsteps, and in their daily lives spend much time thinking about how they can reach, or who can help them to reach, the *terenden-gunne* (lit. travel-bush), as the elsewhere is sometimes called, rather than about farming in the actual bush (*gunne*).

To be sure, regardless of ethnic background, migration has been historically a well-worn livelihood option along the Gambia River. In addition, desires of migration have percolated through Gambian society since the 1980s, as both rural and urban dwellers, poor and elite families, have responded to a spiralling economic and political uncertainty by sending their children to study and work abroad. But in the eyes of many Gambians, few other inhabitants of the valley have matched Soninke men's degree of commitment to international travel. Stories of Soninke who, despite lacking any formal education, make headway in Western countries, run complex transnational enterprises and manage assets worth thousands, if not millions, of Euros, circulate in the Gambia as simultaneously compelling and puzzling examples of the cosmopolitan spirit and economic acumen of this prosperous and pious minority who make up only 8 per cent of the population and are known by Gambians as the Serahule.[7] With the exception of business, very few young adults in Sabi have indeed opted for professional careers in the Gambia. Raised as farmers and as Quranic students until they were strong and sensible enough to embark on a quest for money abroad, they have no hope, let alone ambition, of joining the civil service or doing white collar jobs.

Due to the extent to which survival, prosperity and respectable manhood rest on journeying away from the village, the current restrictions to the right of movement have posed a severe threat to Soninke livelihoods and masculinities. In her study of a Malian Soninke village with a long-standing history of migration to France, Gunvor Jónsson (2007, 2012) has given voice to young men who, weaned on a culture of migration but unable to secure a Schengen visa, fail to experience progress along the path to social adulthood. Those who remain at home can even be stigmatized as being lazy, immature and cowardly.

In the light of such findings, how can one then possibly speak of 'staying put' as a dynamic process? As in Mali so too in the Gambia, Soninke men certainly mourn their lack of opportunities to reach the travel-bush (*terenden-gunne*); for them, staying in the village is often an existence dominated by unemployment and abject immobility (Chapter 4). But this is only one, albeit important, perspective on immobility. Understanding the 'bush' or 'full house of variation' (Ferguson 1999: 78) of the practices and experiences of staying behind in rural Soninke settings requires decentring outmigration as the sole horizon of possibility and gaining a broader and deeper understanding of what forging a settled life has meant in a context simultaneously founded on roots and routes (Clifford 1997). Men's migratory aspirations tell us what they want to achieve, and eventually what they want to leave behind, but not what else they actually do and attain at home. In Sabi during the late 2000s, going to the village bush included farming as well as a plethora of activities, relations, affects and ethical sensibilities that organized social life around agrarian livelihoods, and which in turn sustained and were sustained by travellers. In the absence of migrant brothers, young men looked after the family, kept an eye on their wives and taught their children to respect the elders and to become good Muslims and hard-working farmers. They kept in touch with household members abroad and reminded them to send money when supplies were short, while they worked harder when things were tough abroad. Indeed, staying often actually involved spending a few months of the dry season away from the village in order to bring back some cash. Remaining in Sabi meant participating in the etiquette of greeting and gossiping, of visiting and spending time with kith and kin, and thus weaving the fabric of local sociality that was extended to members in the diaspora.

My point is not simply that there is more to men's lives than migration, but that there is more to Soninke migration too. It would be reductive to dismiss what non-migrant young men do in their villages as activities and roles into which they were simply born and raised. Equally unsatisfactory would be to view them as the residual element of a highly selective

emigration process, as if it involved no active stance on the part of those who remain home. What rather emerges from narratives and practices of emplacement in migrant-sending Sabi is a plurality of trajectories that draw on both consolidated and novel ways of organizing an agrarian life *within* migration.

'Sitting': Creating and Inhabiting Immobility

In conversations about *terende* (travel) – which is generally understood as journeying away from the home village and, more specifically, from the home country – Soninke speakers often use the verb *taaxu* to refer to staying behind or to stopping travelling, as when a man returns from abroad in order to settle at home. Literally meaning 'to sit', *taaxu* has a wealth of other figurative meanings. In its transitive form (*taaxundi*), 'to sit' refers to the founding of a settlement, in particular of a village or a household. Other meanings of *taaxu* include a more metaphorical sense of becoming established in a social position; a chief succeeding to the throne, a state president swearing the oath of office or a man becoming a household head are all said to be 'sitting'. There is probably a correlation between this meaning of *taaxu* and the vital significance of sitting – as an act of taking a seat – in social life. Visitors to the region must certainly have noted the seating platforms at street corners or under mango trees, where male elders spend time chatting and settling palavers. Similar platforms are found in or around family houses, where women and the younger men gather to socialize. No conversation usually begins until people are invited to take a seat. Offering a chair or a place on a mat to a visitor is an act of hospitality and respect, the acknowledgment of the social presence of the guest and the first step towards establishing or continuing a social relation with him or her. Various aspects of everyday and ritual life – negotiations, ceremonial proceedings, storytelling and gatherings of various sorts – similarly involve sitting, and sitting together (*taaxu doome*), as an embodied form of social participation and production (cf. Cooper 2012).

The semantic plasticity of the verb *taaxu*, or 'sitting', constitutes a precious meta-analytical resource for investigating the different ways of staying put as a young man in a migrant-sending place like Sabi. It conveniently echoes the Latin root of sedentariness, the verb *sedere*, which has both spatial and social connotations: to sit, occupy an official seat, preside, be fixed or settled (*Online Etymology Dictionary* 2014). Its meaning also ranges from becoming spatially emplaced to becoming socially established or acknowledged, and so I use *taaxu* to refer to staying put as an act

of positioning oneself in a field of (im)mobility and the process of inhabiting that position. To 'sit' in Sabi is to establish relations with both close and distant people, and to strive to be socially recognized as someone who is staying put for a legitimate purpose. By exploring the polysemy of 'sitting', this book seeks to unravel the 'multiple modalities' and 'valences' of stillness (Bissell and Fuller 2010: 6, 11) that constitute social life in a valley of rural permanence and emigration. It seeks to capture the powerful forces that shape not only movement but also settlement, and compel young men to understand their lives in sedentary terms. Attending to the meaning and experience of 'sitting', I unearth complex trajectories of their becoming stayers, not necessarily as definitive accomplishments, but as positions endowed with particular qualities of being, relational potentialities and capacities to act.[8] The chapters in this book document this process of positioning in different spheres of social life in which men's abilities as 'sitters' are variously inculcated, elicited and harnessed as well as doubted, despised or simply disregarded.

This book therefore diverges from most accounts of migration and mobility, for by foregrounding 'sitting' it concentrates attention squarely on immobility. It focuses (primarily) on immobility in relation to international migration roughly in the same way that it dwells on *taaxu* in relation to *terende*. While this focus on mobility across national borders stems from empirical considerations, namely the salience of *terende* for Sabi young men, I do not necessarily subscribe to typological distinctions between forms and scales of migration. On the contrary, I often use the term migration in a loose fashion, for, as I purport to show, similar sociocultural logics often undergird different spatial behaviours in Sabi, and even straddle the divide between sedentary and mobile livelihoods (Chapter 2). Immobility denotes, in this respect, not an absolute but a relative condition: absence of international movement does not exclude mobility in different circuits and scales, some of which are analysed in this ethnography (esp. Chapter 3). However, my objective is not to describe all possible forms of mobility and immobility in Sabi, but rather to develop analytical tools for investigating 'sitting' in a context polarized by international travel, something which requires us to clearly delineate the conceptual ambit of immobility and hopefully to make it a viable framework for the study of migration and mobility more generally, international or otherwise.[9]

Immobility and immobile subjects have until recently remained a rather neglected and under-theorized aspect of migration (Hammar and Tamas 1997: 1; Carling 2002: 5–6).[10] In 1997, in a volume that sought to bring the theme of immobility within the purview of migration studies, Hammar and Tamas complained that 'almost all attention has up to now

been given to those who actually migrate' (Hammar and Tamas 1997: 1). Hammar and Tamas wrote this at a time of growing awareness in the social sciences that people do not necessarily perceive sedentary life as a natural condition of being (Malkki 1992), and consequently that migration should not be a priori considered an anomaly in need of an explanation (Klute and Hahn 2008: 8). Seizing upon the growing speed and volume of global flows, a veritable 'mobility turn' in the social sciences has since brought mobility, or better, multiple mobilities, to the centre of social research and theory, and to the detriment, in particular, of narrow definitions of migration as linear and unidirectional movement (Sheller and Urry 2006: 208). 'Mobility', geographer Tim Cresswell has noted, 'has become the ironic foundation for anti-essentialism, antifoundationalism and antirepresentationalism' (2006: 46). And yet, the debunking of sedentariness from received epistemologies in the social sciences has hardly resulted in more studies of people staying in their place in spite of the thrust of contemporary mobility. Ten years after Hammar and Tamas' plea for a study of immobility, Toyota, Yeoh and Nguyen (2007: 158) had to remark once more that 'given the focus on migrants and the somewhat narrow ways in which migration processes have been defined, the migration literature can be said to have thus far "left behind" the "left behind"'.

The images of boat migrants and the less spectacular reality of Sabi young men unable to obtain visas constitute a powerful counterpoint to optimistic accounts of global unfettered movement and bring immobility back into the picture in compelling ways. In the widening gap detected by Zygmunt Bauman (1998: 3) between 'the global and extraterritorial elite and the ever more "localized" rest', one is forced to see not only the enduring foundations of state sovereignty but also the fact that its caging techniques have themselves become mobile. While people, goods and ideas move at an increasing speed across borders, flows are being securitized in such ways that spurious elements are filtered out (Walters 2006). Along the flow, poor citizens of developing countries are typically warded off, confined and removed. In contrast to depictions of a world on the move, Jørgen Carling (2002) has therefore argued that impediments to mobility constitute the veritable hallmark of the contemporary world. In many places in the global south where there is a long history of emigration, people are witnessing a widening gap between aspiration and the ability to migrate across national borders, a juxtaposition which Carling calls 'involuntary immobility'. Building on Cape Verdean examples, Carling includes in involuntary immobility factors other than policies that constrain movement, such as economic liabilities, lack of contacts and individual characteristics (gender, education, age, etc.) that affect the possibility of overcoming legal restrictions to free movement. I draw

on Carling's toolkit to shed light on the social forces that shape the trajectories of 'sitting'. Far from simply offsetting desires of migration against legal/political barriers, in this book I show how the international politics of mobility add to the home-grown modes of regulating movement that emanate from social organization (cf. Rogaly 2003).

At the same time, this study reaches beyond an approach to immobility that is primarily centred on obstacles to movement, and rather views mobility and immobility as 'an outcome of a relation' (Adey 2010: 18). In anthropology, as in other social sciences, increasing dissatisfaction is being expressed with regard to a conceptual lexicon that pits movement against stasis (Rockefeller 2011; Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013). Clearly, the diverse practices summoned up by 'sitting' cannot be analytically subsumed within a notion of im-mobility narrowly conceived in binary terms as an absence or negation of mobility (McMorran 2015). They rather suggest that stillness can be 'thoroughly incorporated into the practices of moving' (Cresswell 2012: 648). West African communities like Sabi have evolved amid commercial and human flows powered by regional and global systems as ancient as the trans-Saharan trade and the Atlantic slave trade. To imagine social life in these settlements to be the sole result of a localized peasant tradition is, I argue, to significantly misunderstand the imbrication of the Soninke and other West Africans in these wider systems (Piot 1999). Consider, for instance, the role of agriculture, the emblem of sedentariness. Claude Meillassoux (1971), probably the first anthropologist to demystify mobility as an essential trait of Soninke culture, showed that Soninke precolonial short- and long-distance trade depended on agricultural production and on the exploitation of slave labour as well as on the fact of occupying a geo-ecologically strategic position along the Sahara–Sahel frontier. Historian François Manchuelle (1997: 102–6) subsequently drew on Meillassoux's insights to show that commercial agriculture remained an important basis for Eastern Soninke migration even after the advent of free labour migration at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth (on the Gambia, see Swindell and Jeng 2006; Gaibazzi 2012b). Since the 1960s, the agricultural base of Soninke mobility has deteriorated, forcing greater numbers of villagers to leave for Europe and elsewhere in order to support their families at home (Weigel 1982; Quiminal 1991; Findley and Sow 1998). Yet in the Senegambia and the Western Sahel, labour migration has not so much uprooted peasants and turned them into permanent urban proletarians; it has rather encouraged them to maintain a base in their place of origin, to which industrial capitalism could conveniently outsource the costs of social reproduction of the migrant workforce (Meillassoux 1981; Geschiere and Nyamnjoh 2000). In Soninke

communities, agriculture has accordingly retained a crucial cultural and pedagogical role in sustaining transnational connections and bringing up future travellers (Whitehouse 2009; 2012a; Chapter 2).

As commercial nodes, labour reserves and homes of a worldwide diaspora, localities like Sabi can be thus viewed as 'moorings' (Urry 2003: ch. 5; 2007) or 'actual permanences' (Harvey 1996: 38) that both presuppose and enable flows of people and resources. With reference to contemporary mobilities (human, material, virtual, etc.), sociologist John Urry (2007: 13) has pleaded for the investigation not only of movement and movers but also of the socio-material infrastructures (or moorings) that make mobility possible: airports, roads, service stations and, moreover, 'ticketing, oil supply, addresses, safety, protocols, station interchanges, web sites, docks, money transfer, inclusive tours, luggage storage, air traffic control, barcodes, bridges, timetables, surveillance and so on'.[11] Likewise, contemporary human (im)mobility is patterned by systems like information technology, transport infrastructure, passports and visa systems.

The focus on socio-material systems bespeaks Urry's (2000) call for a 'sociology beyond societies'. *Pace* Urry, I bring to the study of (im)mobilities an anthropological perspective that still prioritizes social relations and cultural practices which organize and confer meaning on (human) immobility (cf. Lindquist 2009; Nyíri 2010; Salazar 2010; Salazar and Smart 2011).[12] Accordingly, I build on anthropological literatures on migration which describe the social and cultural organization of long-distance flows from the point of view of migrant-sending contexts (Gardner 1995; Cohen 2004: ch. 5).

The importance of social and cultural dynamics becomes especially evident against the backdrop of the historical thrust of (im)mobility in West Africa.[13] Even though, as epitomized by the scholarship on the Soninke, immobility and sedentariness have seldom constituted the primary object of analysis in the ethnography and historiography of West African migration, the pervasiveness of human mobility across the region has spawned scholarly reflections on movement and stillness in a number of lateral ways. In West Africa, relations of belonging and claims to the land are often traded in local histories of migration and settlement (Kea 2010; Lentz 2013), while most societies have adopted a number of institutional arrangements, from hospitality to child fostering, to sustain and regulate the movement of people and goods (Amselle 1976: 24–28; 1977; Agier 1983; Brooks 1993; Hashim and Thorsen 2011). Furthermore, scholars monitoring the increasing diversification of rural livelihoods in the West African countryside have shown how new socio-economic demands are often met by combining mobile and sedentary lifestyles in old and novel ways (de Haan 1999; Rain 1999; Whitehead

2002; Ellis 2003). Commenting on the nomadic livelihood of the Fulbe in the Western Sahel, de Bruijn, van Dijk and van Dijk (2001: 72) draw, in this respect, an interesting parallel with Urry and other authors writing along similar lines:

> Their hotel lounges and airports, to paraphrase Clifford, are local and regional markets or watering points for the livestock. They do not communicate by mobile phone or e-mail but through an immense network of kinsmen, acquaintances, hosts and traders who transmit messages in code.

In a similar vein, rather than on ultramodern systems of mobility, I focus on the bush (*gunne*) exploited not only through basic technologies but also through complex social arrangements that invoke and simultaneously sustain the travel-bush. Instead of airports and hotel lounges, attention is focused on families and age groups that distribute resources, people and activities across space. Protocols of conduct are sought not in international regulations and logistics but in specific predicaments and comportments thought to support men in their mobile livelihoods but the acquisition of which requires a degree of emplacement. As Clapperton Mavhunga (2014: 17–18, 25–27) has pointed out, analysing such sociocultural arrangements does not simply add 'social context' and 'culture' to concepts of mobility primarily designed for advanced capitalist settings and high-tech transport technologies; it rather provides a starting point for contextualizing and rethinking them.

It is in this sense that building on the Soninke notion of *taaxu* or 'sitting' allows me to capture the twofold process of dwelling and becoming established in a relational field of (im)mobility. Following the dynamics of 'sitting' implies an analytical move from the question 'Why do people stay?' to the one 'How do people stay?'. 'Sitting' is far more than the outcome of domestic decision-making that sorts people into travellers and stayers, as in a household economics model of migration (Stark and Bloom 1985). Much as emigrating involves laying one's hands on finances, garnering moral support from relatives and proving one's worth as a traveller prior to departure, so crafting a sedentary life involves plotting and navigating (Vigh 2006, 2009a) within a translocal and often rapidly shifting field of resources and scarcities, solidarities and frictions, obligations and entitlements. Staying put involves assuming both a social position and an active stance towards it (Reeves 2011). It means to be *put* in a place and a role that might not be of one's making and choice within the hierarchies of gender, age and status that govern village and migrant life (cf. Cresswell 1996: 97ff). At the same time, while positions and relations associated with staying put may be normatively sanctioned, they are

fundamentally brought into being by reflective human action (Giddens 1984: 17). As an act of 'actual permanence', 'sitting' involves wielding a capacity 'to stay', in the obsolete sense of 'to support, sustain, strengthen, comfort' (*Oxford English Dictionary Online* 2014) movement and movers. 'Sitting' is therefore also a willed action which commands fortitude and responsibility, a transformative experience that shapes configurations of (im)mobility and the social positions therein. In short, a man is not born a 'sitter' or stayer – a farmer, householder, businessman or civic activist; he becomes one.

Viewing immobility as both position and process sheds greater light on the implications of the international politics of mobility for Sabi men. What will emerge in the course of this ethnography is that the legal and economic barriers to free movement do not simply prevent outmigration; they also affect the relational field of (im)mobility, in particular by placing pressure on the capacity of the village to accommodate an increasing number of people as stayers.

'Sitting' contains no simple teleology: in spite of every effort to become established, Sabi men may, as it were, fail to stay put. They may only reach a precarious abode, or they may perceive their position not to be fully acknowledged or made viable by other social agents, including their migrant relatives. Mapping the field of (im)mobility therefore means identifying the exit points where 'sitting' becomes 'just sitting', and immobility is reduced to what I call bare immobility (Chapter 4). For the men living in Sabi, their anxieties over immobility and their desires for emigration can only be understood, I argue, in view of this spectre of failure that hovers over their sedentary lives. The ambition to emigrate is thus entangled with the failure to 'sit', as if these men were suspended between moving and staying.

The presence of devalued forms of 'sitting' alerts us to a final crucial point; namely, that not all stillness is subservient and functional to mobility. In an important corrective to the relational approach to (im)mobility, Bissell and Fuller (2010) have argued that immobility, as a dialectical referent of mobility, is but one modality of stillness. There are other modalities and valences of the still which escape and exceed their valorization by, in particular, a capitalist system. However, when stillness does not sustain movement or, worse, obstructs the search for ever greater speed and volumes of exchange in the current world system, it often becomes an 'abomination and *uncommitment*', a non-purposive and morally bankrupt element to be removed or re-mobilized (Bisser and Fuller 2010: 7, italics in the original). Bissell and Fuller thus invite us to pay heed to the ways in which the still becomes bridled and harnessed by a given system of valorization. As an example, they recall the passenger, a paradigmatic

figure of postmodernity, who in order to travel must be kept seated and docile by administering comfort, food and entertainment to him or her. Although I once again turn away from Eurocentric figures of late modernity, I build on Bissell and Fuller's insights to describe how sedentariness becomes immobility; that is, how settled lives become lucid and viable as acceptable ways of staying put in a context permeated by travelling and the possibility of living a mobile life. To ask how people stay is, therefore, to ask: how does stasis acquire value and purpose, or on the contrary, generate crisis and bewilderment? When is it a virtue and when is it a vice? Under what circumstances can one purposefully stay, and when is one instead othered and marginalized?

To begin answering these questions it is therefore necessary to analytically zoom out from immobility as such and to bring into focus stillness or permanence at large. Whereas agrarian institutions have been shaped into moorings of mobility by the political economy of migration, permanence in Sabi is 'neither reducible to [a] strategy of neo-capital governance, nor a productive ally in pursuit of accumulation' (Bissell and Fuller 2010: 10). There are clearly more men in Sabi than would actually be needed to hold the fort, as it were; and yet, while many of them palpably sense the spectre of failure, fewer than expected fall irrevocably into its abyss. A more nuanced understanding of how value is accrued to 'sitting' requires an appreciation of rural dwelling in its own right and how migration emerges from it. In other words, it involves contemplating for a moment the possibility that migration does not arrive in Sabi as a global force that creates new relationalities of (im)mobility, but rather emanates from it as the village seeks to reproduce and extend its agrarian social order in space and in time.

The Onus of Rural Permanence

> But fate decreed that the cloak should become an iron cage.
>
> Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*

In her study of the island of Gawa in the Melanesian Massim, Nancy Munn (1986) has employed the term 'spatiotemporal extension' to describe a process of value production and preservation in which the here and now of the island is transcended in both spatial and temporal terms. Gawa islanders engage in meaningful acts and exchanges, like the famous *kula* ring, that create social relations beyond the perimeters of the island and

in view of a near or distant future, thus enabling people to spread their fame and, collectively, to maintain the viability of the island community over time. Drawing on Munn's insights, Julie Chu (2010) has described migration in the Fuzhou countryside (China) as a form of spatiotemporal extension whereby the ongoing appeal of international travel, in spite of the hazards the villagers incur along the route, stems from their desire to inhabit Chinese, rather than foreign, modernity. In Fuzhou, migration is a technique of emplacement most visible in the high-rise houses built in the village by migrants, with architectural features reminiscent of metropolitan China.

In a similar vein, I view Soninke migration as a mode of spatiotemporal creation and extension of value that turns the bush into the travel-bush. Certainly, the growing economic insecurity heralded by structural adjustment, combined with ecological uncertainty, have played an enormous role in emigration from Sabi; but the pressure to acquire and redistribute wages and profits earned away from the village also stems from well-worn strategies to produce durable forms of social value whose meaning is essentially place-bound (Buggenhagen 2012; cf. Berry 1993). Far from solely being the product of dispossession (Cross 2013), economic emigration among Soninke men has been fuelled, as noted, by a long-standing preoccupation with autonomy and prestige in the village community (Manchuelle 1989; cf. Iliffe 2005). The housing frenzy so noticeable in Soninke villages demarcates, in this respect, one of the main arenas in which, over the past few decades, this race for big-manship has taken place (cf. Melly 2010). Moreover, migrants have extended the village in the sense that its social hierarchies and solidarities have often served as blueprints for organizing diasporic and transnational life in immigrant settings (Quiminal 1991; Timera 1996).

Like other dynamics of migration, immobility must be seen as an element of this broader process of emplacement through spatiotemporal extension, or what I prefer to call permanence. I use the term permanence to evoke both spatial fixity (staying) and temporal continuity, together with a sense of preservation. In fact, whereas in Chu's ethnography migration is a way of projecting the village community into an urban, infrastructural cosmopolitanism and thus shedding the peasant past in which many Chinese are loath to remain stuck, Sabi villagers are committed to reproducing the agrarian institutions, sociality and values that make life and outmigration meaningful and acceptable. There is no denying that migrants' mansions dovetail with a modernist vision of infrastructural progress and rural development. On the other hand, as in other regional settings, the inhabitants of Sabi, or Sabinko, are concerned with balancing the pressure to change and to vie for heroic affirmation with a

search for stability and cohesion, mainly achieved through, as it were, the stilling of social values and norms (Bird and Kendall 1980; Wooten 2009; Kea 2010, 2013). By building big houses, migrants do not simply make a name for themselves and leave non-migrant men in the shade; theirs are also 'sociological investments', as George Balandier (1961: 19) would call them: investments that both accrue status to the investor and contribute to legitimizing and reproducing the social relations and institutions on which fame is based. To put it in plain words: buildings are not built in just any place, but in family compounds and for household members; they are collective properties underscoring the communal ethos pervading domestic units, express loyalty to those left behind and embody the willingness to keep following 'our fathers' path'. Consequently, migrants' ties and investments have underlined the value of sedentary activities and of an agrarian identity. In many ways, emigration has allowed rural Soninke not only to offset a declining agricultural production, but also to continue to stay in their villages and be farmers.

In Sabi, villagers are not solely under a 'customary imperative' to face up to the challenges of rural life by stubbornly sticking to their peasant tradition (Davidson 2009). Rural permanence has instead become a necessity because, whether for survival or for fame, by mediating incorporation in regional and international circuits of labour and capital (cf. Bolt 2013), it has eventually bound people to the bush. John Chalcraft (2008) has argued that continual (labour) migration does not necessarily follow a design made by the dominant classes (the capitalists), nor does it merely stem from exploitation, nor from an alignment of migrant communities with the values and subjectivities promoted by capitalism; it can rather be the unintended consequence of participation in labour markets. Following Weber (see epigraph), Chalcraft has suggested that as people actively seek to reproduce their values and codes of honour through instrumental and temporary participation in capitalist markets, they progressively become caged in its mechanisms in order to keep producing social and personal progress, thus having to continue migrating even when the conditions at their destination are no longer favourable. With regard to Sabi, the declining rural economy has further entrenched villagers in a system of externalized reproduction, whereby producing subsistence and prosperity has meant relying to an unprecedented degree on global markets and especially on labour migration to the West. Insofar as villagers attribute their capacity to foster mobility to continual rural permanence, however, it is not only the pressure to emigrate that persists in spite of adverse policies of international mobility; it is also the importance of catering to the agrarian foundations of village and diasporic sociality, notwithstanding a barely sustainable rural economy.

At the same time, by becoming wedded to capital's expanded reproduction, rural permanence has been loaded with tension and ambivalence. The staking out of social reproduction to domains which villagers do not control exposes them to the whims of global markets as well as to the risk of becoming victims of their own success. At least two critical factors of destabilization will surface throughout this ethnography. Firstly, the 'price' of fame in Sabi is the thrust of money in social exchanges and as a measure of masculine potency, which compels men to acquire and distribute cash by selling either goods or their labour while bringing them face to face with the reality of a largely demonetized agriculture (esp. Chapters 3 and 4). The second factor is the emergence of alternative modes of emplacement, the most pervasive form of which is found in the urban areas along the Atlantic coast of the Gambia as a showcase of migrant investments and success and, worse still, as a new home for a small but influential pool of wealthy returnees who have transferred to the city the social and cultural functions normally fulfilled by the village (esp. Chapters 2 and 5). While simultaneous emplacements can and do exist, today Sabi finds itself in the delicate position of extending its social and moral order in an attempt not only to aggrandize itself but also to stem this centrifugal tendency and to reinstate its primacy as the pulsing heart of the diaspora (cf. Whitehouse 2012a).

It is in the light of these contrasting forces and experiences that I delineate rural permanence as an onus. On the one hand, the Sabinko are under an injunction to honour presence and continuity by 'sitting'. 'Not everybody can leave', they maintain; some must forego their ambitions of mobility in the name of a collective effort to maintain the village as a social and moral community and 'to refill the river' of the patrilineage. On the other hand, the material bases and the shifting geo-social aspirations of permanence cast doubt on the viability of rural dwelling in the long run. The onus of permanence can thus be lived as a burden, an invisible cage, a sacrifice matched by no guarantee of reward.

By bearing the onus of 'sitting', young men explore the possibilities and limits of agrarian presents and futures, the value system that both creates and disrupts spatial and temporal permanence in Sabi. More than other dwellers in Sabi, male youths and young adults are subject to contrasting expectations, from becoming mobile, productive and money-worthy to remaining put, assuming collective responsibilities and expressing maturity in ways other than by acquiring wealth. I use the lens of gender analysis to bring into view how the benefit and burden of permanence emerge through different ideals, practices and experiences of masculinity (Miescher and Lindsay 2003), and how, through 'sitting', young

men respond to the pressures to inhabit such predicaments of the self (cf. Mahmood 2005).

Furthermore, by introducing age into the analytical scope, I monitor the different stages at which permanence becomes an onus in men's life-course. From childhood to eldership, men come to terms with different demands of emplacement, but it is perhaps when they approach adulthood that permanence and its discontents become especially salient.[14] This is when young men marry and progressively assume family roles and collective responsibilities, which in turn increase the pressure on them to become established either at home or away. In this study, I thus especially foreground the trajectories of men entering maturity, covering an age range between the mid twenties and the late thirties, or even later. It is however important to note that in Sabi, as in the rest of Africa, age is generally defined in social rather than biological terms (Durham 2000: 116–17). In Sabi, the meaning of youth, and hence of maturity, is indeed negotiated at the crossroads between local hierarchies of seniority, state policies, international civil society initiatives and global youth cultures (Chapters 4 and 6). Since aging and age relations both structure agrarian sociality and serve the villagers as a metaphor for linking past to future, focusing on the fraught process of becoming a mature, sedentary man reveals the expectations and reinventions of rural permanence.

This book is, in other words, about subjects enlisted for the regeneration of the social order (cf. Cole and Durham 2007: 17–18). The 1990s, a period of turbulent and at times violent transformations in which young Africans have occupied centre stage, has prompted scholars to highlight the role of youth as either makers or breakers of the social order (Honwana and De Boeck 2005). Besides looking at young soldiers, vigilantes and pro-democracy activists, scholarly work has mostly focused on *urban* youth and their use of global imaginaries and alternative societal models to address a socio-existential impasse caused by failing 'traditional' as well as 'modern' paths to emancipation to which postcolonial history had consigned them (e.g., Weiss 2009; Mains 2011; Newell 2012; Janson 2013). By focusing on youth and young adults for whom agrarian life and extended families are still important (Chauveau 2005), the line of inquiry I pursue in this book goes partly against the tide of this literature.[15] Rather than viewing youth as bearers of new patterns of 'consumption, leisure activities, and stylized resistance', I frame the inquiry in terms of conformity: 'why [and how] do so many young people strive to conform to the expectations and promises of one or another of various interlocutors…?' (Amit and Dyck 2012: 10), where families and fellow villagers feature as the main interlocutors. This is not to deny the importance of novel imaginaries and avenues to manhood which, as will

be shown, constitute important resources for reimagining the viability of 'sitting' vis-à-vis a wider horizon of life possibilities. But in lieu of rupture, or even anomie, young men in Sabi foster change in 'the very act of consolidating tradition' (Barber 2007: 26; cf. Galvan 2004; Wooten 2009: 17–18; Gomez-Perez and LeBlanc 2012). Youths at the doorstep of manhood are arguably less concerned than younger men with the clothes they wear and the music they listen to; in the absence of desirable exit strategies from the impasse, they craft their lives by complying with expectations of permanence and trying to negotiate their position within bounds which they thus help to reproduce.

On Bush-bound Ethnography

Documenting the trajectories of men who 'sit' in Sabi certainly confers a 'vintage' outlook on this ethnography (Ciavolella 2010: 27). Themes so dear to early ethnographers of Africa – kinship, age groups, male authority, etc. – feature prominently in the pages that follow. Nonetheless, by no means does this signal a return to stable structures and functions, nor a search for equilibriums, nor even less an attempt to salvage a disappearing peasant culture. On the contrary, studying permanence holds up, to paraphrase Sayad (1999), a mirror to society, making it possible for us – scholars, observers and, most importantly, West Africans – to see the modalities of change and continuity in the savannah, complete with their dysfunctions, contradictions and conflicts. While reiterating the importance of looking at the global from an out-of-the-way village (Piot 1999), Charles Piot (2010: 16) advocates a change in perspective and attentiveness to new ethnographic objects and sites in order to capture West Africa's post-Cold-War political culture in which 'tradition is set aside' and 'futures are replacing a past'. Although I endorse and admire Piot's project, this book clearly shows that village ethnography can still be an analytical conduit to larger transformations of West Africa in the wider world. Sabi is a very small place in a very small country, but one that has definitely been *in* the world (Wright 2004). As noted, reflected in the mirror held up to Sabi are the powerful forces restructuring 'the world out there' in late modernity, the way it is both open and closed, both travelled by and yet moved further away from West African citizens.

In this respect, 'sitting' has also been a powerful methodological strategy to capture the changing realities of the West African peasantry. Taking place over an aggregate period of seventeen months in 2006–8 and in 2012, the fieldwork for this book required undertaking an apprenticeship in Sabi's life-world. As a man of around thirty years of age at the

beginning of my stay, I was encouraged to mingle with men in my age group. Becoming acquainted with my peers entailed, however, more than just understanding where they wanted to travel to and why and following them in daily life, including when they went to the Atlantic coast during the dry season to work and trade; I also had to know where they came from, socially and geographically. To be able to contextualize my interlocutors' life trajectories, I had to acquire and exchange knowledge of their kinship and domestic background. I therefore decided to conduct an oral historiography of the village and its families, and then to work with colonial sources to supplement the interviews.

In Sabi, participating in the everyday life of young men meant going to the fields with them and acquiring calloused hands, as a gesture towards becoming more 'like them'. It meant becoming a member of age groups, helping in their activities. Assisted by a handful of young men in their thirties, I spent much time with their friends and other age mates of theirs, engaging in petty transactions and taking part in the long tea-drinking sessions at youth gatherings. Although these were events with little apparent informative value, which wasted a lot of time and where taking out the field book or the tape recorder was not always appropriate, they nonetheless led me to an experiential understanding of their everyday village realities. Without such involvement, I would have hardly come to appreciate the significance and complexity of 'sitting'.

Overview of the Book

By following the sedentary lives of young men in Sabi, this ethnography analyses the social construction and ambivalent experience of rural permanence. The chapters broadly proceed along the age scale from boyhood to manhood, and from individual to collective forms of 'sitting': settling in a village, farming and rural dwelling, generating income, being unemployed and static, heading a household and participating in age groups. Chapter 1 traces the history of Sabi from its foundation at the beginning of the twentieth century through to the present, illustrating continuities and discontinuities in the patterns of migration and sedentariness. Immobility as known today to Sabi's young men stems from the progressive decoupling of agricultural and migrant livelihoods since the late 1960s. Whereas the Sabinko previously combined trade and labour migration with agriculture, momentous emigration and the decline of the rural economy have driven a wedge between travellers and farmers, paving the way for rising costs and restrictive policies of international

migration to exacerbate the duality between mobility and immobility that characterizes the current generations of Sabi men.

Having delineated the field of (im)mobility in contemporary Sabi, Chapters 2 to 4 subsequently explore different experiences of 'sitting' in young men's attempts to earn a living. Chapter 2 disputes analytical dichotomies between migration and sedentariness by analysing how young men prepare for *hustling*, as migration is called. Far from being solely a site of botanical growth, the bush is viewed by the Sabinko as a terrain for the physical, social and moral maturation of individuals. Through farming, boys are turned into hard-working, resilient and compassionate men, able to endure life and work in the travel-bush. The agrarian virtues of masculinity are thought to be adaptable to migrant work, especially to unskilled occupations in the West, a rationale shared by the migrants who foster their children to rural families for these to 'sit'-dwell in the life-world of Sabi peasants. Having cultivated crops and virtues, during the dry season young men head for the cities in order to look for money as labourers and petty traders. Whereas seasonal rural–urban circulation further illustrates the interplay between mobility and immobility, Chapter 3 shows that many of these young men experience it as a form of spurious rather than proper *terende* or travel. Unable to make significant progress with the money they make through working in the city and farming in Sabi, young men try to exit the loop of circular migration by finding support from relatives to either migrate abroad or become established as businessmen at home. Through the case study of two friends, the chapter describes the twists and turns that the quest of money and support entails, eventually leading young men to reconsider 'sitting' in Sabi instead of migrating.

While they are prone to *hustling*, however, widespread youth unemployment in the Gambia forces many young men to spend large parts of their days 'just sitting' and waiting for better times to come. Chapter 4 describes this condition of inactivity and inertia as bare immobility, a most abject form of being and sociality, stripped of the qualities associated with more valuable forms of immobility. Bare immobility translates a cultural kinaesthesia of 'just sitting', as young men experience, through their stilled bodies, the inability to remain peasants. In response to this impasse of personal life and social reproduction, young men resort to temporal and moral strategies. Hardship is framed within a theological discourse that commends patience as an Islamic virtue and envisages the possibility of change, thus casting permanence in the Gambia in a more positive light.

However, patience does not necessarily reward young men with remunerative off-farm occupations. The last two chapters of the book focus on respectable modes of 'sitting' that are based on assuming positions of

responsibility. Chapter 5 describes young adults who become household heads in migrant families. As some men in the household migrate for work and trade, they entrust the well-being of the household to those who stay behind, thus making the domestic unit a vital mooring of mobility. In addition to filling and managing the granaries, 'sitting at home' involves social work to maintain domestic conviviality and relatedness. A complex system of interdependencies link migrants and stayers, but in a context where migrants build homes in the city and multiple claims are made on redistribution from abroad, domestic authority does not simply stem from holding office. Young household heads find themselves in the difficult position of having to ensure cooperation between householders and having to prevent conflicts from escalating into schisms and the diversion of resources.

Chapter 6 shows that young men defend the role of the village as the cultural centre of the diaspora not only by resisting change but also by directing it. In a surge of civic activism, in the second half of the 2000s, Sabi youth became more vocal in community affairs. They revitalized the withering institution of age groups, and by responding creatively to different discourses on youth empowerment and active citizenship promoted by state and non-state actors, including hometown associations, they advocated civil change and tried to stem the rising ceremonial costs in life-cycle rituals. The chapter chronicles the events that animated this phase of age politics in the village, by discussing the role of age groups in framing the position of sedentary young men as social cadets in society, and consequently the possibilities of transforming the very rules by which maturity is achieved and expressed.

Finally, the epilogue returns to the question of stillness in a world allegedly on the move. It weaves together the threads of immobility in Sabi, in an attempt to understand what it means to continue staying on the land in twenty-first century West Africa. In addition to contributing thoughts on the study of human mobility by elaborating on the complex nature of 'sitting', the epilogue thus concludes with a reflection on temporality, whereby the experience of young men who bear the onus of reproducing a settled life serves as a reflection on how agrarian societies in West Africa face up to the many challenges of the future.

A Brief Note on the Gambia

Its size (the smallest country in continental Africa), stable political situation and relative marginality in the world economy mean that the Republic of The Gambia is seldom seen in the international headlines.

Indeed, on communicating my place of ethnographic research, I sometimes receive responses like: 'Pardon, did you say Zambia?' Before I present my ethnographic material, therefore, I feel it may be useful to outline briefly the main features of the country.

The Gambia would almost be an enclave of Senegal, were it not for the Atlantic coast. It is basically made up of narrow strips of land on each bank of the Gambia River for about 460 km from the river mouth to the eastern border. The climate is tropical and marked by a wet season (June–October) and a dry season (November–May). The country is mostly flat with only the gentle slopes of the laterite hills rising at some distance from the riverbanks. The environment becomes drier as one moves from the Atlantic coast to the Upper River, where the average rainfall is roughly 850–900 mm per annum. Sparse baobabs and other large, tall trees stand out in the savannah panorama, which is covered mostly by cultivated fields or low scrub vegetation and bushy areas left to grow back after many years of farming. Most villages are located within walking distance of the Gambia River or its tributaries – year round or seasonal streams. During the rainy season, streams swell and form swamps or small lakes, which may last for some of the dry months. Along the banks of the streams or on flood-recession swampland, more flourishing vegetation appears, and inhabitants take advantage of the availability of water and wetlands to grow orchards of mango, palm and papaya trees, as well as horticultural gardens.

The Gambia River has been one of the most important commercial routes in West Africa. During the Atlantic slave trade, European slavers would navigate the river throughout the year to meet African Muslim traders (the *juula*) supplying slaves and goods from the interior. With the demise of the slave trade in the first half of the nineteenth century, trade continued in other goods and the valley eventually became a groundnut exporting area. The Gambia has continued to export groundnuts up to the present, although commercial agriculture has suffered from climatic and marketing constraints over the last four decades.

Before colonization, the north and south banks of the river were divided between a number of Mandinka kingdoms – an offshoot of the Mali Empire – which ruled the valley from the fourteenth century (Quinn 1972). Colonization found the Gambia River valley in turmoil, with Mandinka (pagan) rulers fighting against Islamic movements (the so-called 'Soninke'–Marabouts wars), and the southern banks of the upper river valley changing to Fula rule in 1867. The 1889 Anglo-French agreement established the boundaries of contemporary Gambia. The Colony of The Gambia proper consisted of little more than two islands, St. Mary (Bathurst) at the mouth of the river, and MacCarthy in the central river

valley, whereas the rest of Gambia became a British Protectorate in 1894 (after 1901 in the Upper River). Colonial presence in the rural areas was scarce and budgetary resources were limited, especially in the first three decades of administration (Gailey 1964; Bellagamba 2000). Boosted by entrepreneurial Gambians, migrant farmers and European merchant capital, the colonial economy thrived on commercial groundnut cultivation (Swindell and Jeng 2006). After the Second World War, a series of constitutional changes paved the way for independence, which the Gambia achieved in 1965 under the leadership of Dawda Jawara, the colony's leading veterinary officer. His party – the PPP – was mainly made up of Mandinka people, though it soon afterwards absorbed other groups and patronized rural dignitaries across the country (Hughes and Perfect 2006). State patronage and tactical alliances allowed the Jawara regime to hold sway for thirty years and survive a coup in 1981. Gambian politics remained, however, a relatively plural democracy.

In 1994, four young soldiers turned a protest concerning a pay rise and mistreatment into a coup d'état, thereby toppling one of the longest-serving Presidents in Africa; Jawara fled the country (Wiseman 1996). Military uniforms provoked some anxiety among Gambians, but the bloodless overthrow bred hopes for change in a population plagued by economic hardship and that had grown disaffected with politicians. Two years later, elections turned the military junta into a civilian government, giving birth to the Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC) under former lieutenant Yahya Jammeh, a thirty-year-old man from the Jola ethnic minority. Reorienting the population has also involved a degree of authoritarian rule, with the suppression of civil liberties and freedom of the press (Saine 2009). Due to external constraints and internal fragmentation, the opposition has been defeated by Jammeh in all subsequent presidential elections until the time of writing. In the 2000s, Jammeh persistently concentrated decisional power in his hands. At the local level, however, the state still relies on local institutions and traditional forms of government, such as chiefs, dignitaries and elders (Bellagamba and Gaibazzi 2008).

According to international standards, the Gambia represents one of the poorest countries in the world. In 2012, the Human Development Index ranked it 165th out of 186 (UNDP 2013: Table 1). Development policies have historically focused on the urban areas, with the Upper River Region being one of the most marginalized areas in the country. In the past fifteen years, however, the APRC government has invested in infrastructural development in the rural areas too. The national economy is mainly based on agriculture, the re-export trade and the tourist industry (mainly along the Atlantic Coast). Accounting for about 60 per cent of

the active population, agriculture is the main employment sector (IMF 2009). Since the late 1960s, however, droughts and marketing problems have gravely affected the sector. Due to the country's economic woes in the context of neoliberal reforms, un(der)employment is severe, especially among the youth (Lahire, Johanson and Wilcox 2011).

The Gambia is generally characterized as a country of immigration, international emigrants being estimated to be only around 4 per cent of the population (de Haas 2008a). However, qualitative research and survey work suggest substantially higher emigration rates and widespread aspirations to emigrate, at least within the Soninke-speaking milieu (see Table 1.1). In contrast to neighbouring Senegal, the Gambia has not developed a fully fledged institutional apparatus to reach out to the expatriate nationals and favour their political inclusion,[16] and migration-related issues feature much less frequently in the media.

Sabi is the fourth largest village (5,035 people) in the Upper River Region, the easternmost Local Government Area of the Republic of The Gambia. It is located in the Fuladu East District (in the Basse constituency) near the border with Senegal, on the main road connecting the regional capital Basse Santa Su (eleven thousand inhabitants, about 9 km away) and the Senegalese town of Vélingara (twenty-one thousand inhabitants, about 15 km away). According to the 2003 national census, the Upper River Region (URR) hosts the majority of the Gambian Soninke (known as Serahule in the Gambia), who constitute the largest ethnic group here (39 per cent), followed by the Mandinka (31 per cent) and the Fula (27 per cent) (Gambia Bureau of Statistics 2006). In contrast, the Soninke account for only 8 per cent of the overall Gambian population,[17] comprising a recent and small community originating from Guinea Conakry (the Badagulanko) and settled mainly in the Dippakunda town of the Serekunda municipal area. Upcountry Soninke (the Kambianko), the protagonists of this book, have few relations with this minority of the Gambian Soninke population.

Notes

1. I am indebted to Luis Villoslada Soberón for introducing me to these verses.
2. For a chronicle of undocumented boat migration and ensuing governance interventions, see among others: Tall (2008), Willems (2008), Choplin (2010), Carling and Hérnandez-Carretero (2011), Streiff-Fenart and Kabwe-Segatti (2012) and Cross (2013).
3. Several studies in Africa conceptualize mobility as a widespread livelihood option to respond to uncertainty and opportunity, and even as a cultural fea-

ture of certain groups (de Haan 1999; de Bruijn, van Dijk and Foeken 2001; Ellis 2003).

4. With regard to West Africa, see among others: Fouquet (2008), Schmitz (2008), Bordonaro (2009), Vigh (2009b), degli Uberti (2011), Graw and Schielke (2012) and Willems (2014).
5. In Africa, colonial and postcolonial governments, as well as development organizations, have promoted various forms of sedentarization, particularly to manage nomad populations and emigration from the countryside (Randall and Giuffrida 2006; Bakewell 2008; Gary-Tounkara 2008: ch. 6).
6. As Amselle (1998: 18) has shown, colonial ethnological discourse has tended to classify Mande populations as ethnicities corresponding to archetypical social form and culture, and some of their taxonomies have gained social currency. Such considerations invite us to acknowledge the constructed nature of Soninke ethnicity (cf. Fabietti 1998), and especially warn us against assigning essential characteristics to this category, the significance of which has assumed highly ideological hues throughout history.
7. The Soninke are known by a plethora of ethnonyms by other regional ethnic groups. 'Serahule' (from Wolof) is a common one in the Gambia, and was adopted (as 'Serahuli') by the colonial and then postcolonial administration (French writers often used 'Saracolets' or 'Sarakolé'). Gambian Soninke are also used to referring to themselves as 'Seranxulle' or 'Saranxulle', the Soninke version of Serahule. In Gambian history the term 'Soninke' applied to precolonial pagan rulers. In this book I have chosen to follow the convention of the academic literature and adopt the term 'Soninke' to refer both to the language and to the ethnic group.
8. I draw on Bourdieu's (1985: 197) notion of social field here as 'a multi-dimensional space of positions' in which each position denote types of capital (economic, cultural, etc.) and orientations to act available to social actors; in the context of transnational migration the spatial dimension is crucial (Levitt and Schiller 2004). At the same time, I do not necessarily see fields in static terms or governed by clear-cut rules of the game (see Vigh 2009a; Chapter 3).
9. It may be argued that the term 'immobility' misleadingly suggests an absolute condition of stasis. Although I use alternative terms such as 'permanence', 'stillness' and 'staying put' to frame the complexity of 'sitting', I believe that for comparative and theoretical purposes defining the scope of immobility in precise analytical terms is more useful than introducing new terminologies.
10. There are nevertheless early studies of the impact of emigration on non-migrant population in Africa (see Richards 1939).
11. Hannerz (1996) and Clifford (1997) also discuss the importance of hotels and airports as mobility hubs.
12. The term 'immobilities', in the plural, may be used to encompass different modalities of immobility. Since I mainly deal with one type of immobility – namely immobility vis-à-vis international migration – I prefer to use the term in the singular form. That being said, I consider immobility inherently plural at the empirical level; I therefore qualify it each time according to the object of investigation.
13. No attempt is made here to review the vast literature on mobility and migration in West Africa. Recent publications that specifically engage with the 'mobility turn' include: Schapendonk (2013), Boesen and Marfaing (2014) and Boesen, Marfaing and de Bruijn (2014).

14. 'Young man' literally translates as *maxanbaane* in Soninke. This term, however, applies usually to the very young, the 'boys' (late teenage, early twenties). *Lenmine* means child; *yugo* means both male and man; *xirise* means elder or senior. All such terms are semantically elastic depending on the situation (see Chapter 6).
15. This is not to build a dichotomy between rural and urban youth (see Chauveau 2005: 27); although Sabi is the primary location, most village young men also spend periods of time in the city (Chapter 3).
16. This is also due to the success of the opposition parties in rallying support in the diaspora, particularly in the United States. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has only recently expanded so as to include 'Gambians Abroad'. The first consultative meeting with the 'Gambians Abroad' was held in January 2012 apparently as a sign of reconciliation between the diaspora and the regime. For some commentators, however, it led to more questions than answers (Jallow 2012).
17. Out of a population of about 1,360,681 in 2003, the main ethnicities were distributed as follows: 35 per cent Mandinka, 22 per cent Fula, 14 per cent Wolof, 11 per cent Jola (Gambia Bureau of Statistics 2006). The preliminary results of the 2013 census do not provide data for localities and ethnicities, but do confirm a sustained growth of the national population, now estimated at 1,882,450 (Gambia Bureau of Statistics 2013).

Chapter 1

Peasants by Other Means

(Im)mobility and the Making of a Village Mooring

In 2006, when I first visited the village, Sabi conjured up contrasting sensations. On the one hand, I encountered a village immersed in its slow rural tempo and sociality at quite a remove from the hustle and bustle of metropolitan centres along the Atlantic coast, while on the other, a community palpably entangled with the wider world and striving to follow the unrelenting course of infrastructural development and social change in the Gambia. After leaving Basse, the provincial capital of the Upper River Region, and driving beyond its outskirts, the collective taxi – an old rusty van – began to manoeuvre laboriously in and out of or around the large potholes that pitted the road to Vélingara and filled up with knee- or even waist-deep brown water in the rainy season. The roadside was closely flanked on either side by a thick line of trees and bushes that lashed the vehicle and sometimes made the passengers squeeze together, as the driver sought a better passageway on one side or other of the road. Soon after the van had approached the last downhill drive before the village, however, the feeling of venturing into the wild African savannah gradually disappeared. Sabi was announced by the recently built Upper Basic School and, past the bridge over the seasonal stream, there appeared the first mansions of the village, enclosed within brick walls and topped by iron roofing that shone in the sun. Half a mile ahead, the border post became visible, and then, at some distance from each other, two large buildings under construction: the Sabi hospital sponsored by the Sabi association in Spain and a *madrasa* built by Sabinko in Serekunda.

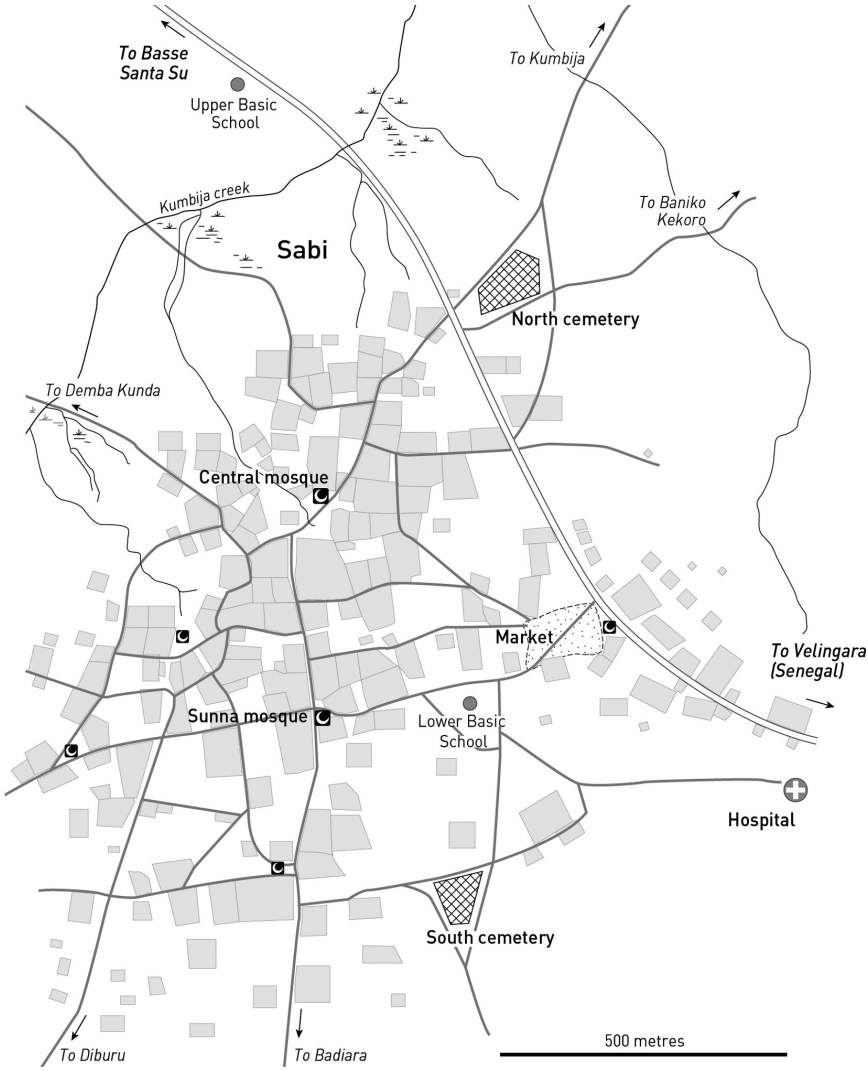


Figure 1.1 Sabi in 2008 (map produced with the assistance of Erik Brohaugh)

At the marketplace or *lumo*, the van stopped and the passengers got off (Figure 1.1). Here, one might well doubt whether this was a Soninke agricultural village at all. A mix of Gambians, Mauritanians and Guineans ran all sorts of stores, large and small; Senegalese tailors worked feverishly on the verandas of their shops or inside them, where the interiors were adorned with fabrics of the most varied hues and designs. Some Guinean families, who had settled on the fringes of the *lumo*, worked as

mechanics and fitters.[1] A Nigerian pharmacist catered for patients nearby. Among the few Sabinke-owned businesses, a video club screened football matches from European leagues and other major cups. Before 2007, when rural electrification reached several neighbourhoods in the village and made watching TV at home a popular pastime, villagers would come here at night to watch Bollywood and Nollywood movies, and for an older audience, Soninke comedies produced in Senegal and Mali.

Leaving the market for the town centre, the impression of a rapidly growing village remained with me. In the family compounds along the route, fences of millet canes and wooden sticks had been replaced by concrete walls, while round huts with thatched roofs had given way to concrete buildings topped by corrugated iron sheets. As the villagers remarked: 'All the buildings that you see in this village, it is travelling that brought them'. Some houses sported a flat concrete roof and a decorated ledge, or were decorated with colourful stripes of red and yellow paint; sometimes the patronym of the household and the year of construction were inscribed in the concrete (Figure 1.3). Solar panels could be spotted here and there, though the arrival of the electrical supply had made cash meters a more usual sight.

At the central square, the weight of the village social history became decidedly more visible, albeit still traceable to an elsewhere. A mostly empty and sandy square was dominated, on the northern side, by the central mosque, a plain but gracious white building with two small minarets and a dome. Originally built by Sabi-born magnate Bassiru Jawara – allegedly the richest man in the Gambia – the mosque was later refurbished and equipped with solar panels and loudspeakers by various Sabi hometown associations (Figure 1.2). Following the customary principle of inheritance, prayers at the mosque were led by a learned man from a branch of the Silla family. The same rule applied to the village chief – a state official – the eldest genealogical male of another branch of the same Silla family, who governed the village from the large residence just across the square from the central mosque. Whether featuring the latest architectural style or in urgent need of refurbishment, at a closer look the families around the chiefly household reflected the social order of the village from the time of its foundation. Neighbourhoods of *nyaxamalo* (casted artisans), divided according to their profession, surrounded Silla-kunda.[2] The Sumbunu (leatherworkers) and the Kante (blacksmiths) were among the founding families of Sabi, and they built their family compounds here; whereas the Kamara (Islamic praise-singers) had settled between the chiefly Silla and the imam Silla, to the southwest. In this area, called *kammunun-kanu* (uphill quarter), one found many households of *hooro* (nobles). At the opposite end of the village,

Figure 1.2 Sabi Central Mosque: Generations of Migrant Transnationality

Figure 1.3 Kaba-kunda, 2007

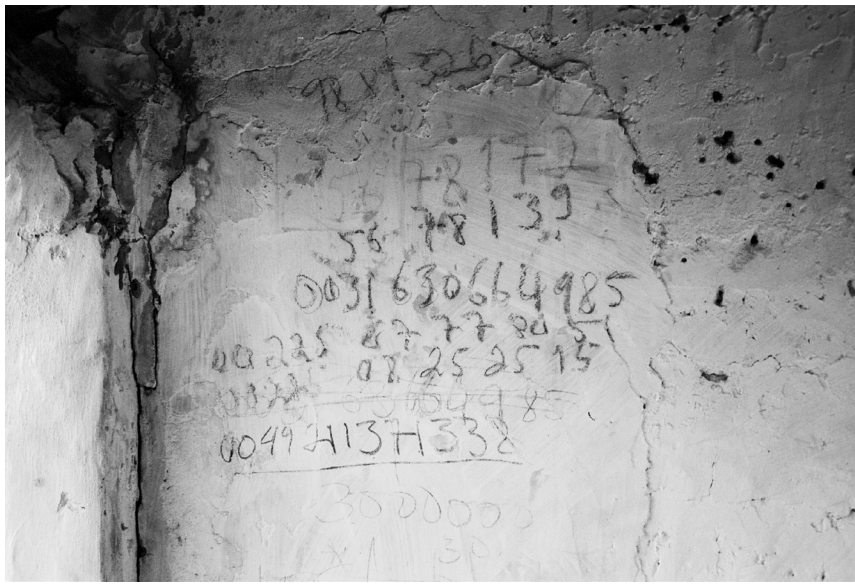


Figure 1.4 Staying Connected: Phone Numbers on a House Wall

there extended the *komon-kanu* (slave quarter), hosting villagers of slave descent (*komo*).

This cursory presentation of Sabi should be enough to give a sense of the marked spatial and temporal bi- or multi-focality (Vertovec 2004) that has characterized the physical and social environment of Sabi for many decades and until at least the time of writing (Figure 1.4). These juxtapositions are certainly not unique to this Gambian community. Most villages in the region have, in one way or another, contributed to waves of rural-urban and international emigration in the course of the twentieth century, progressively weaving the fabric of local, peasant life along the threads spun by migrant and non-migrant villagers as they have sought to remain connected across a distance (e.g. Quiminal 1991; Lambert 2002; Riccio 2007: 50–55). Housing investments financed by migrant money are probably the most visible sign of this long-distance interaction, standing as tokens of belonging as well as signs of upward personal and social mobility which have transformed the urban landscape in the countryside as much as that of metropolitan areas (Tall 2009; Melly 2010).

To the scholar of migration, Sabi would appear, in brief, as a typical example of a 'transnational village' (Levitt 2001). However, concealed in the multi-stranded connections and flows that straddle 'here' and 'there' is a less visible historical process of disconnection (Ferguson 1999: ch. 7) or reconfiguration of the nodes and networks of the Upper River

economy (cf. Howard and Shain 2005). Sabi did not pass from being an isolated farming village to becoming a transnational village by progressively opening up to the world. On the contrary, as will be shown in the first part of this chapter, the founding of Sabi was already the product of epochal political and economic transformations in the Senegambia *and* the world system during the second half of the nineteenth century. What has conferred a transnational colour on this Upper River settlement in the subsequent decades is a trajectory that, while turning the village into a centre of a worldwide diaspora, has decentred it as a vital node of economic activity and accumulation.

In several respects, Sabi residents are more like peasants today than they were in the past. Until the Second World War, the villagers combined trade and labour migration with agriculture in a synergic manner. Thereafter, regional trading networks provided the basis for a rapid expansion of long-distance travel within and without Africa. While this ongoing phase of migration reveals continuity with the past ones, this chapter will show that it is characterized by discontinuity in the way in which movement and stillness are related. The trade–agriculture nexus has withered among the Upper River Soninke, leading to a greater bifurcation of mobile and immobile livelihoods in a context of growing diasporization and simultaneous curtailment of the freedom of movement. By describing the economic, political and environmental transformations that have shaped this separating of life careers, this chapter sheds light on how a social field of (im)mobility has emerged in Sabi, and with it a geo-social 'sitting' space for rural young men to occupy.

'Sitting' Sabi, Creating Movement, 1902–c.1945

According to colonial records, Sabi was founded or 'sat' in 1902, only a year after the British Protectorate of the Gambia (established in 1894) had been extended to the Upper River Province.[3] Sabi was a resettlement from Sabi Xase (lit. Old Sabi), a village in the precolonial kingdom of Bundu, which was an area stretching from the upper Gambia River valley to the upper Senegal one (see Clark 1996). Sabi Xase belonged to a cluster of mostly Soninke villages in a valley where the Nieriko, a tributary of the Gambia River, flows through, and was connected to Soninke settlements in the northeast of Bundu, close to the Senegal River and the historical Soninke lands of Gajaaga. Across Bundu ran one of the most important commercial routes in the region since at least the times of the Atlantic slave trade. The Soninke, among other indigenous Muslim traders, led caravans of slaves, gold and other merchandise from the Senegal

valley and the Western Sudan to the Gambia, and returned back with salt and European goods. Philip Curtin (1975: 68) has described Soninke villages in the Nieriko valley as 'clerical-commercial communities', where students could learn Islam, and where traders and travellers could stop over before or after crossing the wilderness area between Bundu and Wuli, the easternmost kingdom in the Upper River. Sabi Xase was known to early nineteenth century European explorers as a relatively prosperous place which, in addition to trade and Islam, thrived on a flourishing agriculture (Gray and Dochard 1825: 102–3).

In the second half of the nineteenth century, however, the upper Senegal River valley became the theatre for internal and regional conflicts, due to succession struggles, so-called jihadist movements and expanding French colonial interests in the area. Warfare and raids, together with epidemics and droughts, caused the Soninke and other peoples to leave the region, with Wuli and the rest of the Upper River being one of the main destinations (Gomez 1992: 122, 149; Clark 1999: 99–107; cf. Sanneh 1979: 63–64). Entire villages were resettled in the nearby upper Gambia River valley, especially on the relatively unpopulated southern banks, where the king of Fuladu, Alfa Molo Egge, and later his son Musa, offered protection to men of trade and religion like the Soninke elites (Bellagamba 2000: 51).[4] The wealthy among the refugees would in fact take some slaves and cattle along, and some clerics were reported to have moved with their entire followings. On the north bank, long-standing commercial relations with *juula* families in the Mandinka kingdoms of Wuli and Niani hosted waves of Soninke settlers and eventually helped them find new land for settlement.[5] In spite of their growing presence, rapidly forming the largest ethnic group along the Upper River, as latecomers the Soninke in the south did not generally object to being ruled by Mandinka or Fula kings, or, after the colonial takeover, by district chiefs.

The Silla and their followers from Sabi Xase thus moved to Darsilami, on the north bank, where they stayed for a generation or so. Pressed by land scarcity, however, they then crossed the river, together with their slaves and clients. The Sumbunu (leatherworkers), the Kante (blacksmiths) and the Kaba (noble clerics) followed suit from Darsilami, helping to reconstruct Sabi Xase's social structure in the new Sabi.[6] The village grew rapidly, and within a generation reached the size of almost one thousand inhabitants, among whom were relatives and fellow Soninke from the east, as well as clerics and, especially, farmers from other communities in the interior. A small Jakhanke neighbourhood was eventually established in the village around the household of a Quranic teacher.[7]

What drove demographic growth in Sabi and other recent Soninke settlements was, in fact, the expansion of commercial groundnut

agriculture. Since the mid nineteenth century, the commercial exploitation of groundnuts along the Gambia River valley had attracted what Swindell and Jeng (2006: 44) have called 'pioneer-famer-traders' from the interior, among whom the Soninke men again featured prominently. Groundnut cultivation was subsequently integrated into household production, assisted by slave labour, and increasingly, by seasonal migrant workers known by the British as *strange farmers* (i.e., stranger farmers; known in Senegal as *navétans*). *Strange farmers* farmed around three mornings for their host, who in exchange provided them with accommodation, food and a plot of land for them to grow groundnuts for sale. Seasonal immigrants gradually replaced slave labour as slaves became progressively emancipated from their masters in the first half of the twentieth century (Weil 1984; Bellagamba 2005). Relatively few slaves fled, and those who remained were rather integrated into the bottom of the social hierarchy as an endogamous group on a par with the nobles and the casted artisans; as newly autonomous farmers, they too contributed to the expanding agricultural frontier. By the 1920s, the Upper River Province had become the main exporting region in the Gambia basin, overtaking the historical boom areas in the North Bank Province. Basse became the main market town in the Protectorate, attracting European firms, Lebanese entrepreneurs and indigenous traders (Barrett 1988: 105–6).

After their arrival in the Upper River, Soninke immigrants also quickly recreated their clerical-commercial communities in the area. Although European commercial companies and the arrival of Lebanese traders led to a progressive marginalization of African trade (Mbodji 1992), there remained niches in the market where *juula* traders continued to thrive. During the whole colonial period, regional trading networks remained central for the Gambian Soninke. Upper River traders ranged from the upper Senegal River valley and Mali to Guinea Bissau and Futa Jallon (Guinea Conakry) (Figure 1.5). Some kinds of handmade cloth were cheaper than those imported by Europeans, and tie-dye textiles produced in Gidimaxa and Gajaaga (upper Senegal River valley) were used as prestige items and for ceremonial dressing (Clark 1999: 71–72). Sabi traders also travelled south to Futa Jallon, particularly to Labe and Kindia, where a similar kind of cloth called *kindia* could be found.[8] Along the same route, traders would buy cattle, which were highly sought after by Gambian farmers wishing to convert their groundnut sales into livestock wealth.[9] As ancient as the cloth trade was that of gold, imported from Mali into the Gambia to be made into jewellery, which also served as a form of savings for women (Shipton 1995).[10] Sabi men were involved in seasonal and occasional forms of labour migration, especially as *strange*

farmers, to the groundnut basin in north-western Senegal and as labourers and hawkers in wharf towns along the Gambia River.

The Farmer-trader

In Sabi, agriculture and economic migration were symbiotic. The farmer-traders who pioneered groundnut cultivation along the Gambia River remained the dominant figures of (im)mobility until the mid twentieth century, at least in Soninke villages. Some traders eventually became full-time producers, deploying householders, clients and migrant labour to produce surplus; others used commercial agriculture to recapitalize their trade. The farming of groundnuts also provided an opportunity to start trading from scratch. Groundnut cultivation, like most agricultural activity, was a seasonal activity (June–November), which conveniently integrated with dry-season activities, especially trade. In 1946, an agricultural officer visiting Koina, the easternmost Gambian (Soninke) village, wrote: 'Trading is carried on in any commodity in demand in French territory, and groundnuts are sold as soon as the trade season opens in order to obtain cash to buy such commodities'.[11] Although commercial agriculture could result in poverty and chronic indebtedness, the social base of trade remained rather wide, especially for seasonal and short-range trade such as the smuggling of European merchandise, including gunpowder, into French territories. Even long-distance trade was not restricted to clerical and other freeborn families, though it must be borne in mind that these generally maintained a prominent position as traders.

For most of the colonial period, the farmer-trader remained the emblematic figure in migratory–sedentary dynamics in Sabi. The farmer-trader typically invested in both mobile (trading) and sedentary (groundnut) activities, engaging in a sort of positive feedback system of capitalization between seasonally complementary activities. Wealth acquired in farming and trading was thus used to build prestige and local social networks. Such localizing strategies could serve the interests of farmer-traders, such as accessing food and implements distributed on behalf on the colonial government by district chiefs and other agents. Some of these goods, such as gunpowder in the early colonial period, would then be smuggled across the border.

The Sabinko still vividly remember two wealthy farmer-traders. One is Biagi Sirandu Kaira, a man from an important noble family (*hoore*) who used to run Quranic schools and probably had a trading past before settling in Sabi. Beginning his career in the late 1920s, Biagi was involved

in the gold trade. He used to travel to Gajaaga and Mali, and as he made money, he began to commission other traders to buy gold on his behalf and bought from the foreign gold traders he hosted.[12] Biagi also traded in groundnuts, a business to which he became more and more dedicated as he grew older and gave up travelling. Apart from selling groundnuts to wharf town agents, he would give bags out on credit to people in need of seeds or food. He applied a harsh two-for-one interest rate, usually to be paid after harvest. This was a widespread arrangement for the time, which surely increased indebtedness among the poor; it was later dismissed as illicit (*riba*) on Islamic grounds. Biagi was nevertheless known as a prominent man. He was the first villager to build a brick house with a corrugated iron roof, around the 1940s. It is said that each of his twelve sons had a horse which wore gold bangles round its ankles.

The other farmer-trader is Musa Jabu Konte. A contemporary of Biagi, Musa Jabu came from a lower status family, his father being a stranger with no connections to Sabi families but who nonetheless decided to settle down in Sabi. Musa Jabu's story is one of a self-made man, and, perhaps better than Biagi's, it shows the mutuality between mobility and immobility. Despite starting as an outsider, Musa took advantage of a growing rural economy in the 1920s and 1930s, and of Soninke trading networks, to achieve great social and economic success. He worked hard on groundnut fields and used the sales profits to go and buy cloths in Futa Jallon or in Mali to resell them in the Gambia. He then used the profits from the cloth trade to employ *strange farmers*, and hence produce more groundnuts, and hence recapitalize his commerce, until he became a semi-permanent groundnut producer and trader on a par with Biagi.[13] He married four wives and had many children. He eventually became respected among the nobles and established close ties with Islamic scholars. He is remembered as a generous patron, and one of the first people from the Upper River to go on pilgrimage to Mecca by travelling on a plane (in the 1950s).

After the generation of Musa Jabu and Biagi Sirandu, the last Sabi trader-farmer of some renown was Sambu Kamara, a *fina* (Islamic praise-singer group). Known as a generous man surrounded by praise-singers (*jaaru*) and the first man to afford meat on a daily basis, Sambu amassed wealth by trading gold in the 1950s and early 1960s, while farming groundnuts in the rainy season. He later invested in cotton, and then began planting mango trees and cassava for commercial purposes. Following his death, the plantations were gradually abandoned, although the mango orchard still thrives on the outskirts of Sabi. Some of Sambu's, Musa Jabu's and Biagi Sirandu's younger brothers and sons took over their

trading ventures, but most of them retired soon afterwards or ended up joining their kinsmen travelling to Sierra Leone and other West African countries.

By the mid 1950s, in fact, other migratory routes and opportunities were attracting young men away from the village, and away from groundnuts. Musa Jabu directly advised some of his sons to do so and paid for their fares. The exodus from Biagi Sirandu's household was even more drastic, with all of his sons gone to seek fortunes in foreign countries. That first brick building in Sabi still towers above the courtyard in the Kaira residence, a symbol of a glorious past; however, only a few of the family members have chosen to stay in Sabi today.

New Routes and Roots in the Post-war Period

Having survived by adapting to marginal niches, Soninke and other Upper River traders came out of the shadows and developed in a rather impressive way after the end of the Second World War. They followed what Kate Meagher (2005: 229–30) calls a strategy of diversification and globalization, reaching more and more diverse and distant destinations. They spread across West and Central Africa, occupying and intersecting market opportunities in the diamond and African art export trades, as well as in other merchandise. Meanwhile, expansion and diversification took place in agriculture as well. But as regional trade waned, and the centres of commercial activity became more removed from the village, this period of transition sowed the seed for a deeper transformation of the nexus between migrant and sedentary livelihoods.

Although trade migrants bought and sold a plethora of other merchandise, diamonds and, to a lesser extent, African art objects became the true emblems of the expansion and diversification of migratory routes. In the 1940s, experienced traders travelling south to Futa Jallon eventually continued on along the route, reaching Sierra Leone, as the diamond sector there was quickly developing.[14] In the 1950s, an authentic diamond fever attracted thousands of men from the Senegal valley and the Gambia valley to the mines of Sierra Leone (Bredeloup 2007: 65ff). Even young men with no prior experience of trade sold their groundnuts, a cow or their mother's jewellery to go to Sierra Leone. In the 1960s, the *diamantaires* spread to Ivory Coast, Liberia, Guinea Conakry and to the Belgian and French Congos. Soninke migrants operated as mining entrepreneurs, traders and intermediaries alongside other groups and nationalities in a complex network that crisscrossed West and Central Africa, supplying diamonds, sometimes illicitly, to the most important markets beyond the

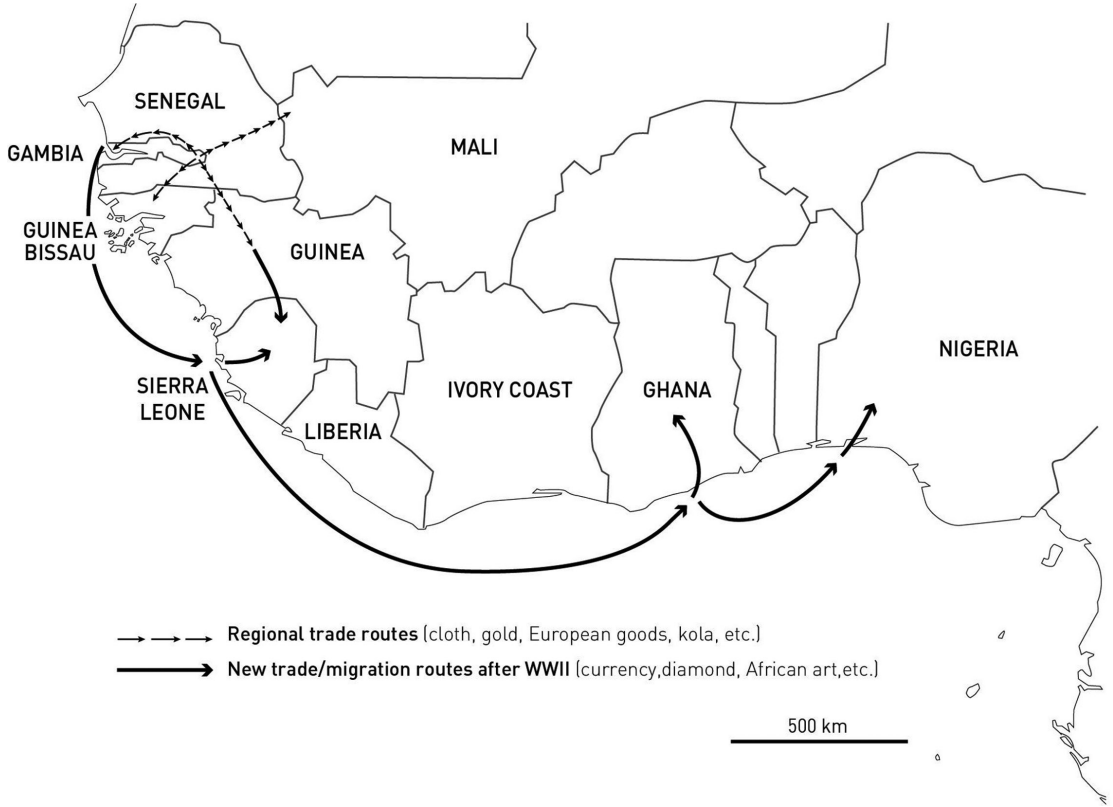


Figure 1.5 Soninke Trade Routes in the Colonial Period

region, such as Antwerp, Tel Aviv, Beirut and Bujumbura (in Burundi) (Bredeloup 2007: 24–25, 96).

Meanwhile, sea transport facilitated the emergence of the new migratory routes. For the Soninke of the Upper Senegal, the transport system on the river and then at sea had provided an important labour market, which in the post-war period eventually paved the way, via Marseille, for the well-known Soninke labour immigration to France (Manchuelle 1997: 197–203; Bertoncello and Bredeloup 2004: 19–33, 91ff). For the Gambian Soninke, in contrast, sea transport brokered not labour opportunities but commercial routes to West Africa. In addition to Sierra Leone, traders travelled further south to the Gold Coast. In the late 1940s, they went to buy kola nuts and exchange British and French currencies at advantageous rates (cf. Rice 1968: 216). Some time later, traders found out that African art objects were a growing market, and in particular focused on old European beads (*xanyo*), an item of trade dealt in by their forefathers during and after the Atlantic slave trade (Curtin 1975: 229–30). As Christian Steiner (1994: 7) has shown, the African art trade boomed in the 1960s, fuelled not only by collectors but also by tourists, peace corps, civil rights movements and African nationalist movements. Muslim traders from West Africa generally controlled the trade in Ivory Coast, Ghana and Nigeria, the last two being the main destinations for traders from Sabi and the rest of the Upper River.

In the 1960s and 1970s, some art traders began to travel to the U.S. to supply regular clients; others thought that by going to where most buyers came from, their goods would fetch higher prices.[15] Paul Stoller's (2002) ethnography of the African art market in Harlem (New York) is testimony to the current vitality of West African traders who arrived along this route. Once on American soil, however, migrants found other opportunities. Cheap unskilled labour was needed in shops, restaurants and hotels; West Africans also worked as deliverers, watchmen and taxi drivers (Tall 2008: 45–47). On the other side of the Atlantic, some of the *diamantaires* began to travel to Belgium and the Netherlands in the 1970s. During their stay, traders looked for other commercial opportunities, such as second-hand car markets, particularly in Germany. Here, too, other labour opportunities became available.[16] In the late 1970s, the airline company Iberia inaugurated a route between Lagos and Madrid, and some migrants already in Nigeria took the flight (see Kaplan 1998: 96). No visa was required before 1985. Migrants did not stop in Madrid, they went on to Catalonia, especially the Girona Province. By the early 1980s, many migrants were working in the *campo*, Catalonian farms and orchards, picking fruit and vegetables during the spring and summer (Kaplan 1998: 96). Eventually some found work as labourers in the

construction and service sector, and later in factories near Barcelona, Gerona and Mataró.

Agricultural Innovation in a Time of Emigration

The boom in international migration, back in the 1950s, was not due to a sharp decline in agricultural production. The end of the Second World War in 1945 had restored market confidence, prices had gone up and Gambian farmers had responded by producing ever more groundnuts. Good rainy seasons did the rest. The 1950s were less favourable (Gailey 1964: 162–63) than the post-war years, but production continued to expand, breeding mild optimism for the transition to national independence, in 1965. Late colonialism was marked by developmentalist policies, which took some steps towards improving infrastructure and agricultural production – even though such policies had only marginal impacts on the Upper River compared to the urban areas and other British territories. In 1949, the government had established the Gambia Oilseed Marketing Board (GOMB) to centralize the groundnut trade and to provide development funds for farmers' activities and communities. From the late 1940s, the Wuli agricultural station ran demonstrations of ox-ploughing and in the 1950s ploughs began to be taken to the fields and sold to the farmers.[17] New seed varieties were introduced, together with new implements (Sallah 1990: 626). A small warehouse to organize seed storage was built in Sabi.

In 1968 the run of good rainy seasons came to an abrupt halt, inaugurating a period of droughts which would permanently transform the climate across the Western Sahel. The meteorological station at Basse measured an average of 1055.7 mm of rain between 1959 and 1967, falling to 876.4 mm in the 1972–80 period (van Dokkum 1992: 63–64). Baker (1995: 73) has found that in the western regions the rainy season has become one month shorter, while Webb (1992: 561) states that 'the rainy season in the Gambia has become increasingly bi-modal, with a mini-drought of several weeks occurring in the middle of the wet season', causing germinating plants to dry up. Sabi elders and adults have seen the nearby stream becoming drier and drier, and women have progressively given up cultivating rice on its swampy banks.

In spite of the worsening climate, however, the Sabinko remember the 1970s as years of agricultural intensity. The policy of the Marketing Board (transformed into the Gambia Produce Marketing Board – GPMB – in 1973) shifted from supporting farmers with food supplies to subsidizing production. The Gambian Cooperative Union (GCU), known simply as the *cooperative* by the Sabinko, represented the main licensed agent

on behalf of the GPMB and main governmental actor in the region, distributing tools and implementing credit schemes for the farmers. The GCU effectively became a tool for state patronage and control of the rural population (McNamara and Shipton 1995: 105), but this did not prevent Sabi farmers from eagerly responding to new opportunities and subsidies. Animal traction was significantly expanded in the 1970s, with farmers quickly adopting the versatile Sine Hoe, a multipurpose frame (plough, seeder and weeder) manufactured in Senegal. In the middle of the decade, cotton cultivation was also strengthened to diversify agricultural production. In Sabi, Sixu Nyuma Silla (not the chiefly Silla) was one of the first cotton farmers of the Gambia Cotton Project in the eastern part of the country, and he became a Producer Director on the GPMB board. Cotton production caught on quickly among Sabi farmers, often replacing groundnuts. Thanks to the high profile figure of Silla, the villagers could secure regular access to machines, fertilizers, pesticides and tools. Although the Cotton Project was progressively dismantled in the 1980s, leaving Sabi farmers no choice but to abandon the new cash crop, this clearly shows that the pioneers were not only abroad.[18]

Shifting Geographies of Trade

If the migration boom was thus driven by opportunity rather than by constraint, nevertheless regional trade networks called for greater diversification. The establishment of the Marketing Board in the 1950s meant greater expansion and centralization of the marketing system to the advantage of licensed agents, thereby continuing the trend of the marginalization of indigenous traders (Mbodji 1992: 223–24). European companies progressively pulled out of the country but the monopoly of imported merchandise and foodstuff continued under the public National Trading Company, created in 1973 (Barrett 1988: 80). The headquarters thus remained in Banjul, whose commercial vitality increased in the 1970s.

In response to the vagaries of climate and agriculture, the government began to turn the small size of the country into an advantage, dreaming of transforming it into the 'Singapore of Africa' (Sall and Sallah 1994: 128). Rice, sugar, textiles, tomato paste and other goods imported at low customs tariffs were thus re-exported to Senegal and the countries of the interior that had no seaports or were keeping import duties high to protect their industry. The re-export trade left room for African traders; still, however, the major stakeholders were a restricted number of Banjul-based importers with sufficient capital and connections with the government (Lambert 1994: 85–87). Some Soninke returnees from West Africa managed to become prominent importers in Banjul, but few of them participated in

the transport and commercial networks – mostly controlled by Senegalese and Mauritanian immigrants – linking the coast with the Upper River.

In sum, by the 1970s, the centres of trade and capital accumulation had shifted location. The earlier trading networks in Senegambia and Western Sudan had morphed and shifted away from the Upper River. Meanwhile, agriculture remained buoyant, though innovation and diversification were driven as much by opportunity as by growing constraints, especially those connected to climate change. In fact, while the frontier of international migration was rapidly expanding in geographical scale and economic significance, the signs of an imminent halt and retrenchment on the Upper River agricultural frontier had already become apparent.

Parting Sedentary and Migrant Livelihoods: 1970s–Present

Starting from the 1970s, the model of the farmer-trader becomes increasingly inadequate to describe patterns of (im)mobility in Sabi. Circular migration between Sabi and new trade destinations remained popular for some time – '*I de go, I de come*' as many former *diamantaires* used to describe their travelling between Sabi and Sierra Leone, in the Krio language. But cycles of circular migration became progressively longer, and destinations more distant and more expensive to reach. Funding emigration through groundnut sales alone became increasingly hard, while other forms of savings linked to agrarian economy deteriorated. The subsequent three sections describe, in turn, three simultaneous processes which, in continuity with the post-war migration boom, have contributed to driving a wedge between mobile and immobile livelihoods: 1) the decline of the rural economy; and the juxtaposition of 2) momentous international labour migration and 3) rising barriers to transnational mobility.

Bush Troubles: The Decline of the Rural Economy

The drought years in the 1960s and 1970s, combined with growing urbanization, provoked a sharp rise in the demand for food supplies, and hence in imports from abroad. The Gambian government responded by promoting endogenous development and agricultural diversification policies under the Tesito programme, a Mandinka word evoking a hard-working farmer hitching up his trousers before bending down in the field to farm (Saho 1979). With the backing of international donors, irrigation projects to boost rice production were launched, notably in the Jahally-Pacharr area (Central River Region), alongside smaller-scale ones further east along the river (Carney and Watts 1990; P. Webb 1991). Too

far from the river and well-watered creeks, Sabi was not part of these programmes. Also limited in Sabi was the advent of horticulture and orchards, which in the 1980s developed rapidly especially in the western part of the country (Schroeder 1999; Baker and Edmonds 2004). In the late 1990s, Youth With A Mission (YWAM, an international Christian organization) created a small local branch in Sabi. One of their projects has been to improve fruit and vegetable cultivation, for both income generation and nutritional purposes.[19] But commercial horticulture requires considerable investment as well as a regular water supply – again a major problem in Sabi, where only a few gardens stand out in a panorama that is definitely more yellowish than in neighbouring villages like Numuyell and Dembakunda, located near permanent creeks.

Save for horticulture, the dynamism of Gambian farmers was progressively put to the test in the 1980s. By this time, it had become abundantly clear to farmers that a policy change would be unlikely. Development projects and public spending concentrated on the urban areas, while the monopoly of the patronage-ridden GPMB reaped profits from groundnuts, and farmers received low prices. In 1984, groundnut growers were paid only 23 per cent of the international market price (Wright 2004: 220). However, the liberalization of farm-gate prices under the auspices of the Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) (1985), the structural adjustment programme promoted by the IMF and the World Bank, initially favoured Gambian farmers. In 1990, the already erratic state subsidies were stopped altogether, so that farmers would allegedly benefit from the liberal market and negotiate the price of their produce directly with traders (Sallah 1990). However, Gambian farmers experienced once more their fate of being weak price setters in the world market, as they competed with heavily subsidized groundnut producers in countries like the U.S. (Wright 2004: 217–18).

In the 1990s, the marketing infrastructure was badly affected. In 1993, the GMBP went bankrupt and was bought by Alimenta, a Swiss multinational, which renamed it the Gambia Groundnut Corporation (GGU). Meanwhile, the *cooperative* (GCU), deemed too inefficient and deficit-ridden, was disbanded in 1996. Following litigations and court cases with Alimenta, however, the Gambian government closed down the GGU and assumed direct control of the marketing network, only to find itself with a much less efficient infrastructure. In the 2005/6 season, many farmers were issued with promises of payment for their produce but had to wait until the following year before they could receive their cash.[20] A very bad season followed; moreover, the farmers were advised to take their groundnuts to central depots, hence they had to bear the responsibility for the transport costs (Dampha 2007). In Sabi, this resulted in middlemen and

traders with their carts and tractors buying from door to door at 350–400 Dalasi per bag, and taking bags to the Basse depot. A year later (2007/8), a collection point was issued at Sabi and cash was made available, but purchases only began in mid January, when many farmers had already taken their groundnuts to the collection point at Badiara, the Senegalese village at the nearby border.

As a response to the growing uncertainties of agriculture, the government has since offered the population another round of development campaigns, inviting citizens to go 'Back to the Land' and work hard to reach the goal of alimentary self-sufficiency (see Chapter 2). Although some results have been certainly achieved, this campaign employs populist overtones and – like other recent agricultural policies – it has often failed to address the plight of the Gambian farmers (Wright 2004: 235–37, 244–48; Gajigo and Saine 2011). Even if more Gambians were to go back to the land, land scarcity has become a major issue over the last three decades. Between 1973 and 2003, the population of the Upper River region more than doubled and Sabi is now at least five times larger than it was in the 1930s, hosting more than five thousand people (Central Statistics Department 1976; Gambia Bureau of Statistics 2006). A larger population tends to farm more land, but today little of it is available on the Gambian side of the border. Back in the colonial days, people used to go south into Senegal to clear new land and establish seasonal farming villages, which later became permanent settlements. The last ones were established in the 1950s, but then progressively people either settled across the border or gave up establishing farming villages. As a consequence, fallow periods have shrunk, if not altogether disappeared: farmers often alternate grains and groundnuts on the same land year after year, and they now complain that soil fertility is dramatically decreasing. Although the government has started again to subsidize fertilizer prices, this is not within reach of everybody's pockets.

If it is true that emigration has driven numerous men away from the fields, labour shortages in the Upper River have been mainly caused by a progressive decline in the influx of *strange farmers*. Since the 1970s, young men from surrounding regions have headed to the cities to work as labourers and petty traders.[21] Meanwhile, household heads have become wary of guest farmers because these have become more freelance day labourers than tributary farmers. Villagers pay them cash on an occasional contract basis (*sassi*) to weed, uproot and harvest according to need. Often, seasonal immigrants do not even bother to cultivate their plots; instead, they tour the countryside in search of contracts, so it has become more difficult to pin them down to work on their 'landlord days' (three mornings a week).

On the whole, the ecological, economic and demographic constraints on agriculture have pushed Gambian farmers back to cereal production (Gajigo and Saine 2011). In the Soninke milieu, married women still farm groundnuts on small plots, some of which they use for cooking purposes. In the past, men were also heavily involved in groundnut cultivation, especially the household heads, who relied on the younger men's labour and that of the seasonal immigrants. But over the last three decades, men have largely abandoned cash crops and concentrated on farming millet and maize to refill the household granaries.

Despite this concerted effort, however, earning a living on farms has become a strenuous enterprise in the Upper River. In the early 1990s, Seibert and Sidibe (1992: 52) found that deficient production was already a chronic problem in the Upper River Region: in 1991, only six out of seventy-five informants in their survey sample declared themselves to be self-sufficient. In 2006/7, I collected socioeconomic data on twenty households (about 11 per cent of the village total) selected randomly from each social status group (nobles, casted artisans, slave descendants).[22] Though the sample was too limited for precise statistical analysis, my interviews confirmed Sieber and Sidide's findings and served to corroborate widespread views among villagers about their economic problems. Only three of the twenty households in the sample farmed enough food crops to last the year. In all other households, grains finished before the following rainy season or lasted until the harvest only when store-bought rice was added on a daily basis throughout the year. Households would offset subsistence deficiencies through off-farm incomes, mainly through migrant remittances. All but one household had at least one migrant abroad or in Serekunda.

The Rise of International Labour Migration

Upper River peasants have responded to the ecological and economic woes of the past four decades by further intensifying and diversifying migration both in and outside of Africa. While the rural economy has been declining, international emigration has become a consolidated livelihood strategy in Sabi's households. My small-scale survey carried out in 2006/7 reveals that an average of one man in three aged 16 to 55 in a Sabi household was either abroad or in Serekunda – a conservative estimate considering that several men, and their sons, from the surveyed households have over time established autonomous family nuclei elsewhere in the diaspora and are thus no longer counted as members. Rough as it may be, this figure compares well with statistics from other Soninke milieus in the upper Senegal River valley, where over the

Table 1.1 Major Migrant Destinations in Sabi, 2006/7

Destination	n. Migrants	Per cent
Europe & America	**30**	**58**
Europe	*24*	*46*
United States	*6*	*12*
West & Central Africa	**22**	**42**
Serekunda area	*12*	*23*
Angola	*5*	*9.5*
Rest of West and Central Africa	*5*	*9.5*
Total	**52**	**100**

past three decades between 30 and 50 per cent of the male population have emigrated. In the Upper Senegal, France has been the top destination since the 1960s, with peaks of nearly three quarters of the male migrants choosing the European country (Kane and Lericollais 1975: 177; Weigel 1982: 24; Findley and Sow 1998: 78–81, 106–9; Jónsson 2007: 8). In the Gambia valley, where France has been less popular a destination, migration flows have been, as shown, more geographically diversified; nevertheless, since the late 1970s, labour migration to Western countries has no doubt acquired further significance, to the detriment of West and Central African destinations. Of the fifty-two male migrant householders whose destination was provided by the respondents of my household survey, more than half were in Europe or the U.S. (see Table 1.1).

In the late 1970s, migrants already sensed that it was not wise to 'put all the eggs in one basket', as a former diamond dealer phrased it. In Sierra Leone, diamond deposits had become scarcer and more expensive to exploit, while merchant capital came to dominate the artisanal mining sector (Zack-Williams 1995). Likewise, the supply of art objects was also becoming scarce and Western demand fell (Steiner 1994: 7). Traders thus ventured into other market niches, switching from export- to import-oriented businesses. As African markets were increasingly flooded by Asian products in the 1980s, a new commercial fervour directed West African traders eastward: electronic goods (in Dubai and Hong Kong), clothing, shoes, hardware (e.g., tiles) and kitchenware (in China, especially Guangzhou), furniture and building materials (especially in Jakarta).

Import business has continued to grow. Political instability in the 1990s dealt a serious blow to the classic destinations in Africa, especially in diamond-rich countries. Civil strife in Liberia (1989–1996) and Sierra Leone (1991–2002) put an end to diamond ventures for a great many migrants. In 1997, the political situation in Zaire (now the Democratic

Republic of Congo) deteriorated, forcing several migrants to leave the country. Angola has remained the main diamond frontier since then, although the Lunda regions have been highly insecure, first because of civil war and later as a result of the repeated expulsions of strangers (Bredeloup 2007: 122). Thus, many migrants stay in Luanda, Angola's capital city, a thriving commercial hub fuelled by the country's petrodollars. On a par with Banjul-Serekunda, other cities in Central Africa (Kinshasa, Pointe Noire) and in the ECOWAS area (Cotonou, Lomé) have promoted commercial policies, thus attracting traders (Igue and Soule 1992; Whitehouse 2012b).

Although the fervour around trade migration has not entirely evaporated, the news of commercial opportunities in West and Central Africa does not trigger the travel rush they did in the old days, with the exception of Angola. Continental migrations have certainly slowed down since the 1970s, whereas labour migration to Europe and America has concurrently gained momentum. Since the early pioneers established the first bases, waged work in Western countries has become a major alternative to the erratic diamond, art and other trades. Some established traders advised and sponsored their sons and younger brothers to go to Europe or the U.S. and search for a regular salary instead of joining their enterprise. Spain, France, the U.S. and Germany have been the most popular destinations for the Soninke. Migration to the West has attracted a much wider population than expert travellers like the Soninke: economic and environmental woes in the rural and, increasingly, the urban economy have induced many households to invest in international migration. A number of Gambians have acquired degrees and work as skilled labourers or professionals, especially in the United States, but due to their low levels of formal secular education, the Soninke mainly occupy unskilled positions in the West. Agricultural work in Catalonia has continued, though migrants have mostly shifted to less seasonal occupations, on construction sites and in factories and the service sector. The retrenchment of the European economy following the 2008 financial crisis, especially in southern countries like Spain, have partially redirected migrants to commercial routes, with Angola and Central Africa once again being among the top destinations. Notwithstanding this ongoing trend of diversification, during my visit in 2012, the ambition to go to Europe was still robust among Sabi men.

Although scholars have identified a growing feminization of migration flows in the region (C.-O. Ba 2003; A. Ba 2008),[23] long-distance travel remains highly gendered in the Upper River. In Sabi, unmarried women migrating abroad on their own are rare. Women have usually followed their husbands, once these become established abroad and if they wish

their family to live with them. Nevertheless, women married to a migrant remain in Sabi at least as frequently as they travel to their husband's new residence. This does not mean that women are not active in other circuits of mobility, in particular rural–urban ones. Furthermore, once reunited with their husbands, women have typically been engaged in petty trade in West and Central Africa and salaried work in the West. Although men are not always willing to talk about migrant women as generators of income, it is clear that in some cases women's remittances play a role in household budgets and in financing the emigration of their younger brothers and sons. The pull of emigration among women is, in any case, nowhere near that among men. Younger men are certainly more inclined to leave for greener pastures than older men, but as migrants nowadays usually stay abroad until they retire from work or at least until their sons are old enough to migrate and remit money in their stead, there is no clear age limit for travel. Whilst they are able to work, men consider travelling as a possible livelihood option, and indeed the majority of mature and elderly men now resident in Sabi have spent some time away from the village at one point in their lives.

Barriers to International Emigration

Much as emigration is an accepted stage in a man's life, over the last three decades having an opportunity to travel has become, if not an exception, then enormously difficult. Unfortunately we lack precise quantitative data on past international emigration in Sabi and the Upper River to make meaningful comparisons with the current trends. Nevertheless, the fact that above-mentioned rates of international migration in Soninke communities in the Upper River and the Upper Senegal seem to have remained stable since the 1980s despite the growing appeal of travel among Soninke men, suggests that impediments to international emigration have partly kept the volume of international migrants from further expanding (see also Jónsson 2007). Throughout the world, though most notably in rich countries, requirements for immigration have become stricter. For the current generations of would-be travellers in Sabi and along the Gambia valley, the entry visa has assumed almost iconic status as a gateway to well-being and life chances, as well as a source of concern and frustration (Gaibazzi 2014). As the gulf between the aspiration to travel and the actual possibility of doing so has come to constitute a central element in the bifurcation of mobility and immobility, in this section I will provide an overview of the emergence of the barriers to international travel, focusing mainly on legal/political impediments, whilst also discussing other economic and social liabilities.

Spain, the most popular destination for the Soninke until the late 2000s, is an apt case in point for understanding the evolution of the international politics of cross-border mobility. Although Spain imposed an entry visa for most sub-Saharan African citizens in 1985, there was unanimous agreement among the migrants I talked to that travelling to the country remained relatively straightforward until the early 2000s. A widespread strategy to reach the Iberian peninsula has been to obtain a short-term visa and then overstay it and, while working without a permit, try to regularize one's situation through one of the periodic regularization schemes implemented by the Spanish government. The consolidation of the Schengen area in the 1990s has, however, forced Spain to adopt stricter immigration policies (Calavita 2005). Under the Schengen regime, entry requirements have been tightened at the expense of non-OECD citizens, in particular young, male and unskilled ones from low-income countries, whom consular agents target as high-risk potential illegal immigrants (Zampagni 2011).

As one of the main gatekeepers of the southern frontier of the European Union, Spain has actively participated in Europe's war against illegal migration, de facto contributing to the externalization of immigration controls to North and West Africa (Ferrer-Gallardo 2008). In response to legal barriers, in the 1990s, North and West Africans had brokered undocumented routes via the sea across the Strait of Gibraltar. Spain proceeded to militarize the Strait and install high-tech systems to intercept boats of migrants, pushing departure points further to the south, to southern Morocco first, then to Mauritania and Senegal, reaching the Gambia in 2006. Forced to take ever-greater risks to reach Europe, thousands of West Africans have embarked on the long journey to the Canary Islands, and the result has been a heavy death toll (Tall 2008: 47–50; Willems 2008). Both on its own initiative and through Frontex (the EU border management agency), Spain brokered joint patrols, intelligence operations against trafficking networks and readmission agreements with source countries, thereby drastically reducing the number of arrivals down to a few thousands in 2009 from more than thirty-three thousand in 2006 (Frontex 2009).

In addition to leading the concerted effort for border security off the coast of West Africa, Spain has been active in the EU's move towards a management approach to migration flows (Kabbanji 2013). Over the last ten years, the EU has mainstreamed the migration question in its policies and aid programmes for Africa (Gabrielli 2007). In late 2006, Spain and the Gambia signed a bilateral agreement to cooperate on migration management. Visiting Banjul in March 2009, the Spanish Deputy Prime Minister María Teresa Fernández de la Vega reiterated that 'We have agreed that it is necessary to work towards a regularization of the

migratory flows, but we must also make efforts in the prevention of illegal immigration and in the fight against the [traffickers'] networks'.[24] In line with this twofold objective, new funds were issued to continue joint costal patrolling and to provide fuel and equipment to the Gambian navy, and budgeted €840,000 for the construction of three skills centres in the Gambia specializing in construction, plumbing, renewable energy and electricity. This followed previous agreements on repatriation and aid.[25] In Senegal, skills training schemes were also linked to a 'mobility partnership' for sending the beneficiaries to work in Spain on a temporary visa (Ministère de la Jeunesse et l'Emplois des Jeunes 2007).

Agricultural development projects have also been part and parcel of the EU migration management initiative. In 2006, Senegal launched the REVA plan (*Retour Vers l'Agriculture*) as a response to undocumented emigration, and later received financial backing from Spain (Martínez Bermejo and Rivero Rodríguez 2008; Willems 2008: 290). Other projects have been smaller-scale and mostly funded through international and local NGOs. In 2011, for instance, the European Commission supported, via the Gambia Emergency Agricultural Production Project, the association/campaign Operation No Back Way to Europe, an initiative of the Gambian government that sought to curb illegal migration and provide youths with alternatives, especially in the agricultural sector (Janko 2012). Although migration has by now been picked out as a resource for development, these projects fundamentally respond to the well-worn logic of 'keeping people in their place' in the development sector (Bakewell 2008), and point to a mounting concern about food security and production among international organizations and donors. Doubts have nevertheless been raised regarding the effectiveness of such (cosmetic) measures to stem the exodus from the West African countryside (Cross 2013: ch. 8).

In any case, policies aimed at improving rural permanence have had no impact on Sabi, at either the practical or the ideological level. Although the Gambia has devised its own discourse on agriculture and migration (discussed in Chapter 2), the country has been relatively marginal, compared to its neighbours, in the geo-politics of migration governance and aid. Moreover, whereas in Senegal emigration has long been addressed as a development issue, this discourse has only recently been taken up by organizations working in the Gambia. As for skills training and microfinance, I am not aware of any Sabinke participating in such programmes, even though young men in Sabi are generally positive about learning a profession. In the first place, the Gambia's youth policy and, consequently, skills training programmes run by the state, set the age limit for the category of 'youth' at thirty (Government of The Gambia 1998), while in Sabi the search for potential opportunities, including emigration,

is something that goes on well beyond that limit. More importantly, such programmes require the completion of grade nine schooling, which most Sabi men lack.

In the meantime, the Soninke have responded to restrictive policies by, once again, diversifying their routes and activities. Contrary to what policymakers might expect, boat migration did not trigger a rush among the long-travelled Soninke. They have found other safer and more canny ways of obtaining travel documents – legal or counterfeited – for North America and Europe (cf. also de Haas 2008b: 1308–9). Because only the British and American Embassies issue visas in the Gambia, young men often go to other West African capital cities to look for a route (*kille*). They take advantage of the extensive migrant networks in the region and the hospitality of a fellow villager or a well-known landlord, who will often provide contacts with visa brokers too. Gambians do not need a visa for ECOWAS countries.

Of course, young men also travel through West Africa, including Serekunda, for business reasons. Compared to the golden age of trade migration, however, import commerce is much more capital intensive and stratified. The lower positions in the market and the retail stores are crowded, and not only by migrants: increasingly the unemployed autochthons revert to the booming 'informal' economy, the trans-border and transnational trade, to cope with the neoliberal retrenchment of the public sector and the economy as a whole (Meagher 2003: 61; Bertoncello and Bredeloup 2004: 66; Beuving 2004). The availability of start-up credit is thus a major hurdle to trade emigration. Although a number of youths still go and try to do business from scratch in other parts of West Africa, many others would not move without ensuring that they have secure contacts at their destination from whom they could obtain money to invest in business.

Finally, the capacity to migrate internationally has been unevenly distributed in Sabi society. Prominent families historically involved in trade and with wide-ranging kinship connections in Sabi and throughout the Upper River have continued to be at the forefront of more recent migration developments. Lower-status people, and in particular the descendants of slaves, have suffered from what I elsewhere called a 'rank effect'; namely, lower rates of emigration caused by a relative marginalization in economic and social terms (Gaibazzi 2012b). Having said that, in continuity with the earlier period of farming-trading (recall Musa Jabu Konte's story), lower-status people have eagerly taken advantage of networks and opportunities brokered by higher-status villagers. Trade and work abroad have often transformed the fortunes of individuals in unexpected ways, moreover causing as many differences within families as between

them. As some villagers like to remark, some former slaves are wealthier today than their former masters. It is therefore extremely difficult to map migration patterns onto social hierarchies in any simple way.

Diasporization, Transnationality and Urban Homes

So far I have suggested that the decline of the rural economy, the surge of international migration and its restrained access have created a gap between previously symbiotic migrant and sedentary livelihoods. A further element of disruption has been the increasing diasporization of Sabi. Although diasporas are not a new phenomenon – Sabi Xase in Bundu was a node of a wider trading diaspora – the extent to which expatriate village communities have developed over the last half century is remarkable. Countries of destination are today farther away, while transport, albeit faster than in the past, is costly. Business investments and salaried work require continual presence abroad and, as settlement in the place of immigration becomes more permanent, travellers might even bring over their wife (or wives) and children. On the other hand, migrants are not cut off from their home village; diasporization has gone hand in hand with the proliferation of social connections which, whilst underscoring the gap between home and away, simultaneously help bridging it. Migration in Sabi is in this sense transnational or translocal (Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc 1994: 7). To fully comprehend the emergence of a relational field of (im)mobility in Sabi, it is therefore necessary to further describe diasporic and transational dynamics. As my focus is on 'sitting', I will show how Sabi has become a node or mooring of the different flows originating from its satellites, but also how it competes with alternative moorings such as the Serekunda area, which is no longer solely a diasporic place but also a new, urban home.

The early 1990s marked a watershed in the human geography of the Soninke diaspora. Until then, among all destinations, Sierra Leone was a second home to many Gambian Soninke. As migrants spent more time in the diamond areas, some of their wives began to circulate between the Upper River and Sefadu, Kenema or Bo, and more rarely, Freetown. Some migrants married local women. Some of the children attended school and learnt the diamond trade from their fathers. In Sabi, some villagers sent their children to study in Sierra Leone's Islamic schools or colleges, thanks to relatives abroad, though the opposite flow was always much greater. When in 1991 civil war broke out, the dream of a second home brutally disappeared. In December of the following year, more than two thousand Gambians were evacuated from Sefadu as the fighting approached the area

(Bredeloup 1999: 184), excluding those who had already left or stayed on. Entire households returned, either to Serekunda or to Sabi, and many Sierra Leonean refugees were also hosted in the Gambia. In the meantime, Spain was quickly emerging as the leading destination for the new generation of migrants. In 1991, when people were close to fleeing Sierra Leone en masse, Spain regularized the status of illegal aliens. Gambians holding a permit in the Province of Gerona went from 778 to 1,968 that year (Kaplan 1998: 101). Fifteen years later the Gambian presence had risen to 7,603 in the province of Gerona alone, and another 4,590 were in the province of Barcelona. With slightly more than 16,000 (regular) expatriates, Gambians constituted in the mid 2000s the third largest immigrant minority from Sub-Saharan Africa (after Senegal and Nigeria) in Spain, and the largest in Catalonia, a remarkable statistic for such a small country as the Gambia (Secretaría General de Inmigración y Emigración 2007). In 1992/3, Adriana Kaplan conducted a survey in the area around Salt (a town near Gerona) and found that 47 per cent of the Gambian migrants identified themselves as Soninke, 34 per cent as Mandinka, and 17 per cent as Fula (Kaplan 1998: 87). Farjas Bonet's (2002: 336ff) study of Gambians in Olot, Banyoles and Salt estimated that there were decidedly higher proportions of Soninke in 1998/9. This reflects in part the demographic distribution in the Upper River where many migrants come from, but also the fact that the Soninke arrived early in Catalonia and quickly deployed their networks to facilitate new arrivals.

Village membership has played a decisive role in the development of Soninke communities abroad and in the creation of transnational relations (Timera 1996: 54; cf. also Manchuelle 1997: 123–28). Spain again provides a case in point. Unlike in France, in Catalonia migrants have not lived in the *foyers des travailleurs*, the (in)famous migrants' hostels in which Soninke migrants from the Upper Senegal adopted the blueprint of the village (hierarchical) society to organize communal life (Timera 1996). Nevertheless, both Kaplan (1998) and Farjas Bonet (2002) show that chain migration and family reunions created significant clusters of migrants from the same Gambian villages. For instance, Mataró, the capital of the district of Maresme, has been a popular destination for the Sabinko. In 1983, under the leadership of Sabinke Juju Sumbunu, Gambian migrants founded the Associació Club Jama Kafo, and six years later Sumbunu led Sabi villagers alone to form the Associació Cultural Sabusire, which gathers subscriptions and donations from Sabinko across Spain.[26] Supported by the Mataró City Council, since 1989 the Associació Cultural Sabusire has been working to develop the health centre near the border post in Sabi (Ajuntament de Mataró 2003, 2004). Meanwhile, a plethora of Sabi hometown associations in other countries

have worked on different projects either individually or in a partnership; to mention some of the main ones: a small dam to retain water in the swamp (Sabinko in France), the Lower Basic School (Sweden), subsidized rice for low-income villagers (the U.S.) and solar panels to power the water tower (all associations).

Far from only changing the built environment in Sabi, however, migrants' remittances have also concerned the social one. Soninke speakers often compare travelling to schooling, for, by seeing the world out there, travellers acquire knowledge (*tuwaaxu*) and awareness (*wulliye*). The signs of new knowledge are perhaps most evident in the growing and thriving number of *sunnanko* or *sunnadunko* (people of the *Sunna*), believers who abide by the Islamic texts and the teachings of the Prophet Mohammed (Sunna) as a form of orthodoxy (Timera 1996; Rialland 1998; Timera 2001b). The literature refers to this as Islamic reformism, a heterogeneous movement and discourse inspired by Middle Eastern Sunni currents (Loimeier 2003; Janson 2013). Reformist Islam is hardly a coherent set of doctrines or group of adherents; what seems to be its unifying feature is a critique of maraboutism, which reformists condemned as an unlawful innovation (*bid'a*) because of the esoteric interpretations the marabouts give of Islam (see Soares 2005: 9–10).[27] Since the 1960s, migrants have become familiar with reformist ideas in the Congos – an early cradle of Islamic renovation (Manchuelle 1997: 176; Rialland 1998: 79–80; Whitehouse 2012b: 102) – and in other parts of West Africa, especially in Sierra Leone.[28] They have gone back to their communities and spread the novelties. They have begun to pray with their hands folded across their chest and to wear plain caftans in Middle Eastern style instead of West African grand, colourful robes. In the early 1990s, a returnee from Sierra Leone led a group of *Sunna* sympathizers in the construction of a second Friday mosque in Sabi, which is not far from the central mosque (see Figure 1.1). Some villagers turned up their noses at the innovators, perceiving them as introducing a 'new religion' and diverging from 'our fathers' path', but all in all the two mosques have coexisted in a rather cordial manner, particularly when compared to other villages.[29]

Whether individually or collectively, whether to maintain the status quo or to transform it, travellers have, through their investments, acknowledged the village as the home of the diaspora. The emergence of Banjul and Serekunda as second homes is, however, diverting attention and economic flows away from Sabi. In line with the rates of urbanization in other West African countries, the metropolitan area in Serekunda (Kanifing Municipal Council) has grown significantly in the postcolonial period (N'jie 1995). Rising property prices and the lively commercial environment have attracted investments from abroad. Rather than in cattle

and jewels as in the past, today's travellers secure their savings by buying plots of land and building houses along the Atlantic coast. Alongside landed property, international migrants have invested in the tourist industry, commercial enterprises, money transfers, the construction sector and even industrial production. In Sabi, fertilizers and tractor ploughing are often paid for through remittances, and a couple of migrants have also shipped tractors precisely for hiring. But in general migrants have shunned agricultural investments, something that has contributed to breaking the complementary relation between travelling and farming.

The houses built by travellers in Serekunda also clearly indicate the making of a second home for the international diaspora. Although many properties are rented out, many others are constructed with a view to a future return. Even before they return to the Gambia, migrants might relocate their own domestic units to the city. From the 1960s onwards, returnees from other parts of West Africa have indeed settled and invested in Serekunda, bringing their families over and bringing up their children there. In the early 2000s, Upper River Soninke residents in Serekunda numbered roughly ten thousand, about 10 per cent of the total Soninke population in the Gambia, and a small but wealthy and highly visible minority in the urban melting pot. Apart from distinguishing themselves by their considerable economic achievements, Soninke urbanites have made an effort to construct a sense of community. The most articulate example of this attempt is the umbrella ethnic association Sunpo do Xati (which means 'navel and milk', a bodily metaphor for kinship relations and unity). Sunpo do Xati was founded in Basse in the early 1980s, but has effectively developed in Serekunda since the late 1980s, and the urban branch is by far the most active and resourceful one.[30] The association, which is led by prominent Soninke businessmen, has sought to strengthen relations among urban Soninke and to provide a setting where children born in the city can speak Soninke and learn the customs. The Soninke are culturally marginal in Serekunda, and children quickly pick up Wolof and Mandinka in the streets, while Soninke may still sound like an exotic language to their companions even after many years of neighbourly friendship. What is significant about Sunpo do Xati is that it can be read as an attempt to forge an urban, and 'modern', way of being Soninke. As we shall see, this is not necessarily in contrast with cherishing rural origins and connections; nevertheless, the fact that the association has attempted to solve the problem of sociocultural reproduction in situ (instead of sending the children to the village, for example – see Chapter 2), reveals that they have felt that the Soninke presence in Serekunda is mature and permanent enough to think about settling down and creating a second home in the Gambia.

Figure 1.6 Building the Urban Generation: Imam Malick Institute during the Annual Meeting, 2008

Striving to tackle cultural loss in second-generation urban settlers led to the construction in 2000 of the Imam Malick Islamic Institute, which also serves as the headquarters of the association (Figure 1.6). The institute provides an Anglo-Arabic school of the *madrasa* type and a Quranic boarding school where children memorize the Quran.[31] Although some of the children and teachers (*ustadh*) are not Soninke, the educational policy is explicitly ethnically inflected. Soninke is the official language in the school and alphabetization and language classes in Soninke are held during the summer break. Sunpo do Xati has not espoused a specific religious doctrine, but is unmistakeably oriented by reformist ideas, which have enjoyed even greater currency in the urban Soninke-speaking milieu than in the villages. Most members and teachers expressly wear Middle Eastern caftans (the men) and the *hijab* is compulsory for the schoolgirls. The head teachers, whose fathers are wealthy traders, have been trained in Middle Eastern Islamic universities.

The Traveller, the 'Sitter' and the Urban 'Sitter'

To sum up, a multi-stranded, transnational social field connects Sabi to its expatriates. However, the changes in the geography of livelihoods, the

resulting drive towards diasporization and the concomitant limitations on mobility across borders have shaped this field in such a way that mobile and immobile segments of Sabi society are more clearly distinct than in the past. Whereas Sabi used to be an important economic node that powered commercial mobility and encouraged migrants to reinvest in agriculture, since the mid twentieth century the nexus between sedentary and migrant livelihoods has undergone significant transformation. The decline of the rural economy, that is, of agriculture as well as regional trade, has moved the centres of economic accumulation and investment elsewhere. Sabi has remained the centre of the diaspora, attracting migrants' money, but it is also one that, as will become clear in the course of the ethnography, mainly fulfils a function of sociocultural reproduction. No longer do migrants use their savings primarily to generate agricultural surplus; rather, remittances serve to supplement meagre harvests, to improve the living standards of left-behind relatives and to enhance the reputation of the investors. The transnational orientation of the migrants is reflected in the built environments of Sabi, which at the same time reveal the outward orientation of the villagers, and, implicitly, their dependence on resources generated away from the village. For almost any need or want in their daily lives, resident villagers 'reckon with the outside' (Elliot 2012), or *tunŋa* (exile) as the migratory elsewhere is known in the Soninke language.

The quantitative increase in outmigration has led to a qualitative shift in ways of thinking *and* practising (im)mobility. Many Sabinko identify the beginning of *terende* (travelling) proper with the surge of migration to Sierra Leone, while some others with the surge of labour migration to Europe and America starting from the 1980s. Not that they disregard the history of long-distance travel in their community, but the idea that migrating to earn a living and support the household is almost a permanent, life-long activity has only recently become well-entrenched. The farmer-trader has all but disappeared. Many of Sabi's young men continue to be farmer-traders, or rather, farmer-seasonal labour migrants, who go to the Atlantic coast to find work during the dry season (Chapter 3). But the two seasonal activities do not yield a virtuous cycle of accumulation and investment between farming and trade/labour migration as they did in earlier times. Since the time of the farmer-trader, this hyphen between the farmer and the trader has progressively stretched, until the two have become almost separate entities, or rather, separate stages in a man's life-course. Men might and often do become migrants and stayers at different times in their lives, but the consolidation of a documentary regime of international migration, together with the rising costs of emigration, have made straddling between mobile and immobile livelihoods more difficult. As a consequence, both the figure of the 'traveller' (*teraana*) and

that of the 'sitter' (*taxaana*) or stayer have become more clearly defined and consolidated. Put differently, the progressive socio-spatial bifurcation of positions and trajectories in the field of (im)mobility over the last half century has made room for an analysis of what it means and implies for a young man to undertake a career as a 'sitter', and this will be the main concern and focus of the rest of the book.

A third figure, or position, should be added to the field of (im)mobility, namely 'those who sit in Serekunda', as the villagers say. Although Serekunda is a migrant destination, its capacity to attract economic *and* social investments from the diaspora will be a recurring theme in the chapters that follow, as an element that polarizes the dynamics of 'sitting' in profound ways. As will be shown, men who stay in Sabi must reckon not only with the elsewhere but with an emerging second home, and the growing aspiration of their migrant kith and kin to prepare the ground to 'sit' in the city once they return from abroad.

Notes

1. These settlements of Guinean skilled artisans and workers are quite common. In fact, there are many of them in Gambissara, where Sabi mechanics come from.
2. When applied to patronyms (*jaamu*), the suffix *kunda* means 'the household/compound of' (e.g. Sillakunda = the compound of the Silla). *Kunda* also applies to names of places ('the settlement of').
3. Gambia National Archives (GNA), CSO 18/1, *The Records of Fuludu East District of the Upper River Province together with a short history*, 1933.
4. The main Soninke villages on the south bank are: Gambissara, Numuyell, Kumbija, Allunhare, Sudowol, Garawol, Koina. Source: Dae Sumbunu, Gambissara, 21 January 2008; Mamadu Dukure, village chief of Gambissara, 1975, cited by Treffgarne (1978: 399). Some sources – Bakoyo Suso, Serekunda, 16 October 2006; see also Bellagamba (2004: 387) – state that the Soninke swore allegiance to Musa Molo upon settlement. A few Soninke settled in Fuladu in the reign (1867–81) of Alfa Molo, Musa's father.
5. The Dabo in Wuli, an influential *juula* family (Wright 1977), seem to have played a major role in hosting and acting as intermediaries, such as with the Bajaxa (Badjakunda) and the Sise (Garawol) (Keba Suso, 5 December 2006, Serekunda).
6. The main sources of Sabi history are: Damude Mangasi, 19 December 2006; Kau X. Kaba, 14 December 2006; Kumba Silla, 13 November and 16 December 2007; Suleyman Sumbunu, 14 December 2007 (all these narratives were collected in Sabi).
7. Jakhanke settlers have been participating in matrimonial and religious exchanges with the villagers, but as Sabi is thought to be a Soninke community, they have been marginal in sociopolitical life (see also Chapter 6).
8. Sixu Konte, 14 January 2008, Sabi.
9. Musa Mariko, 31 January 2008, Sabi.

10. Fode Kaira, 25 February 2008, Sabi; Kumba Silla, 17 January 2008, Sabi.
11. GNA NGR1/16, D.P. Gamble's file 'The Serahuli', Letter No. UP/1/46 from Agricultural Officer, Georgetown, to S.A.O., 1946.
12. Fode Kaira, 25 February 2008, Sabi; Kumba Silla, 17 January 2008, Sabi.
13. Sixu Konte, 21 October 2007 and 14 January 2008, Sabi.
14. Numuyell-born Kalilu Kamara is credited as being the first pioneer (Bunja Kamara, 17 January 2008, Numuyell; Suleyman B. Sumbunu, 29 December 2007, Sabi).
15. Abdullahi Sane, 16 October 2006, Serekunda.
16. Suleyman Sumbunu, 11 February 2007, Sabi.
17. GNA ARP 31/9-11, Annual Report of the Upper River, 1949, 1951, 1956–7.
18. Cotton is a labour-intensive crop and requires a good deal of fertilizer and of chemical treatment. Moreover, in contrast to groundnuts, cotton is not an edible plant.
19. YWAM has built a compound in Sabi, and its personnel do not usually exceed 6–7 at a time, including international volunteers. Its missionary work has been limited, but the organization has financed a number of small-scale projects, in particular installing hand-pumps, improving nutritional standards, and providing schooling and health care.
20. 'Gambia: After a Long, Tough Year Peanut Farmers Get Paid', *IRIN News*, 26 October 2006.
21. See Swindell (1982) for changing patterns of mobility and settlement, and van Dokkum (1992: table 1.2) for statistics. In Basse, there is a growing population of Guinean labour and commercial migrants.
22. The survey was a questionnaire-based inquiry, with additional open-ended questions on the history of the family, designed to gather data on the incidence of international and internal migration on the economy of the household (defined as *ka* or *follake* – see Chapter 5). The majority of respondents were household heads.
23. Marie Rodet (2009) has shown that such a trend was found in the early colonial period as well.
24. Cited in: 'España Refuerza la Ayuda a Gambia en Educación y en la Lucha Contra la Inmigración Ilegal', *El Pais*, 10 March 2010, my translation.
25. In 2007, Spain announced that it would make €10 million available to finance skills-training programmes and microcredit facilities in Senegal, Mali, Gambia and Mauritania, with Gambia being scheduled to receive 1 million (Junquera 2007).
26. Conversation with Juju Sumbunu, July 2007, Mataro. *Kafo* is a Mandinka word meaning 'association', and is commonly used in the Gambia; *jama* means 'people' or 'crowd' in Mandinka. *Sabusire* is a Soninke word meaning 'good fortune' or 'good omen'.
27. Marabout work is usually protective (against malignity, envy, stabbing, perforation by bullets, etc.), but it can also be used to cause harm (through charms, scaring, provoking physical harm or illness, etc.) or to bring economic gain. The nature of its esoteric practice is diverse: supplicatory prayers and formulae, amulets and other charms. Amulets or charms (*juju*, *baaxe*) are usually pieces of Arabic writing encased in leather or metal that are worn as arm bracelets, belts or rings; there are also liquid potions and powders for mixing with bathing water (*naasi*) (see also Dilley 2004; Soares 2005; Hamès 2007).
28. Interview with Mohamed Silla, Imam of Kanifing, 15 February 2008, Serekunda. The linkage between Islamic education, trade and migration has deep roots in Sierra Leonean history (Jalloh and Skinner 1997).
29. The most tense case was the construction of the Gambissara mosque, where the feud between 'traditionalists' and 'reformists' became a national political case in the mid

1990s. The reformists were first supported by the government and then ordered to destroy their mosque (Darboe 2007: 150–51). On a dispute in Numuyell, see Janson (2011).

30. Sunpo do Xati has branches and supporters abroad, but the Serekunda branch acts as the headquarters and all decision making takes place here (Musa Drame, secretary of Sunpo do Xati, November 2006, Serekunda).
31. Over time, the schools have expanded, and now there are two branches, one in Kanifing and the other near Banjul.

Chapter 2

Being-on-the-land

The Agri-culture of Migration

Does it still make sense to become a farmer in Sabi? Several decades of uncertain ecological and marketing conditions have put farmers' confidence seriously to the test. Their hopes of making headway by farming groundnuts, or, more modestly, of feeding a growing number of mouths, appear as slim as ever. Although prospects of emigration are not as rosy as in the past, many families still expect their sons to go and find money elsewhere, especially abroad, as soon as they grow up. Without migrant remittances many Sabinko would be simply unable to eat three meals a day, to pay their medical bills or even to have a decent mosque in which to pray. So entrenched is the sense of migration as auspicious that even small boys fantasize about going to Europe and coming back with plenty of money. Few of them dream instead of a future of lush fields of crops and bountiful harvests. Yet barely any child or boy can skip his farming duties; boys still get up in the morning and go to the farms, and the lazy ones might be persuaded by the older ones after some beating. This is not (or not solely) because the Sabinko are conservative rustics, nor because they are necessarily under the pressures of production and exploit juvenile labour – households which could afford to subsist on off-farm incomes alone are no less committed to sending their boys to the fields. Rather, many villagers believe that becoming a farmer is still the best way for a boy to become a good *hustler*, as hard-working off-farm workers, especially those who travel, are called in the Gambia. Even children born abroad to migrant parents are often sent back to the village to spend from a few

months to their entire childhood with their families and farm in the fields.

While 'sitting' and travelling have increasingly become distinct livelihoods over the past few decades, their synergy is maintained at the sociocultural level. In this chapter, I describe the role of 'sitting' in the cultural reproduction of mobile and immobile livelihoods and orientations. I use 'sitting' here in its most encompassing sense of leading a sedentary life, and more specifically, as a form of dwelling (Heidegger 1993; Ingold 2000: ch. 10) that insists on being on and with the land as a formative experience. Of all practices pertaining to a settled life, I concentrate, in particular, on cultivation. For the Sabinko, fields are not simply places of botanical growth but terrains of physical, social and moral maturation, where boys are turned into hard-working, disciplined and compassionate *hustlers*. Through farming, young men embody virtuous habits that will enable them to work hard and endure hardship not only in the bush but also in the travel-bush. In addition to instructions and techniques, cultivation involves coming to an experiential understanding of emplacement by enabling boys to awaken and attune their embodied consciousness to the rural life-world, thus grounding their sense of self in the existential condition of those who endure life on the land.

By spotlighting the centrality of being-on-the-land for enabling mobile livelihoods this chapter calls for a novel conceptualization of the relationship between migration, sedentariness and culture. A 'culture of migration' approach has since the 1990s contributed to embedding cultural dynamics more firmly in migration research as well as to overcoming the idea that migrant-sending societies are normally sedentary and thus troubled by outmigration. Writing about southern Mexico, Jeffrey Cohen (2004: 5) has used the notion of the culture of migration to show how a long-standing tradition of migration has made outmigration an accepted 'path toward economic well-being' whereby people deliberate over the necessity to travel 'as part of their everyday experiences'. What can be just as mundane are practices of imagination as well as activities that prepare prospective migrants for life abroad (Ali 2007; Salazar 2010). In all such senses Sabi boys grow up in a culture of migration (Jónsson 2012: 105–6), for they attach positive values to travel and expect to follow in the footsteps of their fathers and brothers that have already gone to work and trade abroad (cf. Kandel and Massey 2002). However, insofar as it reduces the relation between culture (or acculturation) and migration to the signifying practices of movement, the notion of the culture of migration fails to account for the sedentary activities that propel mobility in Sabi. Rather than a culture of migration, in fact, Sabi men seem to have an agri-culture of migration.[1] Agrarian activities are harnessed

to construe a capability for mobility, or 'motility' (Kaufmann 2002), and vice versa, migration dynamics contribute to sustaining an agrarian way of life. In Sabi, migration is not dichotomously opposed to sedentariness but thrives in a symbiotic relation with it, and the two even coalesce in cultural terms in what I call an agrarian ethos of Soninke migration. This is not to say that the relation between movement and stillness is harmonious and unchanging. As will be shown in the latter part of the chapter, specific transnational dynamics both reproduce and affect modes and geographies of childrearing, while the commoditization of migrant labour in the West influences local views of cultivation, reducing its complex cultural meaning to mere economic value.

Back to the Land?

That agricultural development is associated with the formation of human virtues and values, rather than simply with agronomic improvement, could not be more clearly seen in the Gambian public sphere. In the early 2000s, President Jammeh launched a call to Gambians to go 'back to the land', which has over time become the mantra of the state rhetoric on agriculture. Painting a bright future for the nation's agriculture, even a green revolution, Jammeh has repeatedly exhorted Gambians to actively contribute to achieve food self-sufficiency by 2016, when rice imports should cease (e.g., State House of The Gambia 2003). Each year the president tours the countryside to promote the campaign and his other initiatives; in his speeches, he often promises the means to those who want to invest in modern agriculture (Wright 2004: 235–37, 244–48). New agricultural projects and foreign donations of machinery, especially the tractors donated by Taiwan, are occasions for pompous ceremonies in which these pieces of modern technology are put on display and then distributed to 'entrepreneurial farmers', usually political clients of the ruling party. Rather than exogenous aid and innovation alone, however, the Back to the Land campaign insists on self-help and hard work. During the rainy season, the TV broadcasts images of Jammeh leading by example in the fields of his huge plantations near Kanilai, his own home village in the Western region of the Gambia. Wearing plain clothes, the president bends down to the ground to energetically weed the crops by hand and hoe. Several teams of young volunteers flock from all over the country to assist him (and to receive generous handouts for their contribution). The produce is then managed by Kanilai Family Farm, which sells it at subsidized prices or to support other charitable initiatives, or donates it as food relief.

During the 2007 rainy season, some Gambian villages began to follow in Jammeh's footsteps by organizing collective farms for community projects and for a scholarship scheme run by the Jammeh Foundation for Peace. One news report I watched on GRTS TV in late September featured university students (the beneficiaries of the scheme) participating in the weeding operations of one such field. When interviewed, one of the students tried to dispel doubts about the students' inclination towards purely intellectual occupations and reckoned that his group worked harder than the local farmers themselves. Responding to the government's call in such a way has since become a way for interest groups and villages to become visible and link up with state patronage networks. In 2011, a group of Sabi women were thus mobilized to farm rice in the hope of receiving machinery for income-generating activities from the government, while the Serahulleh Youth Development Organization (SYDO), one of the main Soninke youth associations in Serekunda, sought land in the Kombo area to grow groundnuts.

As noted in the previous chapter, the Back to the Land campaign is in many ways a rerun of earlier campaigns in the Gambia that promoted agricultural development by insisting on hard work, industriousness and fortitude. At the same time, it differs from past initiatives because it places greater emphasis on youths and migration.[2] Not only is a sense of reversing a rural exodus implicitly conveyed in the slogan; agriculture is also seen as an antidote to the lure of international migration for the nation's youth. In almost any official speech to the nation, President Jammeh has spoken of 'the attitudes of youths' as one of the main reasons for Gambia's underdevelopment. For his government, the future of the country involves reforming their ideas and prospects, including ideas and values about international migration. Instead of indulging in the dream of Eldorado Europe, and despising menial jobs by acting like 'big men with shallow pockets', young people are being encouraged to take up available jobs and work hard to bring the country forward.[3] The media controlled by the government often reiterate this message. In an issue of the Gambia's newspaper *Daily Observer* published in 2007, the editorialist took issue with youths' dream of migration, and blamed the excesses of the *semesters*, as Gambian emigrants to the West are sometimes labelled,[4] for instigating such desires:

> 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 entails, is nothing but the glow of an illusion … 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*.[5]

Going back to the land is envisaged as a way of submitting lazy, unruly youths to proper agrarian discipline and work. In 2003, the government went as far as banning rainy season football matches, which are especially popular among young people (including girls), based on the argument that it distracted youths away from farm work. As noted in the previous chapter, in the wake of the boat migration to the Canary Islands in 2005/6, going back to the land became a way to undo a culture of migration that had grown beyond proportion and was nourishing deviant and even self-destructive urges towards emigration among the younger generations.

So far, rhetoric and intent have not been translated into systematic agricultural policies. Actual aid to farmers has been sporadic and driven by political interests (Gajigo and Saine 2011). In 2012, a pro-APRC elder in Sabi observed, ironically: 'You see, the way we were on the land in the past is the way we are still now'. That is to say, in Sabi, as in many other villages of the Gambia, people do not need to go back to the land because they are already on the land (Dibba 2009). The populist character of the campaign does nevertheless chime with widespread fears of young people's disengagement from farming in the country, as well as in the rest of Africa (see White 2012). Donald Wright (2004: 230) mentions that modernization, mainly in education and urban life, has made youths in Niumi (Western Gambia) less inclined towards farm work. In her work on female farmers in Brikama (Kombo, Western Gambia), Pamela Kea (2013: 107–9) has confirmed such views and added that young girls aspire to move out of farm work one day, and thus needed greater incentives (material and financial) for helping their mothers in garden plots. In Sabi, too, youths envision a future away from the farms and seemingly fall into the stereotypical image of the youth daydreaming of Europe. This being the case, however, is an aspiration to travel and to be modern opposed to agriculture and agrarian values?

Of Bushmen and Moneymen

In early October 2007, after being exposed, in Serekunda, to numerous TV newsreels about Jammeh or pro-Jammeh farming initiatives, I returned to the land myself bringing with me questions about what youths' migratory aspirations meant for agriculture. The Sabinko were

going through their third week of Ramadan, suffering from the heat whilst trying to recover energies after weeding the fields for weeks on end. When a few weeks later the rains stopped, and the cones of sorghum bent downwards, the harvest season began. Every able-bodied person in the village was expected to contribute to the agricultural feat. Without much prompting from the government, most villagers who were in the city during the dry season had come back to the land: only some young men had gone again to look for money in Serekunda after the bulk of the weeding operations were over. Early in the morning, women could be heard pounding grains in their mortars and fetching pots to cook breakfast and lunch, which they would later send to the men and women in the fields. Men knocked vehemently on their juniors' huts to wake them up and get them ready to go to the fields. Even migrants on holiday, especially if young, set aside their nice *semester* clothes and joined their brothers on donkey carts bound for the bush. Upon return in the afternoon or in the evening, young men continued to talk about farming matters in their meeting places. They discussed the work schedule for the following days, the amounts of crops they had reaped, and whether the unusually strong storms that fell in mid October had affected the ripening millet cones. Much mocking banter was addressed to those who had not gone to the fields, on suspicion of laziness and skipping their duties.

So compelling was the farming frenzy around me that I felt I could not skip farm work either: I had to go to the bush. Ousman (aged 30), the most experienced farmer in my host family, left for the city after weeding the fields. In that rainy season, the household had taken in a *strange farmer* from Guinea-Conakry, who, however, worked two or three 'landlord days' (*jatiginkota*) on the household fields and spent the rest of the time looking for service work (*sassi*) commissioned by other farmers. Thus, my help was much appreciated by Musa (33), Tamba (27) and Ibrahima (19), the young men who remained in Sabi to farm for the harvest. Even more appreciated was the arrival of Ibrahima Silla, Tamba's matrilateral cousin (his mother's sister's son), who hailed from Garawol, a Soninke village some 40 km to the east of Sabi. As a young man of around twenty years of age, he was lodged in a hut in the boys' quarter, together with his namesake and peer, and joined the work party heading to the farms.

With five to six grown-up men in the fields (see Figure 2.1), harvesting proceeded smoothly and speedily. By the time we had harvested all the sorghum and moved on to the women's groundnut farms,[6] Ibrahima had become a lively presence in the fields. He related news from Garawol, and from time to time he yelled Jamaican Patwa expressions across the field, disrupting the repetitive thud of our hoes plunging into the sandy ground to uproot the bushy plants and their underground nuts. As a keen

Figure 2.1 The 'Bushmen' Harvesting Bicolour Sorghum (from left to right: Ibrahima (Garawol), Tamba, Ibrahima, Amadu – *strange farmer*)

Reggae fan, Ibrahima was proud of the little Patwa he had learned, and he liked his friends to address him as Diamond Star. The inspiration for this fancy MC-like nickname turned out to be closer to home than expected. His father's younger brother or 'younger father' (*faaba tugune*) was a well-known diamond dealer based in Angola. One day, as the work party began to chat about wealthy Soninke men, Ibrahima offered first-hand information about his *faaba tugune*'s exploits. He told us that this man had built a storey building in his household in Garawol and several others in Serekunda. He drove around in a luxury four-wheel drive, and as Ibrahima explained proudly: 'He kills a goat every week for his compound. Morning time, you see a whole bag of bread loaves, there is butter; there is mayonnaise'. Musa, a former migrant, added that he saw the man in Pointe Noire (Republic of Congo) meeting up with four of his sons and handing each of them a wad of cash of about U.S.$2,000, to recapitalize their businesses.

Fascinated by Ibrahima's story, we had momentarily stopped working, and gathered around him to listen. Ibrahima, however, prompted the party to go back to work. He brandished his hoe in the air – '*Acha*! No waste time!' he uttered in English. He attacked the bushy area in front of him, and by moving rapidly and thrusting his tool with great vigour, he

managed to harvest a good number of plants before we had even had time to bend down. Swallowed by the small dust storm that he had kicked up, we watched his performance half annoyed, half bemused. When Ibrahima walked past me to stack up his oleaginous bounty, he stood still for a second and told me that he knew a lot about farming: he had grown up in it. Only that year had Ibrahima come back to farming, after spending three years working as a driver on a passenger van owned by his *faaba tugune*. He did this job, he later told me, to raise some money, while waiting for an opportunity to travel abroad. 'To Angola?' I asked; 'No, to Europe', he replied. Of course, he added, he could go to Angola, but given a choice, he'd rather work in Europe and – he smiled – enjoy some European life. At that time, his van was undergoing maintenance; so he had decided to take some time off and visit his relatives.

Ibrahima launched himself into the crops again, but this time he soon slowed down to a normal pace of work. When he paused again, the other young men prodded him to say more about his *faaba tugune*, and compared his achievements with those of other wealthy businessmen and migrants in the Gambian Soninke community. They talked about these people's careers and rise to wealth, their buildings, and the expensive cars they drove.

While panting along with my work mates, I could not help thinking of the stark contrasts that dominated their actions and conversations. Later that day I wrote in my notebook of bushmen (*gunnenko*), as the young men ironically referred to themselves, who sweat, cough up dust and break their backs to dig groundnuts from poor soil, and of moneymen (*xalisigumu*), like Ibrahima's *faaba tugune*, who have teams of miners to dig out diamonds in Angola: two harvests of incomparable value. While the young men's bodies were in the crop fields, their minds were travelling afar, longing for a migratory life that would make them shine in the firmament of diamond stars of the Soninke epopee of migration. Agricultural bodies, migratory minds: a veritable culture of migration hued with a transnational Reggae culture.

Although the conclusions one draws from looking at the men's desires of migration from the ground up do not easily fit into the simplistic discourses of policymakers and politicians comfortably sitting in air-conditioned offices, such contrasts are not without foundations. Young men openly admit that the houses and other investments of migrants give them an ambition (*hanmi*) to go and look for money so as to emulate their achievements. Like Ibrahima of Garawol, few boys and young adults in Sabi imagined their future as farmers, and if they did, it was clear that they had had no opportunity to travel or to find a route (*kille*) again after they returned from abroad. Ibrahima wanted to follow in the

footsteps of his *faaba tugune*, who left the village, accumulated money and invested at home. Ibrahima's relatives too shared similar expectations of emigration, and they assisted him to find an occupation as a driver in order to earn some money while he waited for an opportunity to travel to Europe.

However, travel fantasies are only one version of the bush story. With hindsight, I realize how tempting it was to go along with the government's discourse on migration, or even with much scholarly discourse, and focus on the powerful images of success and mobility held by young men determined to leave the land for greener pastures abroad. There is, however, no valid epistemological reason for subordinating the evocative power of words and deeds rooted in the 'local' universe of the bush to imaginations routed to a prosperous elsewhere (see Weiss 2004b). Why, after all, did Ibrahima – a young man from a wealthy family who not only aspired to emigrate but almost certainly would in the near future – harvest groundnuts for his relatives instead of directing his efforts towards finding a visa? Indeed, if his future was in business and travelling, why was he brought up as a farmer instead of being sent to a business school? And why did he himself remark on his agrarian skills and give such a theatrical, and yet compelling, performance of agricultural prowess? What values and imaginations did his performance reflect and express? Shifting attention to the social imaginary of travel risks distracting attention from the fact that agriculture and agrarian upbringing play an important role in the young man's self-perception as a potential moneyman. In order to contextualize and understand bushmen's compelling plea for emigration, therefore, I propose to inquire into a domain of social life that is often believed to be antithetical to it: agri-culture.

Earning Calloused Hands: The Embodiment of Rural Suffering

It is first necessary to clarify that the presence of aspirant migrants on farming land is not solely the result of the high costs and restrictive policies of transnational migration. Agrarian life remains central not only to the domestic economy but also to identity.[7] Of all the men on the Sumbunu fields, I was the one in most need of becoming a farmer. When I began to harvest groundnuts, my host family either teased me or worried because I got blisters on my soft hands that were unaccustomed to handling a hoe for long hours. Men sometimes took my hand and rubbed it against theirs to make me feel the rough surface of their palms. In his field research in a Soninke village in Mali, Bruce Whitehouse (2003:

35–36) was subjected to similar remarks and tests, which he felt were less about proving the inexperience of the ethnographer than commenting on his foreignness. In the Casamance region of Senegal, Michael Lambert similarly found that 'even urban-based Jola are proud that their hands are calloused. They will use their hard hands to convince their friends that they are really Jola, that although they may live in this city, they have not forgotten their roots' (Lambert 2002: 36). As a foreigner, going to the bush and earning blemishes and blisters on my soft hands was almost a rite of passage which bridged the gap between my life-world of material abundance and the life-world of want of my interlocutors. When friends or household members introduced me to people, they often emphasized that I had spent a long time in the village, I spoke Soninke and that I even farmed, something which invariably fetched surprise and remarks such as 'you are a Soninke now'.

As bodily marks, calloused hands are more than signifiers of belonging. They index a particular past, an accumulated experiential knowledge of, and presence in, the agrarian world and the hardship (*tanpiye*) that characterizes it. *Tanpiye*, usually translated as 'suffering' (or hardship, fatigue), is inherent to human existence. References to *tanpiye* recur in countless verbal expressions (see also Diawara 2003: 70). '*An do tanpiye*' – you and fatigue – people state in their customary greetings, referring to the burden of work and material hardship with which one puts up in everyday life. *Tanpiye* is ambivalent. As a generalized condition of existence, it is something one should know and experience; yet at the same time, each person should strive to lift his family from hardship and poverty. The former is indeed the precondition of the latter, for one must *suffer* or *struggle* in order to achieve something (cf. Lemarie 2005), two English terms that young people often mix with Soninke when describing their work or their efforts in life, be they in the Gambia or elsewhere.

Activities associated with the bush are often evoked to represent a more general condition of hardship characterizing the rural areas. For the same reason, *tanpiye* is often thought to be place-bound: 'we *tanpi* here', Sabinko often say. The decline of commercial agriculture and ecological degradation have certainly exacerbated the sense of hardship and fatigue associated with agrarian life. Images of development and modernization, a potent predicament in the Gambia as elsewhere in the world, reinforce the perception of disconnectedness and backwardness of the Gambian countryside (cf. Vigh 2009b). As a European, my presence in the village and the bush was an invitation for reflecting about the 'here' in the light of the 'there' (Fouquet 2008: 260). While villagers praised my willingness to *suffer* with the hoe, they would often utter

phrases like 'You see, in Africa we farm by hand', mimicking the gesture of rooting weeds out with a hoe, and implicitly drawing a contrast with Europe's highly mechanized agriculture.

For many, the life of the villager is sunk in a world of material constraints and lack of means, including tools for working on the land. Certainly, mechanization, albeit partial, has reduced the workload of farmers, especially the tilling of the soil. Machinery is also used for weeding and harvesting, so that farmers are less prone to staying on their farms from dawn to dusk, as they did in the past. In addition, male labourers focus their energies on the collective field, whereas fewer and fewer young men spend their afternoons cultivating their own individual plots (*saluman tee*), preferring to raise the money for their needs through off-farm activities. In the afternoon, sometimes even before lunchtime (around two o'clock), they head back to their homes. Elders can be heard complaining that 'today's youths just rest'. Notwithstanding the improvements in technology and the less pressing labour demands, however, agriculture remains a taxing job. Not all villagers own or have access to machinery, and even when they do, menial work still constitutes a considerable input in farming. Weeding, which is repeatedly performed on cultivated plots during the rainy season, requires farmers to spend long hours bending over the ground, under the sun and the rain. When ploughs or draught animals are not available, the harvesting is done by hand and hoe, as in the case illustrated above. Sorghum and millet are also reaped by hand, cone by cone, and then tied into bundles.

The suffering of the bushman is a burden that weighs down on people, but one that must be borne with a sense of responsibility. Poverty must be overcome and material well-being pursued. At the same time, because of its ambivalent nature, *tanpiye* is something to be known, experienced, and even accepted as an ethical foundation of the self. Earning calloused hands is a necessary step in the more general process of becoming a farmer and a villager, the proof of a certain experience and upbringing. I would argue that this does not contradict the discourse on travel as a way of finding the means to overcome hardship; rather, it qualifies it. In Ibrahima's presence on his relatives' farms and in his theatrical performance of agricultural labour I see an attempt not only to demonstrate his attachment to rural life, but also to express an embodied capacity to suffer and strive. Moreover, the evocative power of his actions presumably lies in the way in which the social imagination of rural life permeates his aspiration of a migrant life. I want to suggest that by suffering on the Sabi fields, Ibrahima made a statement about his potential for *hustling* in Europe.

Cultivating an Agrarian Ethos

Parents do not base their judgments of the migratory potential of their sons on how well the latter know about life abroad and how determined they are to leave the land. When asked about how they prepare their sons for travelling, the Sabinko often told me that they must learn the Quran and farm. While becoming a good Muslim is a requirement for any respectable villager, learning the Quran in a traditional Quranic school also involves a lot of farming and manual work for the master. Thus, whether a boy farms for his teacher or for his family, most Sabinko clearly view 'bush work' as a milestone in childrearing. Writing about a Malian Soninke village, Bruce Whitehouse has even likened agriculture to a form of schooling:

> Farming … builds character, teaching children lessons about sacrifice, duty to family, and the merits of suffering. It helps them acquire fiscal discipline and the commitment to look after their parents in their old age. Those who do not farm as children are in danger of becoming lazy spendthrifts, dependent on relatives for their subsistence. (Whitehouse 2012a: 155)

Similar opinions about the pedagogical value of agriculture are widely shared in Sabi as well as in other non-Soninke localities in the Gambia (Kea 2007: 276).[8] What is interesting to note in Whitehouse's quote is that his informants do not stress technical skills and agronomic knowledge, which are surely indispensable to any farming system. They emphasize subjective qualities and relational attitudes, a general ethics of work and social conduct which is not confined to agriculture but potentially encompasses other off-farm livelihoods. To say that before a young man can travel he must farm is to say that before he acquires an ambition (*hanmi*) to travel, he must go to the fields in order to hone his physical capacities, social competences and ethical orientations, believed to assist him in his future venture abroad. In other words, before he cultivates a culture of migration, a boy must cultivate an agrarian ethos that anchors him to the life-world of his relatives and fellow villagers and prepares him to *hustle* in the future.

In what follows I provide an overview of the virtues associated with farming, and the work of cultivation required of young men in order to acquire and perfect them. A focus on virtue as an ethical value allows me to concentrate on the qualities that the Soninke deem so essential to an ethically sound and prosperous life, and in particular to acquiring economic valuables for both individual and collective purposes. In his work on South India, Anand Pandian has suggested that:

> Virtues ought to be understood not only as abstract ideals and principles of a good life but also more particularly as habits of self-conduct – as cultivable tendencies to act, think, and feel in a worthy manner, as practical elements in the ethical work of becoming a certain kind of being. (Pandian 2009: 223)

For Pandian (2009: 5), cultivation is 'a twofold enterprise: a labor on the nature of the self, and a work of improvement exercised upon the agrarian landscape'. This double meaning of cultivation is useful for describing agriculture as education in the Gambia as well. Here, growing up is metaphorically likened to maturation in the Soninke language: children are supposed to proceed from a situation of lack of self-knowledge to one in which they are 'ripe' or mature (*munyi*), namely, capable of performing work and of making moral judgements.

At the theoretical level, the twofold notion of cultivation as used by Pandian chimes with numerous approaches to the study of subjectivity and ethics inspired by Foucault's work (1990) as well as by Aristotle's philosophy (Lambek 2008; Faubion 2011). I acknowledge the influence of such perspectives in my analysis, but for the sake of epistemological clarity I would like to offer two considerations. In the first place, Foucault was acutely aware of the relational nature of the subjects he described, and he was indeed interested in the emergence of the idea of the autonomous individual in Europe (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner 1986: 54–56). Nonetheless, he at times seemed to reify subjects as autonomous selves who respond to the predicaments of power by working on their *own* bodies or ethical substance (Alter 1993: 50; Turner 1995). In employing his inquiries to shed light on other contexts it is important not to assume that cultivation produces individuals in the Eurocentric sense of the term. Although individuality is present in specific forms in the Soninke milieu, selves are deeply relational, parts of a larger whole. As we shall see, one outcome of agrarian training is to create interdependence and 'mutuality of being' (Sahlins 2011).

Secondly and related to the above, the attractiveness of the term cultivation arguably lies in its evoking the image of work on subjective terrain geared to producing particular sensibilities, and thus recalls a technical operation reminiscent of Foucault's (1988) notion of 'technologies of the self'. As in any pedagogy, Soninke agrarian training does involve a set of instructions for eliciting particular dispositions, both physical and ethical. Among the Soninke, upbringing is premised on a 'logic of being immersed in daily practices of apprenticeship, the repetition of which trains the child' (Razy 2007a: 34, my translation). I would nonetheless stress that immersion in rural life is as important as routines and

techniques in the process of subjectivation (Jackson 1983). According to Heidegger (1993: 361), technology in the sense of the ancient Greek term *technē* is not simply a disembodied craft practised on an external substance, a means to an end, but an act that emerges from a capacity to inhabit or simply to be in the world. Heidegger (1993: 349) recalls the Latin root (*cultura*) of cultivation, whence the English terms culture and agriculture both stem; in contrast to building (as construction), cultivation implies participation or co-presence, nourishment, preservation; in a word, dwelling in that which is being cultivated. In Sabi, while severe disciplinary methods and even corporal punishment are employed to train young men (Perry 2009), participation and free exploration in daily activities and work play a central role in the process of maturation (Polak 2012). Through 'sitting'-dwelling, children are also believed to come to a progressive state of awareness (*wulliye*) by bearing witness to, and being part of, the existential condition of their fellow villagers. This is where the discourse on rural suffering is crucial to understanding the formation of men in Sabi. From a condition of existential oppression, the *tanpiye* of the peasant assumes a poietic function in the sense that it moulds immature beings not considered to be fully fledged persons into resilient men (cf. Scheper-Hughes 2008).

'His Blood Has Arrived': Strength and Toil

Between the age of five and seven, children start going to the farms with their household members. At this stage, their bodies are too underdeveloped to perform major tasks; they mainly fetch items and plants for their fathers and brothers. They nonetheless familiarize themselves with the environment, with crops and weeds, and observe adults. As they grow older, children begin to handle a hoe, transport heavier items and engage in a more focused manner in farming. Eventually, boys will become acquainted with handling draught animals and the machinery used for ploughing, seeding, weeding and harvesting. As becoming a fully fledged farmer implies acquiring a capacity to work and use all the implements involved in agriculture, the ability to perform given tasks may be taken as a measurement of the physical maturation of a boy. When he becomes fully productive and autonomous, people may say that 'his blood has come/arrived' (*a hooro ri*). As Fairhead, Leach and Small (2006: 1114) have observed, '[in the Gambia] red blood is associated with personal strength … It is the stuff of life – the vital force of living things'. The blood fills and energizes the body of the boy, making it able to work. In turn, hard work and training make his body strong and tough (*kendo*) so as to endure long working hours in the sun and rain.

At stake in the physical maturation of the farmer, therefore, is not mere muscularity but the ability to work. The Soninke understand work (*golle*) as an ontological principle of human life, a foundational and necessary input in all activities in which physical and/or intellectual effort is involved. With reference to the Mande area,[9] to which the Soninke belong, Mamadou Diawara (2003: 72) has shown that this broad notion of work ultimately derives from agricultural labour: 'Everything has to be prepared, caused, or at least catalysed through work, which, because of this, becomes an imperative need' (my translation). The capacity to provoke, transform and catalyse is usually described as *senbe* in the Soninke language. *Senbe* can be translated as 'force' or 'strength' and is attributed to entities of different kinds, like fertile soil, a heavy rain, a powerful vehicle and so on (see also Graw 2009: 98; Kea 2013: 109). In the context of menial work, *senbe* refers to a capacity to transform matter or to acquire something deemed useful for the individual who performs work, such as food crops and money. Ibrahima's theatrical performance of agricultural labour can be read, I think, along these lines as a display of force. 'I am able to work, I have *senbe* [*n ra wa gollini, senbe wa in maxa*]', young men often say, clenching their fists and raising their elbows to indicate bodily strength.

Being so central to the Soninke sense of self, hard work is held in high repute. While hard work in the fields is directly responsible for *tanpiye* or fatigue, toil is also the means through which hardship can be overcome and progress can be catalysed. When we were harvesting sorghum in the Sumbunu fields near the road to Basse, vehicles driving by tooted and people shouted '*Xa nuwari*' (thank you) or '*Xa do golle*' (lit. you and work), customary expressions comparable to '*Xa do tanpiye*' mentioned earlier, which acknowledge the effort of producing something useful for the (collective) well-being (Diawara 2003: 68–69); in this case, food. Both men and women toil, and it is widely acknowledged that women bear the brunt of hard work in rural communities. But men are additionally expected to embody a proactive disposition, even an entrepreneurial spirit: a successful man is not simply someone who is able to perform and endure heavy duties, but someone who actually does work hard. This also transpires from the images that consistently punctuate commentaries on people's working life. '*A ke nta taaxunu*', he does not sit, people may say, drawing on the metaphor of physical movement to emphasize his dynamism.

Living by the Sweat of One's Brow: Autonomy and Endurance

In addition to tempering their bodies, toil contributes to the moral edification of young males. Through work, the young man learns to live by

the sweat (*futte*) of his brow. As a bodily substance, sweat indexes hard work, but additionally, the nobility of having earned an honest living by relying on one's own strengths. During casual conversations on the topic, people may be seen moving their index finger across their forehead as if wiping off sweat. One of the greatest threats to masculinity is to 'hang on others', that is, to depend on other people for one's own subsistence. Willingness to work hard is indispensable for emancipation from others and complements the ability to discern licit from illicit working activities in the pursuit of autonomy. In a context where lack of means and abundance of wants are common, for most men dependency is far from being an uncommon experience; yet to be suspected of lacking a drive for self-reliance can make this experience utterly shameful. This is felt strongly, especially among the noble classes, where autonomy is praised and dependency-prone behaviour such as begging – which is typical, in their view, of the lower classes, and in particular of the former slaves – is discouraged (Sommerfelt 1999).

The appreciation of agrarian living as a lesson of self-reliance is also achieved through hardship and frugality. Lest they should be accused of spoiling them, many parents are careful not to make life too easy for their children. Once I asked an elder who had numerous sons in Sabi and abroad how he made sure that his children would be fit for *hustling*; his answer was: 'if they ask for ten, you give them five, so they have to struggle for the rest'. In numerous areas of West Africa, ideas and practices of upbringing oscillate between, on the one hand, ensuring care and nourishment for the child and, on the other, exposing him or her to some hardship. Coping with hardship reinforces the child's character, making it resilient enough for the challenges that await it in life (Bledsoe 1990; Last 2000; Porcelli 2011).

The pedagogic value of frugality and hardship is clearly highlighted in Quranic education (Perry 2004: 54–58). Children either reside with their family and attend classes in a Quranic teacher's family compound, or take up residence there. In the latter case, they are lodged and fed by the teacher and his family; in exchange they farm, perform some domestic chores and fetch firewood from the bush in order to light the fire in the hearth around which teaching and memorization of the verses take place with the aid of wooden slates (*walla*). Learning is compressed into the hours around dawn and dusk, while children work during the central hours of the day. Their living conditions are rather Spartan: their huts may not have proper bedding, children are often dressed in tatters, and sometimes they must roam the village to beg for extra food. Older pupils, especially in the secondary cycle of Quranic education (*maisi*), are expected to acquire their own material belongings themselves, should

they wish to improve their living conditions. These bare conditions are thought to be conducive to learning both religion and social conduct. Steadfastness and forbearance (*munyuye*, also *sabari*, from the Arabic *sabr*) under conditions of adversity are elements of an Islamic ethic, and in this particular context they sanction a capacity to endure which has not only a religious value but also practical implications.[10] Being prone to sacrifice, keeping up with harsh working environments, and contentment are the preconditions to obtaining something to end the hardship which young men and their families typically endure in Sabi.

'He Is a Man Now': Responsibility and Empathy

To grow up as a man is to become entangled in a bundle of relations of kinship and domestic production. The first day I went to the fields to harvest sorghum for my host family, the eyes of the men in the work company were glued to me. Knowing I was not used to this kind of work, from time to time my work-mates suggested I could return home or rest in the shade of a tree. Partly because the task was not too demanding, and partly out of pride, I stubbornly continued to work alongside them. After some hours, we managed to stack up thirty-seven bundles of sorghum onto a donkey cart and decided to head back. Our arrival at home was greeted with jubilee by the women. Comments on the good yield of that year were shared and my companions began to praise my contribution and my determination. Sama, Tamba's mother, was excited at my endeavour, and commended me by repeatedly saying 'he is a man now' (*a ni yugo ya yi*); smiling, Ibrahima Sumbunu also congratulated me on being a man. 'Why?' I asked. 'Because you can work now' (*an ra wa gollini sasa*), he replied. Clearly, keeping up with farm work had raised my reputation as a worker, and bringing home crops had also proven my worth as someone willing to shed sweat for the sake of the family's subsistence (*biraado*). The fields we harvested were collectively owned by the household and the produce was stocked in the granary under the tutelage of the household head for the whole family to subsist on until the next harvest.

By farming on the communal land of the household, boys are embedded into relations of seniority. Historically, domestic groups in the Western Sahel and Senegambia have relied upon, and exploited, the work of junior household members and other subordinated subjects (slaves, clients, etc.) to produce subsistence food and surplus for trade (Meillassoux 1981). It is often said that young men farm for their *kagume*, the most senior genealogical male of the household, the person in charge of managing the fields and other communal resources. Young men farm on the collective field (*furuban tee* or *tee xoore*) in order to produce staples

for the family, but do not own the product of their labour. This arrangement, which is common in West Africa, stems from the hierarchical reciprocities that regulate domestic production. In brief, an 'intergenerational contract' (Kabeer 2000) binds children to returning the nourishment and care they received from their parents and other senior householders while they were growing up; this will ensure that parents are fed when they reach old age and are unable to provide for themselves.

In this logic, agricultural work represents an act of responsibility towards the parents. For a boy, or even for a mature man, the stakes of going to the field are rather high, for what is measured is not simply his capacity to work, but his willingness to fulfil his family obligations. Most villagers with whom I talked, including the young men, make no secret of the disciplinary function of farming in inculcating in boys obedience and devotion to figures of authority in the family. A number of economic exchanges, social mechanisms and ideological constructions cement this unequal relationship. Far from being solely constraining, however, subordination is thought to be enabling. Devotion (material, social, affective) is rewarded with *barake* (from the Arabic *baraka*), a blessing channelled from God via the parents or accrued by the elders when they supplicate God (*duwa*) for a youth. *Barake* also emanates from the state of satisfaction induced in parents, and is an essential endowment to achieve *and* retain well-being.

Although the disciplinary nature of farming is evident, responsibility vis-à-vis the family also stems from a more mundane experience of conviviality. Taking part in farm work is one among other activities – from sharing food, a hut, play, etc. – in which one makes others familiar and part of one's existence (Carsten 2000; Sahlins 2011). It is in this sense that immersion in the rural life-world and its complex landscape of *tanpiye* creates an experiential and existential linkage, which then crystallizes as an ethical orientation. For instance, redistributing resources in a family was often described to me not simply as an obligation, but also as the result of a compelling drive for empathy vis-à-vis relatives who stayed in the village. As a young man put it: 'When I have money, I cannot sit here and enjoy it all by myself, if I know my family are there in *tanpiye*'.

Thinking of agriculture as cultivation of botanical as well as subjective and relational matter allows us, in sum, to better understand the way young men like Ibrahima have been brought up in the Upper River in order to be able to cope with the asperities of earning a living at home as well as abroad. Once again, why would a young man running a business leave a comfortable mansion and lavish meals in his home village to go and sleep in a rundown, crowded hut with other boys and work in the dusty fields of another family? One answer was offered by his namesake,

Ibrahima Sumbunu: 'he came to look for *barake*'. Indeed, a long-standing practice for young men who wish to travel or find money in other ways is to make a tour of their extended families and look for the blessing of the elders (Pollet and Winter 1971: 135). With his transport business at a standstill, and his plans for future travelling on hold, Ibrahima decided to visit his mother's elder sister (his 'elder mother') and offered his work to her in 'exchange' for prayers and blessings for him to succeed in his endeavours. He thus joined his relatives in the fields and made sure he did not come across as a slack young boy in need of external guidance. He knew farming – he stressed – and was fit for it. Besides generating laughter and dispelling doubts about his capacity to endure hard work (possibly called into question by his keenness on Reggae culture, which is viewed by some elders as a form of moral depravation and an epitome of laziness), his theatrical performance of agricultural labour conveyed his readiness for greater ventures than farming. In this way, Ibrahima certified not simply his ability as a farmer, but his general capacity to *hustle*, including labouring in Europe, his desired destination.

From Bush to Travel-bush

The exportability of agrarian training to other non-farm, migratory livelihoods is effected in more ways than one. Travelling itself is often represented as a metaphorical extension of farming, as in the expression 'going to the *terenden-gunne*', the travel-bush. This compound word conjures up some of the typical images associated with travelling (*terende*) to a foreign land or 'exile' (*tunŋa*) (Dantioko 2003), comparing it to the bush, that is, a place that lies outside the (civilized) space of the village (cf. Alpes 2013). My friend and assistant Bakauru once described the meaning of *terenden-gunne* in the following way: 'travelling is like going to the bush to look for something [*fo mundiye*]. You go and look for firewood, or to farm your crops, but you don't know what you might find: a snake, a wild beast…' Both farmers and migrants go to the bush to find something. Farmers sweat over the fields and harvest crops, while migrants endure hard work in order to receive a salary or business profit. The yields of both types of missions to the bush materialize in the granary of the household, where bundles of millet and sorghum stand next to the bags of rice bought with the money sent by migrants. Interestingly, Wolof-speaking migrants from Senegal depict their sojourn abroad as 'cultivating the big (household) field' (Fouquet 2008: 249).

Like the farmers, so the migrants have a duty to provide for their families. Migrants are, however, away from the village and from their

household heads. Although those who stay behind adopt several strategies to ensure the loyalty of their expatriate household members,[11] the most important assurance that the young men will comply with their obligations is the sense of responsibility and empathy cultivated during childhood. I often asked my adult interlocutors how they could be so sure that their sons would remit money to them once they left the village. A typical answer was: 'he will not forget us – he knows the [living] conditions we are in'. Indeed, during telephone conversations with migrants, in order to elicit assistance household members often make reference to *tanpiye* and similar tropes of rural suffering.

Upon their return from abroad, migrants often go to the bush with their household members in order to deflect accusations of having 'exited poverty' (*bogu do misikinaaxu*) and 'made themselves big'. Once I asked a traveller on holiday in Sabi whom I saw returning from the fields whether he had not come home to rest; he replied: 'Maybe you rest for a week, then you get up and work on the farm … If I hadn't known how to do this kind of job [farming], when I went to Europe I would have been a drug dealer because I would not have known what is to sweat. This way I know how to work hard for my money'. Drug dealing epitomizes a mode of acquiring fast money, yet one that is considered illicit and not conducive to blessing (Gaibazzi 2012a: 130–31). Going abroad requires moral vigilance and discipline: when leaving home (*kaara*), one is exposed to the perils of strangerhood (Whitehouse 2012b). In Bakauru's depiction, the bush is a place of potential material abundance and at the same time potential dangers (see Gaibazzi 2010). Whilst abroad, migrants may be tempted by different lifestyles and immoral behaviours, a risk often associated with the West: once seduced by the bright lights of Europe and America, the traveller will forget about his home and family.

It is important to stress that the linkages between farming and travelling are not merely metaphorical and normative. Men explicitly construct their subjectivity as *hustlers* on the basis of the dispositions and skills cultivated in the village bush. During a casual conversation, Tamba, one of the leading farmers in my host family, began to narrate his boyhood years. Tamba attended the upper Quranic school (*maisi*) in Kumbija, a neighbouring village, until the age of seventeen. He vividly recalled those years as a time of hardship and bravery. Back then, boys spent the whole day in the bush, from seven in the morning to seven in the evening. Once they returned to their teacher's residence, they fetched water and prepared the fireplace. Meals were consumed rapidly, and they often left the communal bowl still feeling hungry. And finally, the sleeping huts were often too crowded for everyone to fit in; inevitably someone had to sleep on the veranda, with his teeth chattering all night during the coldest months.

Only after some years was Tamba able to impose his seniority on the newcomers, and sleep in a proper bed. He sighed and then concluded: 'Eh, my friend, we suffered. But it's good. Now that my body has become stronger [*kendo*], I am fit for *hustling*. I can go and find money. I can work hard, I fear no job'. In these few unsolicited words, Tamba promoted himself as a *hustler* by linking past to future, farming to travelling. Throughout his narration, he used a slightly rhetorical tone of language, bemoaning the hardship he had endured but then regarding it as the foundation of his upbringing and as evidence of his readiness to adapt to any job and living condition in order to find money abroad.

I would argue that the international political economy of labour migration has reinforced the perception that the virtues of agricultural work are transferrable to off-farm occupations. The shift towards Western destinations over the last thirty years has made social reproduction in Sabi dependent on European and North American labour markets. The post-Fordist transition in these countries has funnelled the autochthones towards technical and knowledge-based occupations, while unskilled positions have been filled by cheap immigrant workforces (Sassen 1991). Mahmet Timera (1996: 221) has shown that when the French automobile industry retrenched in the 1980s, Soninke factory workers moved to unskilled jobs in the service sector (cleaning, restaurants, etc.) characterized by flexible working hours, occupational mobility and precarious contractual conditions. The integration of Soninke workers into the lower strata of the job market probably reinforced the idea that, as Timera remarks, a migrant's project is not linked to a specific professional career. In France, Soninke migrants are willing to accept *any* job in order to earn a salary: the type of job is secondary to the amount on their payslip at the end of the month. Gambian Soninke migrants occupy a similar stratum of the job market in other Western countries. In Sabi, young men are familiar with Spanish words like *campo* (field, farm) and *paleta* (construction worker), two of the most widespread occupations of migrants before 2008, when Spain was hit heavily by economic recession (Kaplan 1998: 98). But while young men know that these jobs are demanding, they rarely discuss the actual content of the jobs. Similarly, all that some parents know about their sons' occupations in Europe is that they work for a salary. What matters most to them is whether and how much they remit.

During their home visits, Sabi travellers in the West tend to emphasize that earning money means hard work. Migrants do not solely empathize with the situation of many youths who, like them before leaving the country, sit jobless in the Gambia; they also distinguish themselves from the local crowds by recalling the relentless rhythms of work that they endure in Europe or in the United States. In some circumstances,

this hard-work ethic of labour migration feeds back directly into the agrarian one. I once met a Sabinke based in Spain who during his holidays decided to bring his younger brothers with him to the fields from 7 A.M. to 7 P.M., as in the old days. As he explained: 'I'm working ten, eleven hours a day in Spain. Every day. I wake up at 6 [A.M.] and come back at 7 [P.M.], sometimes 8 [P.M.]. I'm working hard, while here people are sitting [idly]'.

Last but not least, migrants actively contribute to reproducing the rural upbringing model by sending their children to be fostered in their rural households. A good number of migrants migrate on their own, leaving their wives and children in their father's household; others take their wife along, but still send their children back home for varying periods of time. Analysing the demography of the Upper River Region Soninke, YWAM (2006: 21) has shown that the age group pyramid shows an expansion in the 5–9 age group, the age at which migrant parents usually send their children back to the village. Farjas Bonet (2002) has found that almost one third of Gambian parents in Catalonia send their children home for varying lengths of time. Transnational and urban–rural childrearing builds on the widespread institution of child fosterage in West Africa (Goody 1982), and it is meant to enable children to 'know the culture' and 'know the family' by being immersed in the life-world of their relatives (Razy 2007a: 27). The sense of danger and moral laxity that characterizes the image as well as the lived experience of exile (*tunŋa*) further motivates many parents to repatriate their children in order to shield them from the negative influences of the host society (see Whitehouse 2009). The stern discipline of agrarian upbringing is used as a cure and preventive measure to tackle any incipient deviancy (Bledsoe and Sow 2011). 'I was stubborn [i.e., rebellious], so my father brought me here', explained Musa, a man of thirty-seven who was born, raised and schooled in Sierra Leone before being repatriated to Sabi when he was a teenager. Today, he is a successful *hustler* in Angola.

However, if migration has contributed to the reproduction of the agrarian ethos, it has also facilitated the advent of other models of education that compete with farms and Quranic schools. In the Gambia, the Soninke have earned a reputation for shunning Western education. Soninke villages have rather been strongholds of Quranic education, and many noble households in Sabi run basic Quranic schools (*xaranyimbe*). Jawara-kunda hosts one of the most prestigious upper Quranic schools in the Upper River area. According to some Sabinko, the PPP regime was adamant about maintaining good relations with the village dignitaries and Islamic scholars, and thus did not push formal education further. A secular Basic and an Upper Basic school in Sabi became operative

only during the second half of the 1990s, when the Jammeh government revived the developmental agenda of the Gambian state and constructed numerous schools in the rural areas. In the 2000s, the rate of schooling in Sabi, around 20 per cent, was still half of the national average (YWAM 2006). While this would seem to underscore the anti-education fame of the Soninke, it should be noted that the Basic School in Sabi was built by the Sabi hometown association in Sweden, and only later staffed with teachers by the government. What is more, the Serekunda-based association of Sabinko, which includes several prominent businessmen, has won over the resistance of Quranic scholars and in 2006 it began to lay the foundations of a *madrasa*, which was inaugurated in 2011. In the meantime, during my fieldwork at least one household with numerous children hired a trained Islamic teacher to hold private classes.

The availability of educational facilities in Sabi reflects a growing demand for formal schooling. Not all children of migrants have been raised in the village; a number of them attended schools and *madrasas* in Serekunda, while several others remained with their families abroad or were sent to other countries, like Mali, in order to receive their education, especially an Islamic one. Some wealthy migrants also send their sons (more rarely daughters) to universities in Europe, the U.S. and, in particular, in Egypt, Sudan and the Gulf states. The drive for formal education as a new foundation of Soninke identity is particularly evident in Serekunda, where the growing, permanently settled urban community strives to maintain its cultural roots while at the same time ensuring that the future generations adapt to a 'modern', urban lifestyle. 'The world is changing', many urbanites point out, and children must spend more time on books than on crops. At the Imam Malick Islamic Institute in Serekunda, the *madrasa* built by the Soninke association Sunpo do Xati, a member of the teaching staff estimated the children of migrants to make up 40 per cent of the student body. This suggests that transnational childrearing is increasingly gravitating around the city. As the urban community grows, migrant parents entrust their children to urban relatives or move their nuclear family to the city to take advantage of better educational facilities, including the Imam Malick institute.

The urban polarization of migrant transnationalism and, more specifically, of social reproduction, constitutes a threat to villages like Sabi that have long functioned as the moral and cultural homes of the diaspora. Luis Brenner (2001) has argued that an epistemological shift from an experiential to a rational form of knowledge has accompanied the rise of *madrasa* schooling in Mali. This shift also applies to the pedagogical value of agrarian life as an experience of shared hardship, work and sociality. A prominent trader from Sabi whose first son attended a college

in the U.S. before returning to the Gambia to join his father's firm in Serekunda, once told me: 'People were saying that my children will grow rebellious if they did not farm; instead, here they are, working side by side with their father'. The Sabinko often accuse such wealthy villagers of having 'exited poverty', that is, of having withdrawn from the convivial condition of scarcity that creates hardship and also from the bonds of solidarity among equals. It is an accusation that reveals a sense of anxiety vis-à-vis exclusion from the redistribution of resources and of bitterness vis-à-vis the lack of recognition for the work of cultivation that villagers perform for the sake of the future generations.

However, the rupture between diaspora and village should not be exaggerated. Many villagers combine upbringing strategies in creative ways. As Bledsoe and Sow (2011: 752) have argued, the training and discipline provided by the family environment has been conceived as a necessary complement to formal schooling 'which continues to be regarded in West Africa as necessary but insufficient for lasting success'. Parents often diversify the educational careers of their children, sending some to school and some to the village, while those who solely opt for formal education often make sure that their children spend some time in Sabi, anything between a season and several years. Sending children to *madrasas* and secular schools does not prevent many businessmen in Serekunda, and even in the diaspora, from driving them back to their home villages during the summer vacations (which deliberately coincide with the rainy season) in order to help their families out in the fields. On their part, even those villagers most keen on agrarian education are not necessarily opposed to other forms of skills training, and often encourage their children to attend schooling.

The Alienation of the Farmer?

The shifting geographies of childrearing may undermine the social and cultural foundations of agriculture and rural dwelling in the future. For the current generation of young men, however, growing up in Sabi has involved acquiring not only a sense of belonging, but also a sense of being on and with the land, an experiential understanding of the onus of 'sitting'. By 'sitting' in Sabi, they cultivate physical, social and ethical habits in order to succeed in the travel-bush, should they emigrate in the future. This complicates the widely held view that modernity and migration cultures will inevitably draw youths away from the fields in pursuit of Eldorado dreams. The way in which agrarian sedentariness pervades the imaginary and practical logic of migrant *hustling* further problematizes

the notions we use to understand the processes of (im)mobility. Whereas scholars of migration have shown how the meanings and materiality of mobility shape local imaginaries and lives, a narrow focus on movement and on the elsewhere fails to acknowledge the encompassing character of the agrarian ethos of Soninke migration. Through the lens of agri-culture, this chapter has shown the significance of dwelling practices in shaping migration as well as the ways in which mobility has imbued stillness with meaning.

A corollary of the foregoing observations is that promoting a romantic return of youths to the land by unravelling their migratory fantasies may not lead to a settled life. Youths do not stay on the land in spite of the lure of international travel but because of it. The agrarian ethos is certainly the product of a long-standing agrarian civilization that predates contemporary migrations. In Sabi, parents do raise their children along the 'fathers' path' (*faabanun kille*), emphasising tradition (*laada*) and the morality of agrarian living (see also Kea 2013: 109–10). It would be misleading, however, to attribute this to traditionalism. The agrarian ethos is also the outcome of modernity, particularly of participating in international circuits of labour. Far from being dupes of inter- and post-industrial capitalism, Soninke migrants must nonetheless come to terms with the specific demands and constraints of the labour market in the West. Leading a migrant life requires flexibility, hard work and discipline and other virtues that prospective travellers cultivate in their families' fields.

However, if the articulation between bush and travel-bush, between domestic and capitalistic modes of production, confers meaning on the experience of being-on-the-land, it also links agrarian upbringing to a teleology of progress that paradoxically narrows down the meaning of cultivation and simultaneously downgrades it. Consider, for instance, how Ibrahima Sumbunu once discussed the possibility of remaining on the land:

> We don't have good machines here. We just use our *senbe*, under the rain and the sun. If you do this for long, when you're fifty [years old], you will be short of *senbe* and you'll have nothing … If you are in Europe, you can do odd jobs, like bricklaying; you can even work weekends, you'll struggle. But at least the salary is good, 900 or even more than €1,000.

Ibrahima dreads the prospect of an agricultural future, he sees his capacity to *hustle* and catalyse progress disempowered by continued work in the bush through his adulthood. This is not because, as the Gambian government has it, he wants to avoid backbreaking jobs, but because he

wishes to experience progress through such occupations. The cause of this form of alienation is not the commoditization of farm work and its product, as in Marx's (2000: xxii) conceptualization of factory work, for male agricultural production in Sabi has become largely de-commercialized. As signalled by his reference to salaried labour, it is paradoxically an expectation of capitalist objectification and valorization of labour that informs Ibrahima's narrative of estrangement from farming. According to Diawara (2003: 70), in the Mande world it is understood that 'work must be useful to the person who performs it' (my translation). Clearly, in his statement Ibrahima assesses the usefulness of his work, which as a junior he performs gratuitously, by comparing it to waged labour, an activity deemed equivalent to farming in terms of inputs of strength but different in terms of economic outputs. Ibrahima calls into question neither agriculture per se nor his agrarian training, which is so vividly evoked by his namesake's performance of agricultural prowess. He is rather preoccupied with anchoring his dispositions to an actual financial purpose.

Were it for economic value alone, however, farming would have faded and perhaps yielded to the onslaught of the culture of migration in Sabi. This chapter has revealed ways in which cultivation produces qualities that cannot be reduced to monetary quantity (Lambek 2008). Although young men venture into the bush to bring back 'something', they concomitantly produce and reproduce forms of relatedness, age hierarchies and principles of ethical conduct that are bound up with notions of respectable personhood (Davidson 2009: 120). This surplus of social value is usually appropriated by senior householders. For Ibrahima's elder brothers, this surplus value of farming and rural dwelling is of paramount importance because they strive to become established not solely as farmers or *hustlers* but as household 'sitters', a process to which we will return in Chapter 5. In contrast, like his namesake and age mate, 19-year-old Ibrahima achieves respectability primarily by *hustling*. It is this preoccupation with economic value that displaces agriculture from his horizon of desirable livelihood options and sets young men like him on a quest for money outside the village.

Acknowledgement

This chapter is an extended version of my article published in 2013 as 'Cultivating Hustlers: the Agrarian Ethos of Soninke Migration', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 39(2): 259–75, copyright © Journal of the CEMES and Migration Studies, reprinted here by permission

of Taylor & Francis Ltd, www.tandfonline.com, on behalf of *The Journal of the CEMES and Migration Studies*.

Notes

1. Stephen Wooten (2009) employs the term 'agri-culture' to draw attention to the expressive forms of cultivation.
2. This is not a new policy approach in postcolonial West Africa: in the 1960s Modibo Keita, Mali's first president, specifically promoted similar initiatives to the Gambian ones as an antidote to emigration from the countryside (Gary-Tounkara 2008: ch. 6).
3. President Jammeh's speech at the Opening Ceremony of the National Assembly on 30 March 2008, broadcast by GRTS TV.
4. Whereas the term *hustler* describes a hard-working traveller, the label *semester* (possibly adapted from the imagery associated with international students) applies to migrants displaying accessories, lifestyle and sophistication acquired in Europe and North America, and it can express contempt for those who have gone too 'Western'.
5. 'The "Nerves" Syndrome', *The Daily Observer*, 19 October 2007.
6. Though women farm groundnut fields and own the harvest, they are usually entitled to male labour for harvesting.
7. The role of agriculture for the household economy is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.
8. Bourdillon and Spittler (2012: 11) have argued that 'the widespread view in African cultures is that work is essential to rearing children and preparing them for constructive adult life. According to this view, work provides necessary discipline and experience of responsibility'.
9. Mande (also Manden) refers to a group of related languages and people distributed over a large area of Sahelian West Africa (the centre being Mali).
10. Forbearance is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.
11. By virtue of migratory chains, village and family members tend to cluster in the same areas. This favours forms of control by kinsmen and senior acquaintances. In the case of a reticent migrant, people often contact relatives and friends living in the same place as the migrant and ask them to persuade him.

Chapter 3

Looking for Money

Livelihood Trajectories in and out of Mobility

Having trained on agricultural fields, Sabi young men are ready to venture out and *hustle* in order to find money. In addition to travelling abroad, their *xalisi mundiye*, or quest for money, takes place in the Gambia and neighbouring regions. Also known as the 'trade season', the dry months that follow the end of agricultural activities around December have historically been an important part of the year for money making. During the dry season, the fathers and grandfathers of today's young men used to travel to nearby regions and cities to find work and markets for buying and selling imported goods and indigenous products. Since the 1960s and 1970s, urban growth along the Gambia's Atlantic coast has fuelled a demand for labour and commercial outlets, thus polarizing seasonal mobility. In the late 2000s, about one third of the men who ordinarily lived in Sabi headed to Serekunda to work as construction workers, shop assistants, petty traders or employees in the firm of a kinsman.[1] Many found accommodation with relatives in the city, whilst others stayed with friends or rented a room. All were eager to make and save money before the first rains fell in June, when the tide of rural immigrants progressively flowed back. Unless they found a stable and remunerative occupation that allowed them to send money home on a regular basis, young Sabinko thus returned to the fields and farmed. With the money, if any, they had saved, young men bought clothes, food items and presents and then bought a ticket on a passenger van heading for Sabi.

The ferment of mobility in and around Sabi during the dry season shows that the inability to travel to popular foreign destinations is not an absolute condition of stasis for young men. It further shows that in the age of international migration the interplay between mobility and immobility continues on other geographical scales. In spite of the importance attributed to Europe and other international destinations, in fact, West Africans participate in a number of other migratory circuits in their own or neighbouring countries (de Bruijn, van Dijk and Foeken 2001). Seasonal or circular migration has been, in this respect, a widespread and long-lived practice across the African continent, and one that has given rise to a number of studies and theoretical models (see Potts 2010: 2–13). In general, circular migration follows no teleology of movement and permanence, with migrants often straddling different livelihoods and places by crafting flexible, stepwise trajectories of mobility.[2] Rural–urban migration in Sabi shares many of these characteristics; yet, rather than as a 'migration pattern', a 'migration strategy' or a 'migratory project' (cf. Boyer 2005), I argue that this type of mobility is one possible *outcome* of *xalisi mundiye* or *hustling* as a general livelihood practice that largely cuts across moving and staying. From a livelihoods perspective, migration belongs to a wider portfolio of tactics and strategies for earning a living governed not by economic rationalities in any reductive sense, but by diverse culturally inflected motives and differential access to material and social resources (Scoones 1998; de Haan 1999; Ellis 2003). Although research on livelihoods has served especially to highlight responses to vulnerability and poverty, its holistic, cross-sectoral approach is useful for investigating the complexity of *xalisi mundiye*, which also pertains to wealth and accumulation. What connects different off-farm livelihoods in and away from Sabi is, I argue, the imperative to find, accumulate and distribute money so as to fully participate in social exchanges and to fulfil expectations of masculine worth. By further drawing on and adapting Vigh's (2006, 2009a) notion of social navigation, I will show *xalisi mundiye* to be an open-ended trajectory unfolding on terrains rendered slippery by a capricious political economy as well as by an uncertain access to the social networks used to overcome politico-economic constraints on their monetary acquisitions.

Focusing on livelihoods rather than on migration per se 'avoids problems of having to define a priori the topical units and forms of movement' (Fog Olwig and Nyberg Sørensen 2002: 4), and specifically allows me to show that, given its explorative nature, the quest for money inherently envisages the possibility of 'sitting'. Through the life-history of two age-mates, the chapter describes the twists and turns, the adaptations and recalibrations that being on a quest for money involves, eventually

leading young men to recast at any stage the geography and meaning of (im)mobility associated with *xalisi mundiye*. I argue that young men loathe not only becoming stranded in Sabi but also remaining stuck in what I call 'spurious travel', forms of mobility such as rural–urban migration similar to *terende* (travel) proper but which are not perceived to accrue them enough money to create social value. In addition to emigrating abroad, young men seek to step out of the perpetual motion between village and city by 'sitting' either in Serekunda or in Sabi in the sense of becoming established in a remunerative occupation. At a time when opportunities to travel to desirable foreign destinations are shrinking, I will show that young men are increasingly open to finding money in the Gambia, while at the same time migrant investors use their resources to create income-generating activities for their younger relatives to 'sit' at home. By highlighting livelihood trajectories that begin with mobility and eventually end up in 'sitting', this chapter demonstrates that emplacement may be the final destination, rather than the departure point, of a broadly conceived migration process.

The Social Currency of Money

The expression '*xalisi mundiye*' consists of two elements: money and searching.[3] *Mundiye* is used interchangeably with *hustling* and accordingly conjures up the bodily and ethical dispositions which young men cultivate in farms and villages. Equipped with such dispositions, young men are fit to bear the asperities of the (travel) bush in order to find and bring home valuable assets for their families and for themselves. Having dealt at length with the 'searching' element in the previous chapter, let me therefore concentrate here on money and the reasons why money is directly linked to young men's productive potential.

Money is ubiquitous in everyday and ritual exchanges. As in the rest of Atlantic Africa, transactions along the Gambia valley have long been monetized and ideals of personal worth pegged to liquid wealth (Guyer 2004). Modern currencies gradually replaced other means of payment (cowries, textiles, salt bars, and others) in the second half of the nineteenth century, when commercial groundnut agriculture became integrated into the domestic economy (Swindell and Jeng 2006: 33). Colonial taxation later entrenched this need for liquidity. Eventually, ritual payments integrated cash and commodities that could be acquired in a cash economy. In today's ceremonies, cash is also an appreciated gift to the ceremony holders, and women belonging to a ritual association carefully write down donors and amounts in a notebook. Women hosting

the ceremony can also be seen moving around distributing coins to other female attendants, while dancers and praise-singers collect banknotes from the hosts and participants as their performance moves the audience to 'open their hands' (Janson 2002). The uneasiness with which Westerners exchange money in intimate relationships is largely absent in the Gambia. Men are expected to support their lovers, cash being an appreciated present which can be laid directly onto their palms. By extension, husbands have financial obligations towards their wives, and not surprisingly money matters constitute the most frequent cause of conjugal conflicts (Skramstad 2008: 123). Similarly, an acquaintance is said to be a good and generous person when he or she can help with some cash in case of need. A young man who often pulls out money from his pocket to buy tea, cigarettes and other treats to entertain his friends is equally said to be a good friend. It goes without saying that a man who is respectable (*daroye*) and renowned (*daraja*) is someone who helps people mainly by handing out cash. When a wealthy migrant visits Sabi, his house often swarms with relatives, neighbours and customary clients (among *nyaxamalo* and *komo*) as well as other villagers, each coming with a problem to solve.

If this capillary circulation of money signals the extent to which Sabi is embedded in a cash economy, it does not necessarily reflect a deterioration of interpersonal relations and morality (cf. Maurer 2006: 19–22). Certainly, many people have mixed feelings about money and attribute corruptive powers to it (Riccio 2005). The strenuous, yet honourable, nature of agrarian life is often idealized and pitted against the current situation in which material abundance has led people to fight over resources. At the same time, money is precisely appreciated for its relational potential. Allison Truitt's (2007: 59) observation about Vietnamese monetary transactions seems to apply to the Gambia as well: 'In the right hands, cash is a token of ongoing relatedness, and expresses intimacy, friendship and trust'. Indeed, as Tone Sommerfelt aptly puts it, commenting on a specific monetized prestation that initiates complex marriage exchanges in lower Gambia, 'money makes people appear': '[the prestation] materializes both the relationships that produced it … and the relationships that it brings forth when redistributed' (Sommerfelt 2013: 63–65).

There is therefore a morality of monetary exchange (Parry and Bloch 1989), but rather than through distinct mores and ambits of monetary exchange, the meaning and social value of money is negotiated during each transaction through gestures and words (see also Buggenhagen 2012). Thanks to its liquidity and convertibility as a means of payment, cash is suitable for a variety of social purposes. Whilst visiting a family, a person may spontaneously gift (*ku*) a small amount of money to an

elder sitting on a platform, by calling it a kola nut (*goron*), a typical token of respect for his or her seniority and wisdom. The same amount can be handed to a friend in need or a sister having problems paying a medical bill for her child. The giver may take out a fistful of money and grab the interlocutor's hand to deposit the cash into it by simply saying *hangu* (hold it) and sometimes adding *a ma gabo* (it is not much). This gift is understood to contribute to 'solving the problem' or 'taking care of the matter' (*na fi topoto*). Amounts and their value are not fixed. Even when the receiver makes an explicit request for help, it is left to the giver to estimate the appropriate amount according to his or her possibilities, understanding of the situation and consideration for the relationship with the receiver. People do often turn down requests, though they do so by carefully crafting credible excuses and showing regret for their inability to give. If believed, the intention (*ŋanniye*) to give, which ideally stems from a 'clean heart', may be sufficient to preserve the relationship.

While everybody gives and takes money, men are expected to *find* it in the first place. Men shoulder the financial obligations for their parents and households, and since households are in a chronic need of cash for basic consumption items, men are expected to go and find it. Unmarried men must find the money for their own bridewealth, and even when their elder brothers are willing to take care of marriage expenses, newly married men suddenly become responsible for their wife and children, which means having to spend money on a daily basis. Once all domestic obligations are fulfilled, personal needs and sociality also involve outlays. It is true that friends help one another, and that those who have may give away more than the have-nots do. But there is little dignity in just receiving; to continue participating in male circles of friends one has to occasionally share goods and paltry amounts of cash.

A successful man is someone who manages to keep money while circulating it (cf. Weiner 1992). As Mahamet Timera (2001a: 42) puts it, highlighting a more general principle of social exchange in the Western Sahel: 'Individual self-affirmation ensues from the act of having and giving at the same time' (my translation). While redistribution maintains social relationships, keeping and saving ensures self-reliance over time. Catherine Quiminal (1991: 142) has described Soninke migrants' savings as 'the money of autonomy', an emergency fund against the accidents and unpredictable events during one's life time – from failing crops to illness – which shields one from the shame of having to ask money from other people. Ideally, money consistently accumulated can be partly distributed, partly set aside. In the long run, this transforms the emergency fund into a more permanent financial security asset. While liquidity is important for 'solving problems', Gambians are also interested in illiquidity, indivisible

assets such as livestock and jewels that '[shelter] wealth from the daily demands of kin' (Shipton 1995: 250). Nowadays, most Soninke speakers secure their savings by investing in landed properties in the Serekunda area, whose market value continues to grow. It goes without saying that both liquid and illiquid wealth breed notoriety. As noted in Chapter 2, the name of Soninke moneymen (*xalisi gumu*) and the rich (*bannanu*) are widely known and talked about in Sabi. Among the most popular cassettes circulating in Sabi during my stay were those of the late Ganda Fadiga, an internationally famous Soninke praise-singer, who used to sing about the achievements of *diamantaires* and traders across Soninkaara; his clients gifted him cars, houses and thousands of Euros, so as to be featured in his lyrics.[4]

As this ethnography purports to demonstrate, migrant moneymen are not the only role model for young men. Nevertheless, the predicament of money is pervasive, not solely because it holds out the promise of enrichment, but because of its wide social currency. Money allows young men to perform manhood as caring sons, brothers and husbands, and to create economic and social security, thus protecting them from the danger of dependency. Conversely, the inability to distribute, let alone save, money is seen as a form of social immobility and invisibility. Young men constantly worry about *koriye* (poverty) or being *strand* (stranded). One often hears young men complain that 'if you don't have money, nobody respects you'.[5] This is certainly an overstatement, but one that signals the gravity of being insolvent. It is in this sense that going to look for money becomes in itself a social imperative, a necessary demonstration of a masculine concern (*hanmi*) to fulfil social obligations and a necessary move towards participating in social exchange.

Locating the Bounty: Routes and Destinations

Although the search for money potentially takes place anywhere, *hustlers* 'prefer to go where money is plenty', as one young man put it. Money, in the form of a salary, is thought to be plentiful and secure in places like Europe and North America. Even more plentiful, though more volatile, is the money one can make as a trader in destinations like Angola and certain West and Central African cities, especially by importing commodities from the Middle East, China and the West. As money is mostly in the travel-bush, youth talk about looking for or 'seeing a route' (*nan kille mundu/wari*), which often revolves around finding the necessary travel documents, money and/or trade capital to reach their preferred destination.

If international travel is thought to provide an 'enhanced relationship with money' (Osella and Osella 2000: 122), staying home is by contrast associated with financial insecurity. Many young men simply say that 'there is no money here' (*xalisi nta yere*), in Sabi. Formerly, most farmers had the possibility of working and earning some money in groundnut agriculture, whereas now, farming and *xalisi mundiye* appear to be antithetical activities. Where there are opportunities for off-farm work and trade, young men see other social and cultural constraints. One of the most apparent paradoxes in Sabi is that, while many villagers emigrate, a number of strangers move in to work in the farms and as shop-keepers. In the past, parties of young men would tour other villages offering their labour in return for a share of harvest or pay. These kinds of labour contract arrangements (*sassi*, also *dabowo*) are today practised mostly by *strange farmers* and other immigrant workers. In the dry season, some jobs in construction work are available in Sabi, but it is again strangers who do them, while the youth leave for the city to look for similar jobs. This is partly because such menial jobs are historically associated with low status origins and dependency.[6] In contrast, Mamadou Diawara (2003: 77) observes that Mande people believe that 'the foreign country ignores the social status', recasting low status jobs because 'Once abroad [the man] accepts the hard conditions of the adventure' (my translation). Today, references to status are less explicit among youths,[7] though doing odd jobs and becoming dirty embarrasses them, especially if companions sit nearby and act as 'small patrons', as some say. For those who do actually take up any available job, the problem of fair and timely retribution constitutes an additional deterrent. The employer may take advantage of the ambivalent nature of dependent work to postpone the payment and eventually pay the worker's father instead.

Self-employed business removes the stigma of dependent work but exacerbates the tension between keeping and circulating money. Given that the Soninke enjoy a reputation for their entrepreneurial acumen, the number of stranger-owned businesses in Sabi is puzzling. I often posited this paradox to those interlocutors who complained about the lack of opportunities in the village. By far the most common response was to point out that 'you can't get money in your home place'. What surprised me most was that many elders shared this viewpoint, readily giving examples of stores forced to close down due to the incessant requests for help and credit from friends and family. The tightly knit social environment of the village thus constitutes a social liability for personal accumulation, to the extent that Bruce Whitehouse (2013: 22) has described it as a 'push factor' of emigration. Home-based entrepreneurs shoulder 'the burden of social relations': they are drawn into a web of solidarities and obligations

that they can hardly escape. As a Sabi man put it: 'Everybody comes with his/her problem … you would not know if they are telling the truth, but what can you do? You can't refuse, they will say you're a bad person [*sere bure*]'. If someone can consolidate his presence by giving out money, the redistributive pressures can be simply overwhelming for local pockets. It is difficult to hide profits and money, for people will know who has what and when he receives it. And they will know when someone refuses to help others. This is moreover a context in which people deliberately cultivate the virtue of empathy and sympathy. Being face to face with the hardship people face on a daily basis is often mentioned as a factor that forces one to take pity and do whatever one can to help a friend or a relative even without an explicit request. Travelling does not of course exempt the entrepreneur from fulfilling his financial obligations, but being far enough away from kith and kin allows him to deflect and postpone requests of help, thus buying time in order to reinvest profits and accumulate wealth. Therefore, much as strangers who run businesses in Sabi have no kinship obligations vis-à-vis their customers, the Sabinko leave their village in order to take advantage of being strangers in a foreign land.

It is important to stress that the belief that someone cannot find money in his home place does not merely result from social structure and culture but also condenses a specific historical consciousness. The burden of social capital has increased in the context of the collapsing rural economy, which, as shown in Chapter 1, was marked by declining agricultural outputs, the restructuring of the regional trade and the growing commercial immigration of Guineans and Mauritanians in the Upper River that accelerated the exit of the locals from the retail trade. Deprived of local income, Sabi villagers have been forced to fall back on mutual aid networks in case of need, even for petty expenses.

Finally, located mid-way between home and exile, Serekunda enjoys a special status in the geography of *xalisi mundiye*. As a second home, Serekunda hosts a number of fellow villagers and family members. Young men who migrate to the city sometimes opt to stay with a friend or in a rented place in order to avoid having to share out the little they earn. On the other hand, urban relatives are normally in a better economic position than villagers, and the sparse settlement pattern of the urban Soninke community makes encounters with other relatives less frequent than in the village. Most important of all, there is a shared understanding that Sabi young men go to Serekunda to *hustle* and they can more legitimately turn down requests for help on that account.

Not only is Serekunda, as in the case of other commercial hubs in West Africa, a trade destination, but migrants' investments have also made it both a seasonal and permanent labour market for Sabi young men. Since

Figure 3.1 Container Shoes: Second-hand ('Container') Shoes from the U.S. on Sale at the Gate of a Sabinke's Store in Serekunda, 2008

the 1970s, Soninke migrants and returnees have greatly contributed to boosting the commercial and real estate sector in Serekunda, in turn recruiting young relatives, fellow villagers and fellow ethnics as shop keepers, business partners or apprentices, and as menial workers (Figure 3.1). Transnational migrants also rely on local intermediaries to obtain official documents from the Gambian state, to find land for sale or to manage their businesses whilst they are away. This remittance economy is moreover adapting to the changing political economy of international migration. As would-be travellers currently face problems in securing visas for Western countries, migrants under pressure to help their younger brothers and nephews to 'try for themselves' sometimes set them up in business or employ them in their firms.

This function of the remittance economy is increasingly shaping Sabi as well. In 2008, some migrant villagers were constructing new stores in the market place (*lumo*), planning to entrust them with their younger brothers or some other relative. By 2012, more young Sabinko than I ever saw before had started commercial activities in the village. As chances to emigrate dwindled, news of economic strife from Spain and other Western destinations kept flowing in, and the job market in Serekunda stifled, some became convinced that business at home was better than nothing, at least until a better opportunity appeared on the horizon.

In sum, although in Sabi there exists a clear hierarchy of destinations and activities of *xalisi mundiye*, place-bound representations of opportunities and constraints are not static. They are on the contrary responsive to the shifting political economy of labour and trade mobility. This geography of *xalisi mundiye* provides the backdrop against which their perceived possibilities of finding money at home and away take shape. However, to fully understand how young men map out their options and actions at any step during their trajectories, it is necessary to turn to *hustling* as a livelihood practice. In the two life-stories that follow I focus on the interplay and disjuncture between the desirable and the available, and especially bring into focus the practical, situational considerations that shape decisions to move and stay in young men's quest for money.

Two *Hustlers*

Like his father, Sigu was a *hustler* with little luck. Sigu's father was the first traveller in a small family positioned at the lower-status and poorer end of Sabi society. Between the 1960s and the early 1980s, he toured West Africa as a trader, and worked eventually for several years in Europe before returning to Sabi, unfortunately with only a few savings in his pocket. He shared his money with his two elder brothers and with his wife and children, among whom was Sigu, the second of five sons. Sigu grew up in Sabi as a farmer until, still a teenager, he was deemed mature enough to venture out in search of money. For a number of years, Sigu farmed in the rainy season and spent the dry season in Serekunda. Until the mid 2000s, odd jobs were relatively abundant in the city and with the money he earned he could still purchase a few bags of rice and other staples for his family. Albeit insufficient, this money was much needed back home, for in the meantime his father had broken away from the agnatic household following a dispute and founded a small household for his own family. The agnatic household was growing bigger and more prosperous, as some of Sigu's agnatic brothers managed to migrate to Europe and the United States. By contrast, neither Sigu nor his own brothers had succeeded in emigrating yet, and having become economically independent of the ancestral household, his family was now struggling to make ends meet. Sigu felt the responsibility to go and find money.

When I first met him in 2006, Sigu, aged twenty-six, was driving a passenger van between Sabi and Serekunda. With the collapse of public transportation in the 1990s, second-hand vans of different types had invaded the cities and the main routes of the country. For those who could afford to buy a good quality vehicle, it was a fast business. Sigu's

van belonged to a migrant villager who extracted a fee for each trip Sigu made. Sigu could then keep whatever he could make after deducing costs. This was a good period for him, as money flowed in generously and on a regular basis. But the old van soon started to have problems, and each visit to the mechanics cost money. Misunderstandings with the owner ensued, and according to Sigu, some other young men who aspired to replacing him at the steering wheel began to spread rumours that he mismanaged the money, or they simply undercut him by offering to pay a higher fee to the owner. Sigu lost his position.

During the 2007 rainy season, Sigu's hopes of a breakthrough rose again. When I returned to Sabi, Sigu had gone to Benin. In spite of frictions between their respective families, his agnatic brother (his father's brother's son) in Europe had promised to help him find a visa in Cotonou, where there were brokers who could help him. Sigu raised the money for the fare, and travelled south. Once in Benin, however, the promised money kept being delayed and eventually he realized that the agnatic brother had let him down. Hosted by a Gambian Soninke landlord, Sigu fortunately managed to keep his expenditure low. Other guests gave him some merchandise on credit for him to try and raise some money in the market. But without significant capital, petty trading turned out to be hard. As soon as he had saved some money for the return fare and a few presents, he boarded a vehicle and reached the Gambia before the harvest season was over.

Soon after thrashing his mother's groundnuts, however, Sigu was on the move again. A friend gave him a lift to Serekunda, where he joined a group of Sabi youths who were working on a construction site under the supervision of a friend of his. When I visited him some weeks later, we joked about the 'bachelor life' that he and his friends were leading. The young men shared a shack in the middle of the large construction site where a Sabinke based in the U.S. was building a number of commercial outlets. By lodging at the site, Sigu's friend supervised the workers and surveilled the supplies of building materials. Unlike many other youths staying at their relatives', the young men had to carry out domestic chores and pay for their meals out of their pockets. No mother or wife was around to wash their clothes and cook for them.

The site provided a natural setting for organizing a work team, which also toured the town in search of contracts for mixing cement, making blocks and digging foundations. The daily pay per person ranged from 75 to 125 Dalasi (about €2–5), depending on the task. When a team earned a contract, the margins of profit were slightly higher. However, by March, the inflow of young men from the provinces had swelled the pool of the available workforce, fuelling competition and lowering the rates. The

2008 dry season was at least better than the previous one, when I had seen young men coming back from the city because no job was available.

Apart from earning contracts, Sigu and some friends looked for land available for sale while they worked on construction sites on the frontiers of urban expansion. In April, Sigu was excited about a deal he was trying to mediate between a local chief (who also took part in the land transactions) and a migrant from Sabi. An opportunity to mediate a land sale would yield him a commission of thousands of Dalasi. The deal unfortunately fell through, and the buyer turned to other, more experienced land dealers in town.

I flew back to Europe in May, leaving Sigu at the construction site surrounded by scaffolding and immersed in thoughts of travelling to Europe. His morale was low, jobs were scarce, and in moments of frustration he toyed with the idea of leaving on a boat to Europe. 'I have no helper', he sighed, an indispensable resource to apply for a visa. When I returned to the Gambia in 2012, Sigu's brothers told me that he had found a good job in a foreign construction company operating in the Central River Region. I also learned that Sigu had married and settled down with his wife in Serekunda. That year, I only met him twice and was unable to hear more about him. The last time I saw him, I met him by chance in the Serekunda market. We greeted each other and then I congratulated him on getting married. 'Ah, you know', he laughed, 'I did not manage to travel, so I got married'. I left Sigu and went my way, as he was heading somewhere to look for a job. The company had finished building in the area for the time being, and Sigu had to find money elsewhere.

When in February 2008 I left Sabi to follow young men like Sigu looking for work in Serekunda, his friend Mohamed had just returned from the Atlantic coast. He was asked to supervise the mansion that his brothers were building in their family compound. The last son of an elderly man who never left Sabi but came from a prominent extended family with a long-standing history of emigration, Mohamed was the only adult male left in his household. His own brother had migrated to the United States, while the two brothers from his father's other wife were in Europe and Serekunda respectively.

From the year when Mohamed graduated from the village *maisi*, an upper Quranic school, in his early twenties, he became concerned with money rather than knowledge. He began to spend the dry season in Serekunda, where he looked for work as well as for an opportunity to travel abroad. Over the years, his expectations of migration continued to grow. So compelling was his urge to go *hustling* that one night in late 2007, as he received a call from his brother amidst his group of friends, he became vexed and vehemently threatened his brother that he would no

longer talk to him unless he helped him to travel. His brother did indeed try to help him with a visa for Europe; less than a year later, however, Mohamed received bad news: the deal for a work contract visa had been called off.

It was at this time that he began to think about starting a business: 'Because Europe is so difficult, many people have opened businesses [in Sabi]'. Mohamed's responsibilities had meanwhile increased. He married and his wife became pregnant; even though his brothers had paid for the marriage, and every now and then sent money to him, he now had to take care of his own family. 'At night, I was thinking', Mohamed recalled, 'I have a wife now, I have a son. I was thinking … until I started a business'. Around 2009, Mohamed opened a shop in the Sabi *lumo*, the market place, where most major stores are located. With savings accumulated during his trips to Serekunda (around 10,000 Dalasi, c. €270), Mohamed bought clothes and plastic slippers in Serekunda and rented a vacant store. Things went smoothly: each week he saved some money and invested the rest of the profits into goods and other improvements, such as a fridge for selling cold drinks.

As in most shops in the Gambia, Mohamed sold a wide range of products, from drinks to shoes. The Sabinko however mainly knew Mohamed's as a fashion shop. When I first visited it in 2012, Mohamed showed me around, pointing to shirts, slippers, garments and other objects hanging from the counter and the wall or simply lying on a mat, and he indicated for each product both the cost price and the profit he scraped. There was no secret in this kind of business; shop-keepers like him bought goods in bulk at a set price in Basse or Serekunda, and resold them retail in Sabi, applying a mark-up for transport and profit. Second-hand clothes and shoes were, however, a different bargain. Almost every month, Mohamed's brother in the U.S. sent him boxes of used clothes through a friend who ran a shipping company. The brother told Mohamed the amount he wished to achieve with the sales, money which he used for repaying transportation costs as well as for buying staples for the family in Sabi. Any profit above that threshold was for Mohamed to keep. Occasionally, the brother also bought bags of rice and sugar wholesale in Serekunda, which Mohamed resold on his behalf in Sabi. Mohamed pointed to the corner behind the bench on which I was sitting, where the bags of rice were usually piled up. At that time, none were lying on the floor: food prices were too high to make any significant profit. At that time, a bag of average quality rice cost between 900 and 950 Dalasi, fetching a profit of less than 15 Dalasi.

In 2011, Mohamed took over another shop from a trader who had gone bankrupt. The shop, in which a student from his neighbourhood worked

part-time as a keeper, was a typical *bitiki*, a small general store where anything from cigarettes to bread are sold. Mohamed's rationale for this investment was that a *bitiki* generates small but regular money: 'Everyday people buy food, cigarettes and *ataya* [tea]'. That was a tough time for the villagers, with remittances from abroad dwindling due to economic recession and unemployment. Rather than a brand-new T-shirt, many bought essential food items, or simply spent the few extra coins in their pockets on sweets, cigarettes and *ataya*. Small but regular quantities of money allowed Mohamed to keep up with everyday expenses and requests for cash from his wife and relatives, so that 'I don't have to touch the money I make here [at the fashion shop]'.

I asked Mohamed about credit and debts. Like any other trader, he had many debtors in town. He did not estimate the total amount, which I reckon must have not been very high. This was a time when shopkeepers were adamant about making cash-in-hand sales or gave out goods only on short-term credit arrangements. When the debts were not cleared on time, Mohamed would approach the debtor and try to persuade him or her; if sweet talk did not work, he resorted to customary authority: 'There are elders in this village…'. It is likely, nonetheless, that Mohamed, like other shopkeepers, wrote off some of the debts in the name of friendship, kinship or religion. Few petty traders report insolvent debtors to the state authorities.

Some losses notwithstanding, Mohamed's business was going fairly well. Europe was no longer so present in his thoughts. Should he be able to amass enough capital, he reasoned, he would set up a store in Serekunda. He would go to China to buy clothes, and perhaps tiles – which was becoming a popular housing improvement even in the rural areas. Or perhaps he could go to the U.S. or to Dubai to buy blue jeans. For now, however, he contented himself with going to Serekunda every one or two months to buy stocks at a lower price than in Basse. He still did not have enough money, however, and he had a family to take care of at home. As Mohamed was telling me about his worldwide commercial dreams, a child entered his shop to buy a pouch of cool water. Mohamed stretched to the fridge and handed over the drink to the young customer. The child landed two one-Dalasi coins on Mohamed's palm, bit a corner of the water bag and slowly made his way out. Mohamed looked down at the hexagonal metal pieces, and then spread his hand open in my direction to show me the meagre bounty: 'You see', he chuckled, 'two Dalasi'.

Sigu and Mohamed shared much in their lives. Born in the same year and brought up in the same neighbourhood, they learned to *hustle* in the fields of their families and Quranic teachers. Mohamed had a better religious education, but he eventually followed Sigu on a search for money

for his family and for himself. Both young men used to hang out at the same meeting point in a mutual friend's house, where they talked about money, travel and farms. In their youth, going to Serekunda was almost an extension of the agrarian training. They worked at odd jobs, and they came back with presents and money to show they were able *hustlers*. Away from the village, they also enjoyed more freedom and sexual licence. Upon return, with the money they had earned in the city, they would invite friends to tea and cigarettes, they bought batteries for playing music and chatted until late at night in their meeting place. Yet, around 2007, although Mohamed and Sigu were still leading a boy's life, they were fully aware that, at their age, 'playing around' (*sange*) was over. They had to 'look for money now', as a friend of theirs put it. Sigu had to raise the money for the bridewealth and wedding expenses before he could even approach a girl for marriage. Mohamed, by contrast, had already made arrangements for marriage with a relative, since his brothers abroad would take care of the marriage expenses; nevertheless, he had to think of supporting his wife after the wedding. Indeed, that was when he began thinking of opening a business.

United in friendship and aspiration, Mohamed and Sigu parted ways in their livelihood trajectories. As neither of the two had yet found a route for travelling abroad, they resolved to making a living in the Gambia. After a number of peregrinations, Sigu eventually found a remunerative job in the formal sector, thanks to which he was able to marry and settle down in Serekunda. Unemployment might eventually push him to transfer his own family back to Sabi, where he would not have to pay rent and bills. Mohamed hoped to move in the opposite direction, but for the time being he stayed in Sabi as a trader and a family man. Convergent as they might be in purpose, Sigu's and Mohamed's quests for money were shaped by different demands and situations. Sigu's family was not only much poorer than Mohamed's; it was also especially ridden with internal frictions that had cut it off from networks of redistribution and help from abroad. None of his brothers were abroad, and albeit living on marginal gains, he was the main remitter for his family in the late 2000s. For food as well as for emergencies, Sigu was the one to approach. The opposite was true for Mohamed. His brothers took care of most of the household expenses, from extra food to housing, and although Mohamed took pride in contributing to the general budget by farming and buying meat on market days, he was freer to dedicate his resources to his own wife and child. As he was the only man staying in the Sabi household, his brothers were reportedly eager to keep him there and created the conditions for him to stay and look after the family (a point to which I will return in Chapter 5). No doubt this helped him to raise the start-up capital for

his store. In addition, every few months Mohamed received money from his brothers, around €50 or more. As Mohamed remarked, this money came on an irregular basis, and in any case he was unwilling to rely on his brothers' handouts: he wanted to find 'my own money'. One is nevertheless led to think that he managed to top up his capital with these remittances. Moreover, his brother helped him set up the business, and continued to send him goods to 'try for himself'.

Navigating the Political Economy

Contextual factors aside, any attempt to reduce Sigu's and Mohamed's trajectories to neat patterns and models of mobility would fail to do justice to the spatial complexity and lived dimension of *hustling*. The two young men certainly did not proceed haphazardly; their trajectories of labour and trade took place in the geography of *xalisi mundiye* outlined above. Without a doubt, Mohamed carefully studied a business plan, particularly for his second store. At the same time, what I want to underline in these stories is Sigu's and Mohamed's capacity to recombine possibilities, sense opportunities and react to failures. Typically by West African standards, their livelihoods follow non-linear trajectories punctuated by discontinuities, complex circulations and auspicious breakthroughs, as well as by dead ends. *Xalisi mundiye* is the thread that connects these fragmented trajectories. However, its practical logic cannot be thought of solely as a 'livelihood strategy' (Scoones 1998): much as they are strategic about their plans and decisions, *hustlers* often proceed through tactical practice which 'operates in isolated actions, blow by blow' (de Certeau 1984: 37). *Hustling* rarely presumes total control and fixed positions; in its most magnified form, venturing into the travel-bush is inherently fraught with uncertainty and danger. It involves continuous adaptation, reassessment and correction in fields of activities that social actors do not often construct and master. The unfolding of Sigu's livelihood, in particular, shows a continuous movement between aspirations and possibilities, emerging opportunities and constraints, over an economic terrain marked by precarious work, marginal gains and unstable relationships. Not unlike his father, Sigu crafted a livelihood with goals in mind, but with an attitude of flexibility and openness towards reshuffling his options. Goals themselves, as Mohamed shows, may also readjust in consequence of this process of making do.

The quest for money presupposes a capacity to navigate economic grounds that are markedly unstable. Tactics, as conceived by Michel de Certeau (1984), still presume a degree of stability of social fields as

structured by higher powers. West African realities are, however, considerably more fluid. As Henrik Vigh (2006, 2009a) has argued, social environments are rarely stable and governed by fixed rules; in places like contemporary Guinea Bissau, where he conducted his fieldwork, the extremely volatile political and economic situation of the country requires of people to continuously decipher and anticipate the evolution of their social environments. To capture this 'motion within motion', Vigh (2009a: 425) offers the concept of social navigation, which 'encompasses both the assessment of the dangers and possibilities of one's present position as well as the process of plotting and attempting to actualize routes into an uncertain and changeable future'. Certain environments, as Vigh (2009a: 430) admits, are less fluid and changeable than others. Sigu and Mohamed, not unlike the Bissauan young men featuring in Vigh's (2006) ethnography, are driven by norms of masculinity (supporting the family, the wife, etc.) which seem to endure despite the volatile present. In order to actualize them, however, they have to navigate political economies that are highly unequal and capricious.

Following Vigh, I view *hustling* or *xalisi mundiye* as a form of socioeconomic navigation. It is a strategic tendency towards a goal (money), but also a process of recalibration in constant interaction with the changing environment. As in Bissau, so in Sabi and Serekunda, young men constantly discuss shifting horizons of (im)possibility. Rumours about visas being issued in or given for particular countries circulate transnationally to Serekunda and then to Sabi. Juxtaposed with these rumours are news of losses, scams, frauds and misunderstandings like those in Mohamed's and Sigu's cases, which circulate as quickly and widely. Job and trade opportunities in the Gambia are no less subject to uncertainty and discretion. For unskilled occupations, contracts are usually temporary and competition for even strenuous and underpaid jobs is severe.

Hustling is a social skill. I agree with Vigh (2009a: 427) that Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* and social fields are too static for making sense of shifting grounds and rules of social engagement because they build on 'the underlying idea of relatively stable class-structured states'. At the same time, although social navigation may well describe a general principle of social action, it should not be assumed, as sometimes transpires from Vigh's analysis, that it is simply there, a matter of contingency. I think we cannot solely understand Sigu's and Mohamed's livelihoods as tactical practices taking place in an uncertain political economy of work, trade and travel. It is worth recalling that *hustling* is a gendered social skill which young rural men cultivate in the farms of Sabi, and which then gathers purpose (*hanmi*) from the social currency of money. This is not to say that agrarian worlds are stable and static; on the contrary, the agrarian

ethos of *hustling* and migration recognizes the inherent unpredictability of livelihoods on which Soninke men have been thriving for decades. It is an apprenticeship in potentially erratic livelihoods through which young men employ not ready-made maps but specific dispositions to navigate changing geographies of opportunity and constraint. Agrarian upbringing does not predetermine the actualization of *hustling*; young men like Sigu and Mohamed embark on rural–urban migration in their youths also to train in finding money outside the village. It is through these experiences that young men become *hustlers*. In other words, in the Upper River social navigation builds on a certain habituation to changeable situations, a cumulative, practical knowledge of how to 'feel the way' (Ingold 2000: 155) towards survival and accumulation.

Stranded in Circulation: From Spurious Travel to 'Sitting'

If the metaphor of navigation aims to capture the social motion of agents and environments, it actually involves mobility too. Having shed light on the dynamic unfolding of livelihoods on the ground, I would like to consider the scales and meanings of *xalisi mundiye* or *hustling* as a spatial category of navigation. Taking my cue from Sigu's and Mohamed's trajectories, I wish to show that navigation can guide young men not only to further mobility but towards 'sitting' in a safer mooring.

Over the past three decades, economic hardship and restrictive migration policies have compressed the navigable spaces and prolonged the temporality of mobility itself. In the 1970s and 1980s, while international migration was rapidly expanding, young men could proceed step by step, for example by going to Serekunda for a few seasons to raise the money to go to West and Central Africa, and sometimes even to European and American destinations. Progressively, however, it has become increasingly difficult to follow such a trajectory. The most recent instance of this stepwise migration that I could record was that of a man who, in the second half of the 1990s, did construction work in Serekunda for some seasons, then moved to Ibadan (Nigeria) to join the gemstone trade, thereby amassing enough money to pay for a visa dealer and reach Spain at the beginning of the 2000s.

Nowadays, young men leaving Sabi for Serekunda are likely to keep circulating between village and city without accumulating sufficient funds for leaping onto transnational circuits of labour and commerce. In addition to smaller scales of travel, in fact, navigation takes place within economic circuits that are highly stratified and relegate young men to the lower rungs of the informal economy. *Hustling* in the Gambia

is often described as *managing* or doing *taf taf*, that is, a way of getting by or navigating, which includes anything from working irregular jobs, petty trading and borrowing or begging from friends and relatives. This earns them 'hand to mouth' money rather than money that is good for building houses and futures: 'As soon as you get it, it is finished – you pay back your debts and you eat [spend on food] the rest' (Ablay, 28).

Few young men manage to step out of the perpetual motion within these geo-economic bounds, and indeed few see circulation as a stable and desirable solution to solve their being *strand* (stranded without money). Indeed, few describe rural–urban mobility as *terende*, which is largely synonymous with international migration. For them, it is a spurious form of travel: spatial movement neither generating value nor leading to social or individual upward mobility in the same way that international migration is perceived to do. Describing internal migration as spurious travel is perhaps an exaggeration; after all, Mohamed was able to raise start-up capital by going to work in the city, and once he opened his shop, he continued going to Serekunda to buy cheap merchandise in order to realize a greater profit at home. Yet my aim here is to single out an aspect or a tendency, rather than an absolute condition, that characterizes young men's *perception* and *expectation* vis-à-vis movement linked to *hustling*.

Sigu was compelled to search for money outside the village, but in a number of ways he became stuck in circulation. He went to and from Serekunda, and as a driver he even made a profession out of this rural–urban mobility. Yet though he managed to navigate several difficulties and impasses, this motion did not significantly improve his socioeconomic situation until he actually found a good job that enabled him to marry and make a home in Serekunda. Culturally speaking, going to the city counts as *hustling*, but not quite the same as *terende* to a foreign country. Whereas his father was poor but respected by Sabi villagers for he had 'seen the world' and learned several languages, Sigu's peregrination between homely places was not much of a discovery. He did, of course, learn Wolof – the lingua franca of Serekunda – and became familiar with urban life; but this urban cosmopolitanism was by then assumed to be default knowledge for young rural men like him growing up in translocal Sabi.

Spurious travel is not confined to internal migration. Sigu's brief journey to Benin counted as *terende*. When he came back, he shared with his mates several anecdotes about Beninese habits and culture. As far as money was concerned, however, the Cotonou journey was remarkably similar to the Serekunda ones. As noted in Chapter 1, the Gambia and Benin have had similar import/export policies. Although Soninke traders have been successful in both countries, young men without any

start-up capital struggle to succeed. During my fieldwork in Sabi, I met a number of young men who had tried to leave the village on an adventure like their fathers before them, but returned to the village empty handed, unable to make a living in the competitive niches of petty trade swelled by the mass of the local unemployed turning to the informal economy (Beuving 2004). Like Sigu, most young men only go to places like Accra, Lomé and Cotonou when they have a prospect of either applying for a Schengen or U.S. visa at local embassies or of joining a relative's firm there. While they wait for their paperwork to be ready, they raise some money by petty trading in the local markets. When visa deals eventually fall through, young men navigate their possibilities, sometimes going back home, sometimes staying abroad or moving on to another country. The difficulties of *hustling* without a solid start-up are such that many end up staying abroad for many years in pursuit of some money to return with. Parents or spouses sometimes place pressure on them to return and even send money for them to buy a return ticket. In the current period of economic recession, travelling to many European places can be said to be increasingly spurious, for migrants fail to find work and money; but young men still perceive labour migration to Europe and North America as auspicious.

The spurious character of circular migration in the Gambia has (re)created the possibility of 'sitting' in Sabi. For Sigu and Mohamed, who had not yet had any opportunities to travel, the next step in their trajectory was to become established in either Serekunda or Sabi. As Mohamed noted, since going to (and staying in) Europe was so hard he considered doing business at home. In addition, in 2012, young men openly discussed the difficulties of finding work and meeting the rising living costs in Serekunda. Some young men calculated the costs and gains: even when living on a meagre two meals a day, margins of gain were narrow. According to his father, Sigu himself was thinking of moving his household to Sabi. Although in Sabi people were hard pressed too, it did not seem as improbable as a few years earlier to open a business in the village (Figure 3.2). It became generally accepted by the villagers that some of the village youths *hustled* at home, and that they should be paid like other traders. Paradoxically, in a context where money was short, norms of redistribution shifted, the supply of credit was reduced and businesses that depended on small cash-in-hand purchases like a small store were solvent. Mohamed set up a *bitiki* precisely to have enough liquidity for everyday expenses and handouts and to spare his trade capital from redistributive pressures. Like some other local traders, he aspired to travel and move away from the village, but he also shared an understanding that doing a business preserved his reputation as a *hustler*: 'It is better than

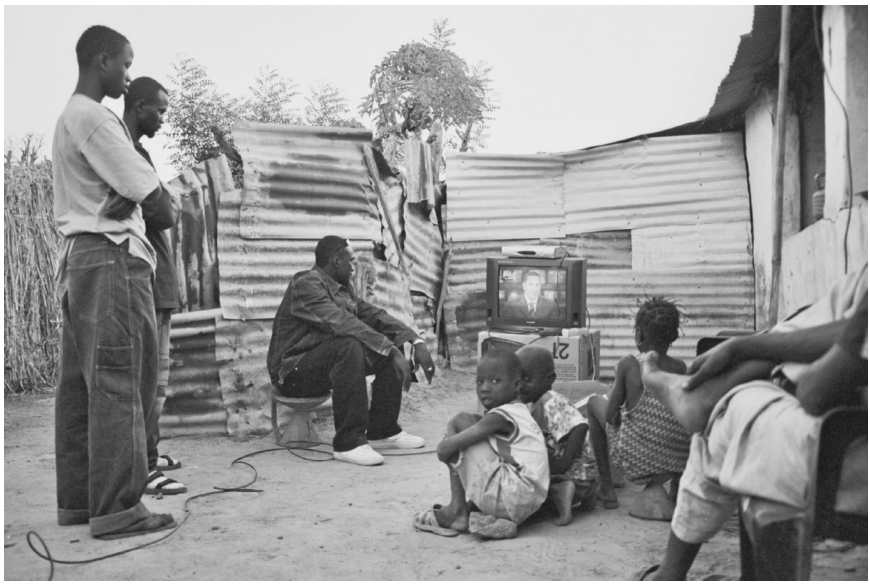


Figure 3.2 Business at Home? Testing a Satellite Dish Connection in Preparation for Starting a 'Video Club' at Sumbunu-kunda, 2007

sitting [idly]'. As another trader added: 'You won't get a lot of money, but at least you can take care of your *dimbaya* ['nuclear family']'.

Wind in the Sails: The Economy of Support

Stepping out of the perpetual motion between village and city and between hand-to-mouth jobs usually requires external help. Young men may wish to have a visa to travel to a foreign country or they may want to obtain a sizeable amount of business capital to be able keep long-term investments separate from everyday profits and expenses. Either way, they need to find a helper (*demandaana*) or *supporter* among their relatives or, more rarely, their close friends. To ask how someone has managed to emigrate is to ask the question '*ko da a denge* [who took him there]?' In a similar vein, whereas Mohamed stressed that he took the initiative and his brother only helped after he had set up the business, many young men in town were convinced that the opposite was true. For them, it was hard to believe that his brother had not set him up in business. This interplay between support and self-help characterizes the majority of businesses in Sabi and in Serekunda, in which help from abroad or well-off relatives

is involved at some point in the process. Many youths see the help to emigrate or set up a business as a *precondition* to begin *hustling* at all. They say they need to be put in a condition or a place to 'try for themselves'. At the same time, young men may be expected to find their own route or ways of *hustling* before receiving help. In order to persuade a potential supporter to help them, they may have to demonstrate that they are good householders and farmers, and also that they make an effort to *hustle* at home. Indeed, even though men like Mohamed were offered help with a visa application, they often have to wait a long time before their papers are ready, and in the meantime they cannot sit idly on a promise of support.

Support is predicated on the economy of kinship and other affective and moral ties. Young men expect their elder brothers to help them when it is in their powers, so that they too can contribute a share to the household economy. Support across generations is less frequent but it often starts off chains of migration within a cohort of siblings. As we saw in Chapter 1, some of the former international migrants helped their sons to migrate to Europe and the U.S. in order to diversify their routes and sources of income. Sisters of migrants and businessmen tend to channel the help to migrate or trade to their own sons (the brothers' nephews). As Mohamed and Sigu clearly show, however, even solid norms of solidarity in kinship relationships are fraught with ambivalence (cf. Bledsoe 2002: 21–22). As the Soninke say, relatives are rarely straightforward (*telengo*). Sigu's friends explained that he returned from Cotonou because his agnatic brother 'betrayed him' (*a da a jamba*). Tense relationships between their fathers had driven a wedge between the two agnatic brothers, probably leading Sigu's supporter to be unable to help without incurring his own family's criticism. Mohamed's household was more united and he could count on several supporters. In his case, it was the complexity and arbitrariness of visa procedures that rendered the kinship relations of support opaque and uncertain (see Gaibazzi 2014). The heated telephone conversation with his brother revealed, on the one hand, the extent to which Mohamed was frustrated about staying in Sabi, and on the other, the doubts and acrimony that the prolonged wait for support can generate between young men and their relatives.

Given the uncertainty of support, young men navigate not only shifting economic and political realities, but also fluid economies of morality and affection.[8] A considerable portion of *hustling* consists of networking. Young men often borrow money to make international calls or try to have a word with a migrant or affluent relative, crying for help. When asked about their attempts to find potential supporters, others reply instead that there is no need to insist because, as one man

remarked, '[that relative] knows my situation; he knows the *tanpiye* [suffering, hardship] I am in'. Refraining from bedevilling relatives can be a way of exhibiting a proclivity towards hard work and self-reliance. As mentioned above, looking for money in the Gambia can improve one's reputation as a *hustler* in the eyes of a potential supporter. People in a position to help with visas and money receive many requests from their younger relatives. Urban and international migrants face the dilemma of whom to choose among the many candidates, and this is where what young men do at home and how they approach 'sitting' can make a difference.

Networking often extends beyond kinship. Sigu had admittedly no helper among his relatives. Betrayed by his agnatic brother, and his maternal uncles being too poor to support him, he navigated his way through other social networks. Investments and remittance-related economies provided a milieu in which he could find employment and opportunities. As a driver, he was entrusted with a vehicle by a fellow villager who chose to invest in the transportation business. Through friends he found a job and accommodation in a construction site owned by an expatriate Sabinke. His attempt at realizing a profit as a real estate broker between the latter and a chief also shows that networks extend beyond ties of locality and ethnicity.

Serekunda is a good place to look for a supporter within or without kinship networks, and that is why many young men decide to go to the city during the dry season even if it is, economically speaking, a spurious travel destination. News about visa opportunities in the Gambia or elsewhere in West Africa circulate more quickly in the urban circles, which are crisscrossed by Soninke migrants from all over the world. The several shops run by Soninke men throughout Banjul and Serekunda are information crossroads and meeting points for different people and several types of business transactions. One must not be deceived by the number of men sitting at these shops and stores; while many people are surely jobless, sitting is also an active participation, a way of keeping one's ears tuned to the travel or business news and observing transactions, perhaps seizing the opportunity to jump into a deal as well. Spending time at the shop, they may earn the trust of the shop owner, who may then give the young men some merchandise on credit as a way of helping them to try and do business, or may entrust them with tasks. Sitting and socializing is also a way of making one's situation known to others, seeking empathy and help. In the flow of money, businessmen, migrants and investments which interconnect in the urban Soninke circles, one hopes to make contacts, visiting old friends and relatives living in the city or on a holiday from abroad, and thereby seeking a chance to

speak to them in private and elicit help to migrate or start a business, or simply to get by.

* * *

In this chapter I have shown that men's livelihoods are highly flexible and adaptable to a changing, turbulent horizon of opportunities and constraints. The open-ended nature of looking for money defies any teleology of migration and already contains the possibility of staying put. The uncertain and devalued character of *some* mobility may, moreover, lift Sabi up from the bottom of the hierarchy of desirable destinations. As exemplified by Sigu and Mohamed, the wealth, migratory history and social status of young men's households and kinship networks shape the latter's capacity to both travel and create immobility in Sabi. At the same time, the uncertainty of the political economy and of kinship solidarities is such that young men's socioeconomic background hardly determines how their livelihoods unfold on the ground. Even when they receive help, young men must actively construct ways of becoming established as 'sitters' by creating a mooring in the remittance economy of support and investment. Fixity amidst mobility must be, in other words, actively produced (McMorran 2015). What I emphasized in this chapter is, therefore, a propensity shared by all young men to tactically adjust to changing circumstances and hone their navigational skills geared to pursuing financial gain.

In fact, while destinations and activities vary, the imperative to look for money remains. Money is at the heart of social exchange and codes of male respectability. In everyday life, it enables young men, like other people, to participate, or simply to be, socially; in the longer term, wealth invested in social relations and stored in assets such as land enables men to preserve value against the odds of global volatility (Buggenhagen 2012). Nonetheless, circulating money requires men to acquire it first. Thus young men unable to migrate internationally must nevertheless look for 'marginal gains' (Guyer 2004) – small profits made at the periphery of transnational circuits of accumulation – as vividly epitomized by the two Dalasi coins lying on Mohamed's palm. The quest for money is not, in fact, all about the outcome. Even when they find little money, young men achieve some respectability. Already coming from the margins of Sabi's society, and being marginalized by his potential supporters, Sigu nonetheless stood out among his kith and kin as a hard-working *hustler*. 'Trying hard' to find money is thus important, albeit perhaps not as important as actually finding it. While navigating the capricious political economy, therefore, young men must avoid not simply sailing into turbulent waters and winds, but also running into the doldrums of unemployment, or worse still, losing

sight of the goal and courage in finding an auspicious route to a much-longed-for bounty.

Notes

1. Figure based on the author's household survey conducted in 2006/7 (see Chapter 1). Other minor destinations include the Jahaly Madina area, where some young men find work in the rice fields.
2. Similar patterns are found in other migration movements, in particular among migrants en route to Europe (Pian 2005).
3. *Xalisi* also means silver, a precious metal used in the past to store wealth.
4. Ganda Fadiga came to the Gambia to perform and record tapes for the Banjul-based businessman Musa Njay. I was told by a young man that he received U.S. $30,000 for his performance, though I could not verify this.
5. This is a widespread belief among women as well as elders (cf. van der Geest 1997; Buggenhagen 2012: 104).
6. Some recollections of the 1950s and 1960s suggest that there was a continuity between servile and free labour: when day labourers were recruited among the villagers, these were mostly *kome* (interview with Bafula Kamara, 15 December 2008, Sabi).
7. When I posed this hypothesis to a young man, he did not fully endorse the issue of status; he drew my attention to a *hoore* (noble) young man working as a labourer for a *kome* (former slave).
8. In Vigh's (2006: 106–8) ethnography, young men navigate primarily networks of kinship and patron-client relations.

Chapter 4

Just Sitting

The Spectre of Bare Immobility

In addition to farming and *hustling*, the typical day of a young man involves much, or even mainly, sitting around with friends. In cities as well as in villages, a ubiquitous element of the landscape is the sight of small groups of young men perched on chairs, benches or platforms at the road sides and street corners. Sitting together is part and parcel of everyday male sociality, but youths also sit around because they have no job or are waiting for an opportunity to start a business or leave the country. For young men who remain in Sabi during the dry season, sitting stretches out from morning to night, to be interrupted only by prayers, meals and occasional tasks at home. From a leisurely activity, therefore, sitting alone or with friends becomes a cumbersome experience. As one greets young men in a gathering and routinely asks them what they are up to (*xa do manni wa me yi?*), a common reply is 'we are just/only sitting' (*o wa taaxunu tan*), usually followed by other remarks such as: we are up to *hari baane* (nothing at all) or *ma koriye* (only poverty).

Sitting around in broad daylight jars with the ideal of the dynamic, hard-working man. Young men who farm in Sabi or *hustle* in Serekunda might fail to amass money and to progress substantially in life, but they do at least try and perform activities deemed to be valuable. They hone and unleash their embodied capacity for work and endurance, which is inherently linked to maintaining their body-self in a state of motion. By contrast, 'just sitting' is associated, for a young man, with passivity and growing anxieties about his reputation as a *hustler* and more generally

as a worthy man. It is a bodily metaphor for the inability to move either physically by emigrating, financially by working or socially by purposefully 'sitting' in Sabi. However, 'just sitting' is not solely a signifier of geo-social immobility; since young men internalize a capacity for *hustling*, 'just sitting' indexes specific ways of somatically attending to this impasse (Csordas 1993). The stilled body is a mode of embodied consciousness in which geographical, social and corporeal movement (or lack thereof) coalesce.

In this chapter I attempt to gain insights into experiences of mobility and staying behind by analysing the cultural kinaesthesia of 'just sitting', the perceptions of bodily postures and the cultural sensibilities conveyed through them (Geurts 2002: 74). I will describe the ways in which young men experience their motionless bodies as a form of entrapment, and then show how bodily inertia becomes filled with imaginary movement, not in the sense of purely mental images of mobility, but of embodied thoughts of international travel that crowd young men's heads. While projecting their dynamic selves into the future and elsewhere helps young men to envision a way out of their impasse, thoughts of mobility often become a haunting presence and ultimately exacerbate their sense of entrapment. In the second part of the chapter, I will show that youths may thus resort to temporal strategies to deal with their spatial problems; namely, reconfiguring their sitting and waiting as a moral-religious struggle against despair.

Of all the experiences of 'sitting' described in this ethnography, 'just sitting' is certainly the most abject one. It is a form of 'sitting' where no value accrues to the 'sitter'. It is an incumbent spectre of social death hovering over young men's lives and the prospect of emplacement in Sabi. Rather than in the absence of mobility per se, however, the problematic nature of 'just sitting' lies in the fact that stillness is not attached to any value and purpose. To distinguish it from other modalities of immobility, I thus describe it as 'bare immobility', a mode of 'sitting' stripped of its qualities and reduced to mere inertia. This term gestures towards Agamben's (1995) notion of 'bare life', a borderline form of existence produced by, and inherent in, the legal and political structures of state sovereignty. Bare life is the condition of a person completely subordinate to sovereign power and who does not receive any counterpart of rights for it. In using this terminology, I do not mean to suggest that 'just sitting' can be read as a form of bare life, for young men are not *sensu stricto* totally subject to sovereign power;[1] rather, I wish to hint at the processes of denudation of qualified subjectivity resulting from the biopolitical, economic *and* societal regimes of (im)mobilization described in the previous chapters. Broadly speaking, while young men are still being

valued against ideals of productive and mobile masculinity, legal barriers to mobility and neoliberal regimes of the economy exclude them from circuits of gainful employment at home as well as abroad. It is the hiatus between the potential and the actual condition, between possibility and opportunity, that wears down 'sitting' and reduces it to 'just sitting'. Utter bareness is an exceptional circumstance; it is nevertheless a modality of 'sitting' that many young men experience in varying degrees of intensity and frequency during their stay in Sabi and in the Gambia, a spectre that informs the imagination of other, more worthy immobilities.

Ghetto Youth: (Em)placing Male Sociability

In the Gambia, sitting – the act of being seated – is a central aspect of social life. Known as *bantaba* in the Mandinka language and *kora* in Soninke, seating platforms dot the urban landscape of the entire region, providing male elders with a place to chat and a forum for debating current events. Though less visible in the public space, male youths have their own gathering places at the *koranlenme*, the minor *kora*, also known as *ghetto* in youth slang. In general, a *ghetto* consists of no more than ten to fifteen young men sitting on benches and chairs placed under a tree, at the gate of a house, or on the veranda of a friend's shop, or more frequently in the boys' quarters of family compounds. In coastal cities, gathering places are often called *vous* (from the French *rendez-vous*), and they are tied to the history of neighbourhood associations in Banjul, where some *vous* used to be well-known as political circles (Hughes and Perfect 2006: 201). In Sabi, while youths meet at seating platforms to discuss current affairs, the *ghetto* is mainly a place to relax in and ease the pressure of everyday problems. Over a glass of *ataya* (green tea), young men exchange news, listen to music, play games and cards, and often share their frustrations about money, their angst about the future and their concerns about strained household relationships (see Janson 2013: 117–19).

In Sabi, *ghettos* usually gather men belonging to the same age group, though other criteria and shared interests often override age differences. Meeting points are often identified with a charismatic youth or the person at whose house or shop they are located. The 'host' usually buys sugar and tea to make *ataya*, the basic ingredients for creating a conversation and making it 'sweet', as young men say.[2] Regular attendants contribute with money or by bringing tea, cigarettes, sweets, batteries for the cassette player and other commodities which they share as an act of male bonding. This micro-political economy of sociality creates other forms of mutual aid and social networking among peers (Nyanzi 2011: 208). When

a young man is broke, he will turn to some of his close mates and explain his situation to them. He may plead for a handout, or he may be able to borrow a bicycle, to use a friend's phone to make an urgent call, and so on. The shopkeeper entertaining a *ghetto* on the veranda of the shop may count on these young men for small errands or to supervise the shop in his absence. In return, at the shop they may find small opportunities for business deals. At the very least, in the *ghetto* a man will be able to share his frustrations and drink some *ataya* that he could not otherwise afford.

Although they are deeply localized and intimate, *ghettos* are places of 'global' imagination and laboratories of transnational youth cultures. Youths in their teens and early twenties often select exotic names for their *ghetto* from a pool of possible migrant destinations as well as from American hip hop, reggae and European football; among others: Atlanta, Los Angeles, Hannover Boys, Barcelona Team (Figure 4.1).[3] In this regard, the imaginary of international migration follows a logic of cultural extraversion whereby foreign products and images are used to express and shape local meanings (Fouquet 2008). Rather than just reflecting local–global connections, these names reveal ways in which youths inhabit the wider world and participate in it through imagination. Weiss (2004b) has argued that imagination (he uses the term 'fantasy') is not the sole result of flows of images and consumer goods in the age of globalization; it is an integral aspect of social life that enables people to

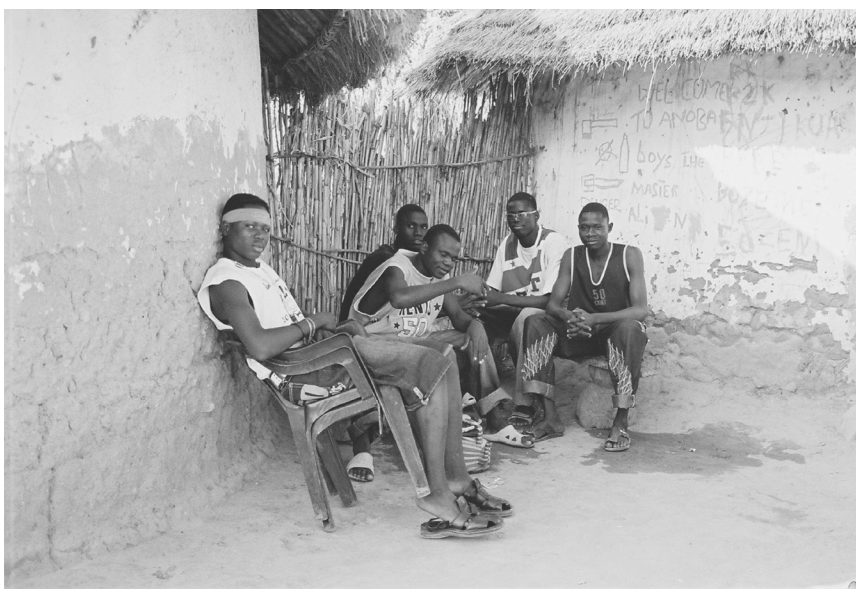


Figure 4.1 Hannover ('Anoba') Boys, 2008

represent and experience social reality. The urban Tanzanian male youths in Weiss's study use images and icons from rural society as well as from American rap. In particular, Tanzanian youths refer to the toughness embodied by American gangsta rappers singing about *ghettos*, as a way of imagining, and hence inhabiting, everyday hardship in the streets of Arusha. In a remarkably similar fashion, some Sabi youths told me that the very word *ghetto* comes from American rap or closely related genres of Jamaican reggae (cf. also Jaffe 2012). As a young man explained: 'life in the [American] ghetto is not easy, just like here'. The evocative imagery of *ghetto* youth is sometimes reflected in the names of gatherings too. For instance, one group of Sabi teenagers named their *ghetto* Mafia Boys, a term they had learned at school, in order to represent themselves as a tough and thuggish gang, and possibly to 'grappl[e] with their inability to inhabit normative masculinities' (Masquelier 2013: 478).

Stylized thuggishness does not really translate into deviant behaviours. Although there have been occasional violent clashes between *ghettos* of boys in Sabi, confrontation usually takes place on different grounds. A *ghetto* acquires notoriety by sponsoring DJ party nights on the outskirts of the village, which are attended by hundreds of boys displaying their hip hop gear, swaggering around and trying to impress the girls; here *ghetto* groups and groups of friends 'hire' the dance floor for a song or two and dance together.[4] From their mid twenties, young men do not usually participate in such parties, nor do they bother to give fancy names to their meeting places. Imagination is nevertheless important for them, as I will explain shortly.

Starting from the early 2000s, the Jammeh regime contributed to demonizing youth gatherings. *Ghettos* have become a major target of Jammeh's attack on youth as being lazy and bewitched by the European dream. In cities and rural areas, youths often complain about the government's crackdown on youth gatherings with the excuse of fighting against drug trafficking. In villages like Numuyell, where paramilitaries have a base, youths and villagers have long complained about the paras' frequent night incursions into *ghettos*, with young men being intimidated and even dragged away and beaten up. In 2011, a man was reported to have been beaten to death by the paras, triggering an upheaval in the village which led to the closing down of the paramilitaries' station. In villages like Sabi, the atmosphere has been more relaxed and relations with the nearby border police have been cordial. Nevertheless, during my visit in late 2012, the government was carrying out Operation Bulldozer, a police operation with highly moralistic overtones waged against criminals and foreign infiltrators that in fact tightened control on Gambians. Even relatively remote and dormant villages in the Upper River had become

targeted by night patrols and intelligence operations, with male youths and gatherings once again bearing the brunt of repression. In Sabi, there was a perceptible sense that some *ghettos* had retreated into more private spaces such as the interiors of family compounds, and that sometimes these groups had become smaller and less visible.

Aside from state repression, youth gatherings are certainly subjected to the public gaze of the villagers too. People are very attentive to movements through town and inquire about householders who have gone to visit friends and families, even for a brief time. Sometimes strong inferences are made from these observations (some people view this as a confirmation that villagers are fond of gossiping and backbiting). Being seen sitting in *ghettos* is automatically perceived as a sign of being associated with the usual attendants of the *ghetto* or with the activities taking place there. Although young men are tacitly expected to have sexual experiences before marriage, premarital sex is forbidden and parents especially fear their daughters being enticed into boys' *ghettos* where they might lose their virginity. Another compromising activity associated with some *ghettos* is marijuana (*kali*), a drug that is relatively cheap and widely consumed in the Gambia by young people as much as by those in their thirties and forties. Needless to say, elders and many other people view the use of cannabis as a clear sign of laziness and moral depravation (see also Nyanzi 2011: 207).

In her study of a Malian Soninke village, Gunvor Jónsson (2007: 70ff) has argued that the *grins* – the Malian equivalent of the *ghetto* – represent a form of adaptation to involuntary immobility. Unable to inhabit migrants' hegemonic masculinity, and stigmatized as lazy people and even deviants, disenfranchised youth take refuge in *grins* – which she defines as 'spaces of freedom' – that lie beyond the elders' gaze and provide them with modes of agency and presence. In an illuminating article on the *fada* – a male-based congregation in Niger similar to the *ghetto* – Adeline Masquelier (2013) draws similar conclusions. Nigerien elders find the *fada* futile and self-indulgent; unemployed young men are no less troubled by idleness, but by making tea and spending time together they also fight against boredom and seek to regain a direction in their lives. In the Gambia, *ghettos* are equally ambiguous phenomena, an ambiguity aptly captured by the trope of the American or Caribbean ghetto. On the one hand, Gambian *ghettos* provide a refuge from societal pressures where young men create intimacy and, at least the younger ones, alternative codes of respectability. Sitting in *ghettos* is in this sense a mode of emplacement, producing a social space (Lefebvre 1991), exchanges, affects and contacts vital to men's everyday survival and self-esteem. On the other, the price for this freedom is often more stigmatization

and enclosure; what makes life hard in a Sabi youth *ghetto* is clearly not solely the rural suffering (*tanpiye*) youths face in their daily life, but the load of pressure and gossip weighing on them. Prior to exploring ways in which young men seek to rethink the temporal and spatial terms of their ghettoized lives in Sabi, closer attention to this process of devaluation or questioning of the socially productive act of sitting is, in my view, required.

Stilled Bodies and Burdened Heads

Notwithstanding external pressures and controls, the sense of oppression associated with sitting in *ghettos* originates primarily from within the *ghetto*, or to be more precise, from within the *ghetto* men themselves. As places of leisure and rest, *ghettos* should be ideally an after-work activity; but as leisure prevails in the absence of work, it fades dangerously into idleness precisely at a time when youths remind themselves that '*taaxe nta di*', there is no (time for) sitting. Remarking on the body at rest is thus an implicit commentary on virtue and vice, more than a response to accusations of laziness coming from the outside. By 'just sitting', youths sense in a bodily way their inability to live up to the ideals and dispositions which they themselves have internalized through the agrarian ethos of work and vigour.

Inactivity generates sentiments of discomfort and distress. According to these young men, the signs of prolonged sitting may become visible in the body itself, particularly in aspects related to bodily strength (*senbe*), such as loss of weight and muscular tone. It is not uncommon for young men to use bodily metaphors to draw contrasts between their current situation of inactivity and a period in the past in which they were *hustling* and making money. For instance, Sigu – a man in his mid thirties at the time of my fieldwork – was once trading commodities between Serekunda and Sabi. Back then, he used to earn a good amount of money, which he eagerly shared with his family and friends. His life was hectic, as he used to travel long hours on bad roads, but he could afford good food, such as meat, which Gambians associate with energy and strength. 'My body was *dinka* [big, plump] and *melexe* [shiny, toned]', said Sigu, as he narrated his story to me. Then, business became slack, and eventually he had to abandon it. Ever since then, he has done some street peddling and worked in Serekunda during the dry season, but has never managed to make much money. He mostly stays in Sabi, and once the agricultural season is over, he flits from *ghetto* to *ghetto* to drink *ataya* and entertain friends with his news and jokes. Sigu has remained a jovial person and apparently enjoys

spending time at the *ghettos*, but he also complains he has lost weight (*kuma*) and become restless because his situation causes him too much anxiety: 'Sometimes I lie in bed until 2 or 3 A.M. without sleeping: thinking and thinking'.

Like Sigu, young men tend to associate 'just sitting' with a burdensome proliferation of thoughts (*simmaye*) in their heads. An expression in Soninke clearly shows the linkage between bodily stance and cognitive activity: '*n do hanmi wa taaxunu*', literally meaning 'my concern and I are sitting [together]', or 'I'm sitting on my concerns'. Usually glossed as 'concern' or 'preoccupation' (Girier 1996: 279), *hanmi* refers to a mode of focusing the mind (*fakle*), and as we saw in previous chapters, it is used to describe men's determination and ambition to look for money. Since money is needed everywhere and yet is never enough, the *hanmi* to acquire money easily fades into the nagging concern about being unable to find cash, as a proper man should do: 'you keep on thinking [*simmene*] about money, how your wife can eat, how your children can eat, [how they] can have clothes and other things. You keep on thinking' (Mohamed, 27). As thinking haunts the young men, it may generate a sense of oppression, of being weighed down by a head full of thoughts. The term *likke* (burden) is used to describe this state of the mind and gives us an indication that thoughts are not perceived as a disembodied mental activity, but as ways of experiencing the embodied mind.[5] This mental encumbrance leads to becoming 'confused' (*jaxasi*), which in turn leads to a loss of *hanmi*, the focus and determination that is so vital in order to continue *hustling* for the very money young men worry so much about.

This situation is again comparable with Brad Weiss's findings about Tanzanian youth describing everyday encounters with economic hardship and shame as a *stream* of thoughts flooding their minds and experienced as pain and even as something akin to spirit possession (Weiss 2005). Although I have never heard Gambian young men speaking of haunting thoughts as spirit possession, concern and confusion can cause somatic distress, as Sigu indicates.[6] In certain cases, young men resort to herbalist or medical remedies, including cannabis, to relieve the burden weighing down their heads.

The Nerves Syndrome

Given its special relationship with money, international travel is unsurprisingly one of the most recurrent haunting thoughts associated with 'just sitting'. Gambian youths often refer to the lure of emigration as the

nerves syndrome or simply 'being *nerves*', a persistent craving for travel, especially to *Babylon*, the West, that lingers within them. The use of the word syndrome must not deceive us into thinking that this is a disease in the biomedical sense of the term; rather, syndrome here conjures up the idea of a contagious fever for travel that has affected Gambian youth for at least twenty to thirty years. Although only a few works have tried to explain the phenomenon, an article by Mamadou L. Jallow (2006), a Gambian independent political commentator living in the United States, is an exception. In his article, Jallow provides an anecdotal etymology of the word nerves:

> In the summer of 1984, a group of Gambians on [a] 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[d] [got] his NERVES up [*sic*]. Hence the origin of [the] 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.[7] (Jallow 2006)

Rather than in the historical accuracy of Jallow's account, I am interested in the cultural reference points he uses. The 'embodiment of the longing to travel', to explore, make and bring back money is readily recognizable even to the previous generations of Soninke and Gambian migrants. This was one of the driving forces of the diamond rush in 1950s, and is one that has continued, albeit in different directions, to polarize the geography of the quest for money among the following generations of Soninke men. Tellingly, Soninke speakers translate *nerves* as *hanmi*, the concern, ambition and determination of mind and body to perform a purposeful task, most notably *hustling* (the word *curasi* – from the French *courage* – is often used as a substitute for *hanmi*). This is consonant with the image of 'getting one's nerve up' used by Jallow. Also featuring in Jallow's story are the migrants who, through displays of success, lure those who have stayed behind into travel. Although Soninke young men are often critical of *semesters* and their excesses, they readily admit that houses, pilgrimages and other achievements of respected *hustlers* give them *hanmi* to get up and try to emulate them. In other words, the *nerves syndrome* can be seen as a variant of the discourse on *hustling* that emphasizes proactive attitudes as a precondition to socioeconomic success, and that exclusively attaches them to international travel.

However, aside from setting the body-mind to a concrete quest for money abroad, the *nerves syndrome* is a way of coping with the present condition of sitting, pondering and despairing. It can be read as a form of 'existential mobility', whereby going somewhere becomes desirable when 'people feel that they are existentially … "stuck" on the "highway of life"' (Hage 2005: 471). Young men know full well that many migrants sit jobless in, say, Europe, especially after the 2008 financial crisis; but many remain confident that moving out will give them at least a chance to move on in life. By placing travel at the centre of the imaginary of success in a context where opportunities to emigrate are actually few, the *nerves syndrome* also assumes an escapist function, an imaginary flight from misery and abjection. To leave is to leave behind the burden of concerns weighing one down and to escape from a place which offers no hopes for the future (cf. Vigh 2009b). The migratory elsewhere thus becomes a heteropia, a space external to the self and yet inhabited (Foucault 1984), an imaginary screen on which to project an inverted reality (Capello 2008: 49, 84). Thinking of travel is a way of injecting movement into the inertia of the here-and-now in which sitting prevails, and projecting oneself into the dynamic there-and-then of travelling. As a young man (aged 30) told me once: 'You see me [sitting] like this now. If I reach there, I will not sit! *La illaha*! I will wake up early in the morning and work till night!' The *nerves syndrome* thus emerges from, and articulates, the cultural kinaesthesia of bare immobility, the bodily and mental shackles that trap young men. As such, it is a response to the structural violence (Farmer 2004) inflicted on young men by multiple forces, from the societal pressures to conform to normative models of male emancipation, to rural poverty and unemployment, to migration policies restricting free movement across borders.

Much as it constitutes an empowering concern, the longing for international migration can easily turn into pining. Since the lure of travel articulates and funnels discourses of the proactive self, it too may become a haunting presence in young men's heads. One of the common tropes of representation of the *nerves syndrome* in the Gambia is, in fact, a youth 'just sitting' all day, continuously thinking about Europe or North America, and progressively alienating himself from the surrounding environment. Overtaken by the *nerves*, a young man may withdraw from his group of friends and spend time in isolation 'sitting over his thoughts'. In Serekunda, I learnt that some youths feeling excessively *nerves* went as far as physically threatening their parents to find them a visa. Even when it does not reach this extreme, being *nerves* frequently has a boomerang effect: it leads to *jaxasiye* (confusion), the dissipation of the *hanmi* that anchored the mind to the goal of migration in the first place. In other

words, while it stems from, and gives respite to, the burden of thoughts and preoccupations distracting young men's heads, the haunting, unfulfilled aspiration of migration may add to their daily *tanpiye* or suffering.

Cindy Horst (2006) has described a similar phenomenon among Somali refugees in a Kenyan camp. Here, the term *buufis* 'indicates a longing or desire *blown* into someone's mind' (Horst 2006: 143, my emphasis). The unrealized desire for emigration to the West, as well as failed attempts at it, can increase the turbulence of the *buufis* to such a degree that it becomes a form of spirit possession and a cause of madness (Horst 2006: 146). Massimiliano Reggi (2011) has found *buufis* to be widespread in Somalia too; he has further shown that migration concerns are embedded in the highly volatile political, social and economic conditions that impinge on everyday life in Somalia and cause psychological distress. Together with the previously mentioned 'stream of thoughts' among disenfranchised Tanzanian youths (Weiss 2005), these cultural phenomenologies of embodied cognitive processes denote, in my view, the chasm existing between ideals of progress and the lack of available opportunities to realize them. In long-standing migratory contexts like the Gambia and Somalia, migration is both a source of malaise and a cure. On the one hand, migration is an entrenched livelihood strategy as well as a prospect for overcoming hardship and paving the way to a better future. On the other hand, as the challenges to becoming mobile remain daunting, the encumbrance of travel-related thoughts exacerbates the suffering and the sense of being trapped not only in a place but also in a bodily, existential condition of stasis.

Waiting: The Stilled Time of Sitting

So far I have focused on the spatial dimensions of 'just sitting'. Time does, however, play a part in the experience of bare immobility, in more ways than one. In the first place, it is the prolonged nature of 'just sitting' that makes it such a wearing experience. In *ghettos*, young men accumulate an 'abundance of unstructured time' (Mains 2007). This problem is all the more poignant for those who stay in Sabi during the dry season. At this time, empty farms bake under the sun, work in family compounds is scarce and youths spend most of their days in the *ghettos* with their friends. Days become long and repetitive, with *ataya* sessions punctuating the passing of time in an almost cyclical manner (cf. Masquelier 2013: 486). The monotony of village life can thus slowly but inexorably lead to boredom, especially because young men are acutely aware of the promising and exciting perspectives elsewhere, to which they make constant reference

(cf. Schielke 2008: 258). Friends go to Serekunda, leaving behind fewer and fewer people as the season proceeds. Those who stay behind make plans to join them in Serekunda, with departures being imminent in words but in practice put off day after day for weeks or months, due to commitments keeping them at home and the inability to pay for the fare.[8]

The quality of time is a second element of 'just sitting'. Time spent in *ghettos* is time spent sitting rather than *hustling*. A young man described the situation in this way:

> I don't know what's wrong with me. When I sit like this, doing nothing, I feel like going to town [the village] … When I go to see my friends [at the meeting point] it is a waste of time. I realize that. I go there and just talk: *yala*, *yala*, *yala* [blah, blah, blah]. When I leave, I realize it is useless, but when I am there, and even before going, my mind is not thinking the same way. (Musa, 32)

Musa's unfocused mind is clearly linked to 'a waste of time', a problem of which he is acutely aware.

A third temporal factor of 'just sitting', therefore, is that prolonged sitting instigates reflexivity on the passing of time. By spending time at meeting points, I learned how *ghetto* stories can be woven into biographies and narratives of travelling and staying behind. There is no man in his mid twenties or older who does not remember a close friend who used to visit his *ghetto* and then migrated abroad or moved to Serekunda. Friends leave, one by one, until too few people are left sitting in the *ghetto*; then it may break up, and those who stay behind are forced to join other gatherings and sometimes to spend time with younger men. Young men often use such stories of the waxing and waning of their congregations to remark on the lag in social time between *hustling* and sitting. Those who have travelled work, accumulate money and build mansions. Those who stay in Sabi, in contrast, place benches in the shade of those mansions being built, to brew *ataya* and thoughts of travel.

Finally, because of this contrast between actual expansion and potential compression of the timescale of social emancipation, young men live in a permanent state of urgency. They feel they have to catch up with their brothers and peers who have accelerated their progression to manhood by travelling abroad. The *nerves syndrome* captures this compelling need to become active and mobile, thereby negating the existential impasse which prevents young men from moving forward. Diluted in the unbound condition of 'waithood' (Honwana 2012), however, this need can erode confidence and determination (*hanmi*) from within the self, thus blurring the mind and numbing the body.

The Virtue of Patience: Temporal Fixes to Spatial Problems

While the *ghetto* partly provides a space for alleviating young men's sedentary woes, and the prospect of travelling may hold out a promise of change, we have seen that these solutions may also become part of the problem. Young men thus seek other resources to make sense of their space-time suspension. How should one live in the present and avoid yielding to despair? If posed directly in these terms, a common response is: *munyuye* or *sabari* (from the Arabic *sabr*), patience. An important concept in Islamic theology, *sabari* is also referred to by lay Gambian Muslims in numerous other mundane conversations and is used in social and political negotiations (Davidheiser 2006: 843). *Ghetto* conversations are no exception. A number of popular mantras among young men emphatically capture their pleas to wait patiently for God's providence: no condition is permanent, God's time is the best (*Allah waxati sire ya ni*), better must come, in God we trust (*o na Allah raga*), and

Figure 4.2 Driving towards God's Time, Serekunda, 2008 (religious slogans are a common decoration on taxis and commercial vans, transportation being an important job market for young men *hustling* in the Gambia)

so on (Figure 4.2). In this final part of the chapter, I would therefore like to show that theological invocations are used in order to resist plunging into apathy, while simultaneously countering the sense of urgency provoked by being *nerves*. By inscribing their present condition in a cosmologically conceived future, young men envisage, to paraphrase Mains (2011: ch. 6), a temporal fix to a spatial problem. Although patience alone does not provide a solution to 'just sitting', nonetheless by motivating young men to bear with hardship and confusion it often helps them retain a still mind and a dynamic body in the pursuit of everyday subsistence.

Urgency and despair may entice young men into taking hazardous and religiously illicit actions. Elsewhere I have shown how expressions such as 'God's time is the best' are mobilized to tame the appeal of hazardous ways of reaching Europe such as undocumented boat migration, or of making fast money illicitly such as by dealing drugs (Gaibazzi 2012a). As mentioned in the introduction to this book, the regional media captured the sense of despair of youths who pursue their European dream by gambling their lives on fishing boats sailing to the Canary Islands. This phenomenon was actually not numerically significant in the Gambia: it lasted only a few years and was not necessarily perceived in the same way by the young men as it was by the media. Nevertheless, it gave rise to enlightening debates in the *ghettos* and in households. Some young men saw embarking on a boat as a way to confront their destiny, in an attempt to fulfil their family duties: dying while *hustling* was not a sin but a dignified death. As a popular maxim in the Gambia recites: get rich or die trying. Others warned that the dangers of perishing at sea were too evident to be ignored. Youths who boarded the boats were at times accused of attempting suicide, an illicit act in Islam because it defies God's power to give and take life. To recall the justness of God's time – the moment in which God will provide for the individual or show him the right path – was thus tantamount to condemning haste and calling for forbearance.

Forbearance is a discourse of hope in an open-ended future. 'You don't know when your time will come', the Sabinko often say, remarking that divine will and personal destiny are ultimately unknowable.[9] The future is always uncertain, and no present condition can wholly predict things to come. By the same token, the future will not necessarily be the repetition of the dull present. As an Islamic teacher phrased it: 'This world is a temporary place and transit point. When we [are] in the next world, whatever situation you find yourself in, you will live in that situation forever. But as for here, no condition is permanent'(S., 65). Since the future is full of possibilities, there is hope for a change of condition.

Hope is not only about a better future or at least a different future. It is also a 'temporal structure of the background attitude that allows one to keep going or persevere through one's life' (Zigon 2009: 258). Invocations of forbearance recast hardship and uncertainty as tests of endurance and reliance on God, two foundational principles in the Islamic religion.[10] This does not necessarily sanction a fatalistic attitude: Hamdy (2009) has noted, in relation to a different Muslim context, that even when accepting affliction, forbearance and reliance on God must be actively cultivated through work-on-the-self and prayer. While Muslim Gambians constantly refer to God's will, responsibility for one's own actions is deemed important, particularly for doing deeds that bring rewards (*baraji*) needed for the afterlife (see Fortier 2005: 200ff). From this perspective, being overwhelmed by thoughts and preoccupations may be even more dangerous for Gambian youths than non-migration itself. Overindulgence in the aspiration to travel may lead to a state of aloofness, deflecting attention from the here-and-now (Gaibazzi 2012a: 129). Frustration and impatience may drag young men into utter despair and hopelessness, leading them to embark on hazardous ventures such as boat migration, or to withdraw from social life, both of which are acts that taint the moral and religious standing of the person.

In addition to contrasting the perils of despair and self-annihilation, forbearance is closely associated with steadfastness in everyday working life. Waiting for 'God's time' goes well with looking for money at home, and actually provides a theological basis for its undertaking. Invocations of patience are especially used in the context of everyday life to invite people 'not to give up' (*nan du do xoto*), to 'keep trying', to maintain enough *hanmi* to tackle everyday hardship and strive for subsistence. They are an encouragement to occupy the time of immobility if not productively then at least proactively, something which also enhances young men's reputation in the eyes of potential supporters. Work and perseverance may not be immediately conducive to wealth, but they are viewed as ways of catalysing an opportunity. During a telephone conversation concerning the expression 'God's time', Bakauru, a friend and a research assistant, pointed out that patience did not mean passivity: 'I don't believe you have to fold your hands and wait for God's time: you have to "create time". Of course, you have to accept whatever God designates for you, but you have to work towards it: that's better than sitting under a mango tree all day drinking *ataya*'. In response to 'just sitting' all day under a mango tree, the stereotypical place for a *ghetto*, Bakauru invoked both submission to God and a proactive attitude to work as a way of pleasing God and creating an opportunity, or 'time'.

Piety as Acceptable Immobility?

The importance of religious imagination in creating a different temporality of immobility bears out the question of religiosity. Soninke youths have eagerly embraced strands of Islamic reformism, known locally as *Sunna*. Now, the invitation to trust in God and his plans are not confined to *Sunna* youths and people; as I have argued, they belong rather to common sense, which straddles different theological inclinations. Nevertheless, this discourse chimes well with the reformist call for direct reliance on God (Arabic: *tawakkul*) combined with empowerment through piety, including steadfastness. In the context of Islamic revivalism, piety is particularly interesting because it amounts to more than praying and displaying public signs of faith (cf. Soares 2004); it involves the daily cultivation of attitudes towards particular ethical principles (Mahmood 2005: 170–74; Hamdy 2009; Janson 2013). Since such a transformation pertains to all domains of the self, could piety itself be a solution to 'just sitting', a way of achieving and expressing respectable adulthood without prior accumulation of wealth?

In the Gambia, as in several other Muslim contexts in West Africa, youths see piety as a conduit to modernity and moral progress. In some cases, this is directly related to disenfranchisement and the delusion of unrealized migration plans. In her study of the Gambian branch of the Tablighi Jama'at missionary movement, Marloes Janson (2013) argues that militant reformism can be thought of as an urban youth culture characterized by patterns of sociality and specific understandings of the situation of young people in the Gambia. Some of the Tablighi activists frame the movement as a response to the malaise of the Gambian youth. As one of her informants remarks: 'We don't despair, since we know that Islam is the truth' (Janson 2012). What is more, some of Janson's (2012) informants clearly see the Tablighi way of Islam as a means of overcoming the disorientation and immoral temptations caused by the unfulfilled aspiration to travel to Europe. Stefania Pandolfo (2007) has found that in Morocco, religious movements and preachers address youth despair in similar terms. Some activists and at least one youth cited in Pandolfo's (2007: 343ff) article envisage a struggle with the self (Arabic: *jihad an-nafs*) as an antidote to the feelings of emptiness and hopelessness that impel youths to embark on hazardous migration routes through the Strait of Gibraltar or even to commit suicide.

As we saw, Soninke young men view similar existential dilemmas through a religious lens. However, although religious discourse certainly offers moral support, the end result of religious invocations is not necessarily piety or religious activism. In Sabi, *Sunna* is not a movement or an

organization, and the differences between various currents of Islam are sometimes played down in favour of unity. Furthermore, neither age nor urban residence are strong determinants of *Sunna* adherence. Thanks to their studies in Islamic institutes, some learned young men have become respected teachers and preachers in Sabi. Yet they are a very small minority; however pious, the vast majority of youths do not choose a clerical career and thus face the problem of earning a living (Janson 2013: 124). Religious adherence may mitigate the *nerves syndrome* and despair, but it is not necessarily an alternative to the quest for money, including emigration abroad. As Musa (33), who considered himself a *sunnanke*, put it once: 'You can sit all day in the mosque, but you still need to eat. You still have to look for your subsistence; even the Prophet said that'. Tellingly, even some graduates from Middle Eastern universities working as teachers in Serekunda confessed to me that they were considering travelling abroad because they were not satisfied with their salaries.

Last but not least, piety is one of several ideal models of progress. Focusing on religiosity and activism conveys only a particular point of view, and sometimes fails to consider the plurality and ambivalence of non-militant Muslims' understandings of religion as well (Schielke 2009: S37). Even though other cultural models may be competing with the *Sunna* and contradict religious precepts, most *sunnanko* I met in Sabi sit in *ghettos*, ponder over their situation and sometimes smoke marijuana to relieve their distraught heads.

* * *

As a localized and dense activity of sociability, sitting is a crucial element of social life along the Gambia River. It creates a time and space for bonding and social exchange. For young men forced into prolonged inactivity, however, sitting loses its purpose and value and is reduced to 'just sitting'. In this chapter, I analysed the cultural kinaesthesia of 'just sitting', in order to gain an insight into the burden of permanence. A burden, *likke*, is the word used by young men to describe their state of oppression and disorientation that risks sinking them into the abyss of bare immobility, whereas they are seeking to navigate towards an acceptable livelihood. 'Just sitting' is a mode of somatically attending (Csordas 1993) to this plunge. Ironically, while agrarian life aims to endow young men with a dynamic body and a focused mind, prolonged sitting, bereft of opportunities to generate social value, creates the opposite result: a stilled body and a blurred mind. As a borderline experience, 'just sitting' thus reveals a spectre of failure in the regeneration of rural permanence, looming large over the possibility of remaining in Sabi as farmers and villagers. It is in this sense that invoking a moral and religious horizon helps young men

to wait in an active and tactical way (Jeffrey 2010), and to keep bearing the burden of permanence with fortitude and forbearance. Implicit in this rekindling of hope is the message not simply that a better tomorrow will be one of hard work and good fortune but possibly that there are modes of being a responsible man at home that do not necessarily imply accumulating wealth abroad. Whereas undertaking a pious lifestyle might simply not be enough to manage the expectations of manhood, other life trajectories – as we shall see in the following two chapters – might offer some guidance for navigating towards a safer mooring.

Notes

1. Through the notion of 'bare life', Agamben (1995) attempts to understand the nature of state sovereignty, which for him ultimately rests on the sovereign's right to impose exceptions to ordinary law. Agamben has employed this notion in the study of migration, notably of detention camps for irregular migrants, where people arrested while crossing borders or while living in the territory without documents are separated from the rest of society and subjected to exceptional measures. Young men like the Soninke do suffer from the legal ban imposed, for instance, on those seeking to enter the European Union; however, it is important to note they cannot be described as mere subjects of sovereign power, for these youths do not necessarily end up in such camps, nor do they in general totally subject themselves to such a power insofar as they stay home. Moreover, the forces that shape the experience of 'just sitting' are mediated by societal structures and norms not directly dependent on the chain of command of state sovereignty.
2. *Ataya* is part of hospitality. It is normally offered and prepared to honour guests from another village who are coming to visit a friend.
3. Some names are local instead (e.g. *xaxache*, the name of the tree under which is the meeting point). Interestingly, although religion is an important aspect of youth culture and imagination, references for *ghetto* names usually draw on other cultural repertoires.
4. Though less numerous, girls attend these parties; for young men, these are occasions to flirt and eventually seduce girls, who are otherwise confined to their compounds most of the day and night.
5. In speaking of bodies and minds, I am not implying any Cartesian dichotomy (Scheper Hughes and Lock 1987). For these young men, the head is certainly identified with thinking and intelligence/reasoning (*kilu*), although thoughts also originate in, or are linked with, the heart or liver (*butte*), the embodied centre of intentionality (*yanniye*) and moral judgement.
6. In particular, a healer I interviewed drew a distinction between a state of oppression self-induced by stress and a state of mental ill-being caused by sorcery. The first could be healed through remedies, whereas the second implied the need for divine intercession through a specialist.
7. Scandinavia is a destination for Gambian migrants, especially for Banjulians. This is probably due to tourism, as Scandinavian tourists were among the first tourists to

visit the Gambia. Linking up with foreign tourists on the beaches has become the way for a number of youths to earn a living as guides and to make friendships and romantic relationships which many hope will lead to a visa to Europe (Wagner and Yamba 1986; Ebron 2002: ch. 6).

8. Dalasi 200 (c. €5–6), in 2006–8.
9. Several divination techniques can be found in the Gambia. As a technique of anticipation, divination enables people to foretell the future. Nevertheless, all informants and diviners I have interviewed stressed that the knowledge acquired by divining is partial and often incorrect.
10. As many informants stressed, a situation of 'good luck' or material abundance is also a test for people: they should not sit back and stop worshipping God.

Chapter 5

Hesitant Patriarchs

Becoming a Household Head

Immersed in the darkness of a moonless night in late 2006, Alhaji, a man in his late thirties, was entertaining me with his grand fantasies about migration to Europe. Around us, men in their late thirties sat on benches brewing *ataya* or dozed away on the mat as a cool breeze finally swept away the heat of the day. Our conversation proceeded amidst laughter, but then Alhaji became more insistent about the urgency of his need to travel: in Europe he could work hard and send money to his family in Sabi. 'I am surprised [confused]', Alhaji said time and again in English, 'about my condition [situation] here…' Eventually, an annoyed voice from the mat roared out: 'What travel!? Your father is alone in the [family] compound: you have to "sit at home" [*taaxu kan di*] by his side; you have to look after the people of the household [*kadunko*]!' It was Bubacar, one of Alhaji's closest friends. Without turning his eyes away from me, Alhaji replied in a calm voice: 'How can I "sit", huh, [Paolo]? My brothers have been away for how many years? They are not helping. How many times have I called them up? Yes, I have to stay and look after the family, but if I can't feed them, how can I "sit"?'

Until the early 2000s, Alhaji spent more time in Serekunda than in Sabi, doing odd jobs and chasing business deals. Then, unable either to secure a stable occupation or find a way to travel out of the country, he returned to Sabi. By that time, his father had grown old, and his elder brother had just left for Germany. His younger brother had been in Europe since the late 1980s, whereas his other younger brother from his

father's second wife was still young and determined to stay in Serekunda. Alhaji's father's elder brother had left the paternal house as a migrant trader several decades earlier, and when he returned to the Gambia he moved his family to Serekunda, where his sons grew up and continued to run the family business after his death. As Alhaji's wife and that of his elder brother were the only adults left in the paternal household to take care of his parents, the responsibility of 'sitting at home' thus fell on Alhaji's shoulders. He hosted one or two immigrant workers to assist him with the farming during the rainy season; however, the grains did not last until the following harvest. He therefore turned to his brothers abroad, though in his view he only received money sporadically from them. It was rather his agnatic brothers (father's brother's sons) in Serekunda who, following in their father's footsteps, contributed food money on a regular basis and provided a host of other goods to sustain their ancestral household.

Alhaji's situation was probably not as desperate as he portrayed it. One could often see him coming and going on his brand new motorbike (again, a present from his agnatic brother), sporting sunglasses and shiny clothes, and stopping by at his friends' places to have a chat, or passing by his relatives' homes to exchange news and jokes. On commenting on his slightly flamboyant lifestyle, some wondered whether he perhaps pocketed the money his brothers had sent from abroad. Some others sided instead with Alhaji and reprehended his brothers for neglecting their duties, especially the younger one in Europe who had visited Sabi only once in almost two decades. Others still warned that Alhaji's luck might dry up soon, if his father were to pass away, and with him the moral incumbency on all his agnatic sons to provide support to the last living male elder of the family. Alhaji himself insisted that his brothers in the city had large families to take care of; he claimed he should go and find '[his] own money'.

Stories like Alhaji's are not unique in Sabi. Men migrating to find money leave their fathers and brothers at home to take care of the household. Becoming *kagume* – literally, the leader of the *ka* (household) – is for young men a way out of perpetual motion between countryside and city, and a legitimate, purposeful reason to stop looking for money elsewhere and thus 'sit'. In the context of transnational migration, the Soninke household has effectively become both a home of the diaspora as well as a veritable mooring that sustains the circulation of resources, people, morality and affects; flows that are regulated primarily by gender, age and generation. By assuming leadership of the household, the *kagume* 'sits' in a position of authority from which he lays claims to other people's work, resources and loyalty for the sake of collective subsistence, well-being and family honour. 'Sitting at home' as a household head is therefore the

mode of 'sitting' with the highest return of status and power that does not require prior accumulation of wealth. And yet, the prospect of assuming *kagumaaxu* (leadership of the *ka*) is often met with much ambivalence: heading a household can be a headache, or better, can add to the confusion and burdensome thoughts of 'sitting' in Sabi.

Shedding light on the hesitancy with which young men undertake a patriarchal career is key to understanding how Sabinko experience and reflect on rural permanence. I speak of hesitancy rather than, say, crisis because in this chapter I consider the ambivalence built into an institution which has been nevertheless enduring and adaptable to various regimes of the economy (cf. Kea 2013). Unlike some other parts of Africa (e.g., Murray 1981), in Sabi male emigration has neither produced female-headed households nor significantly modified the age and gender principles of domestic organization (see also Gunnarsson 2011). Men continue to rule over large households and work on the communal land, while women farm on their individual fields and take care of household chores. Among the Soninke the accepted rules of domestic organization (which were already a product of an (im)mobile society), have accommodated the intensification of international migration and been extended to the travel-bush (cf. Hampshire 2006: 402–4). At the same time, the outward extension of the household has proceeded to the point that both household and patriarchy have now become more socially and geographically complex (cf. Mondain, Randall and Diagne 2012).

This chapter highlights two critical factors that, while constructing the migrant household as a vital core in need of male authority, load it with tensions and contradictions. Firstly, migrants now stay away for longer periods and might take their wives and children abroad or to the city, where in the meantime they might have built a house as a sign of success as well as for their future return. Although, as Alhaji's case shows, diasporic homes do not necessarily disrupt ties with the village homes, they generate at least a degree of uncertainty with regard to future household developments. A second, related determinant of hesitancy is the extraverted[1] nature of the domestic economy. As households have shifted from a system based primarily on agricultural production to one significantly based on managing resources channelled from abroad, household heads must not only juggle with their brothers' willingness to remit but also negotiate access to redistribution with other members of the household. Alhaji's desired quest for money abroad is, in this respect, symptomatic of a longing for autonomy vis-à-vis the possibility of dwindling remittances in the future.

Evidently, therefore, becoming a *kagume* can be hardly described as a one-off event of ascent to office. The chapter describes 'sitting at home'

as an ongoing process of becoming established and acknowledged as the pivotal figure in the migrant household. In heeding this process, I build on a feminist critique of unitary, normative notions of the household and of household authority (Harris 1984: 145; Guyer and Peters 1987), though my aim is to shed light on the gendered position of the (would-be) patriarch rather than to give a voice to women.[2] Specifically seeking to trace the dynamics of (im)mobility that give form and content to household authority from the ground up, I combine a gender perspective with a broader approach to relatedness and domesticity (Carsten 2004: ch. 2). Although domesticity is again generally studied from women's perspective, I show that in Sabi, a hesitant patriarchy emerges from daily acts of presence in the *ka*, such as the providing and sharing of food and mealtime conviviality, through which intimacy and power are woven together as well as invested with ambiguity (van Vleet 2008). Such daily, local practices of *kagumaaxu*, complete with their hesitancy, are subsequently shown to feed young men's imaginations of the household and its (un)viability on a wider temporal and spatial scale.

The *Ka*

The *ka* is a territorial unit of the *xabila*, the agnatic descent group identified by a patronym (*jaamu*).[3] Although the *xabila* is not a highly centralized political formation, and the *ka* (pl. *kanu*) is consequently a largely autonomous domestic unit, genealogical history matters in the *ka*. 'This is where it all began', people often say about their paternal *ka*, making reference to the foundational moment of the *ka*, when a man, and eventually his brothers, migrated from the east and established the first household in Sabi (see Gaibazzi 2013). When the elders of a *xabila* preside over a ceremony or mediate disputes (Figure 5.1), they remind the younger agnates of the way or path (*kille*) of the patrilineage to follow in order to ensure continuity and harmony (cf. Kea 2013: 107, 109). Also, when a *kagume* dies and leaves no heir behind, an elder of his *xabila* will 'sit' in that household until male children are mature enough to take on the leadership. What is passed on is not only a sense of shared origins and destiny, but also the blessing (*barake*) of the previous generations, the divine essence that allows individuals as well as collectives to reap the benefits of their efforts. The very existence of a *ka*, not to speak of its prosperity, is the living proof that the previous generations were blessed enough to bring about the present situation.

At its minimum a *ka* is made up of a man, his wife or wives and his unmarried children. Marriage being patrilocal, the sons will remain in

the paternal *ka* after marriage and contribute to moving it onward in its developmental cycle. According to its size and specific history, a *ka* can include a number of such family units related by patrilineal descent, such as a group of married brothers and their descendants. As each man marries wives and begets children, he will wield authority and a degree of autonomy over his *dimbaya* (pl. *dimbayanu*) or 'nuclear family' (wives, children, eventually his parents); however, all brothers will be under the authority of the eldest amongst them.

Members of the *ka* are accommodated in what Gambians refer to as a *compound*: a fenced enclosure of varying size, including round huts or quadrangular brick houses, stables for draught animals and sheep, and a small plot (*galle*). The resident population size of Sabi *kanu* varies dramatically, ranging from less than ten to seventy or more people, with thirty people being approximately the average.[4] Apart from the agnates and their wives, the *ka* can include other affines (*kallu*), such as the nephews and nieces of the *kagume*, as well as unrelated people, such as seasonal workers. Enduring membership in a *ka* is however established by kinship, so that people like migrants and urban dwellers who do not live in their paternal *ka* often think of themselves as members, especially if they actively contribute to its income.

The *ka* organizes production, consumption and distribution. As mentioned in Chapter 2, men work collectively on the family field (*furuba*, *tee xoore*) to produce millet, whereas in the later afternoon hours they can work on their individual plots (*saluman tee*), though fewer and fewer choose to do so today (see Chapter 2). By extension, expatriate men remit money to buy rice and other staples to make up for their absence from the fields. Married women have a right to use a plot of land from their husband's *ka* in order to farm groundnuts for sale and for making groundnut paste (*tigadege*) (cf. also Pollet and Winter 1971: 395–57; Weigel 1982: 50). In the Upper River as elsewhere in the Gambia, work parties (Mandinka: *dabada*) larger than the *ka* have become rarer, and people in a *ka* usually consume what the men of the *ka* produce on the main field. The term *kore* – now a rare one – identifies such labour-distribution-consumption units. The *kore* is the labour unit of men, completed by their parents, wives and children, among whom their produce is distributed and consumed (Pollet and Winter 1971: 397). The *kore* can include unrelated members such as *strange farmers* and guest workers, and in the past, the slaves. Today the *kore* has assumed an easier structure, which invariably coincides with the *ka*.

Owing to demographic growth over several generations, compounds are often divided into *follaku* (sing. *follake*, gate) or *banŋu* (sing. *banŋe*, side), sub-branches of the agnatic group lodged, as the term suggests,

in separate sections of the *ka*. In four of the twenty compounds systematically surveyed in 2006/7 (see Chapter 1), *follaku* were socially and economically autonomous units functionally equivalent to *kanu*; that is, they farmed their own field and had a separate hearth (*kingide*, *kinŋu*) where they prepared their meals. In analytical terms the *kore/follake* can be defined as the 'household' proper, a definition that highlights kinship as the main criterion of membership as well as the economic dimensions – production, distribution and consumption – which are at the core of domestic activities. Accordingly, partitioned *kanu* can be defined as joint-households.[5]

Becoming a *Kagume*: Ascent to Power or Buck Passing?

A first insight into hesitant patriarchy is given by simply looking at the historical changes in the inheritance of office. The *kagume* (pl. *kagumu*) is normally the eldest genealogical male in the *ka*. Until the 1970s, the first male born (*soma*) of a man was usually expected to 'sit' as the leader of the compound, and was less likely than his younger brothers to travel. However, the decline of the rural economy, together with the intensification of international migration, has made primogeniture less significant for inheriting office. Migrant traders in West Africa or Serekunda have often encouraged their first-born to join their firms, or helped them emigrate to the West. Meanwhile, households back home have also encouraged sons to leave soon after they came of age in order to help their families with cash. In turn, since migrants abroad have helped their younger brothers to emigrate following the sibling order, it has sometimes been the younger men who eventually have had to 'sit at home'. The high cost and legal restrictions of international mobility have exacerbated this inversion tendency, for the men who have matured in this period have had to stay longer at home and eventually act as household heads or assist their fathers with managing the compound for the time being. Alhaji's life story clearly exemplifies this trajectory.

There are several additional circumstances that make a young man 'sit at home' (Figure 5.1). A man told me that he was originally a traveller, but then while visiting Sabi, he found his parents alone in the compound. He was moved to stay by a sense of duty towards them. Another young man returned from Central Africa because one of his elder brothers, also a migrant, told him to go home and marry; which he did. But then his wife did not become pregnant until two years later, and being under pressure to leave his heir behind before going to *hustle* again, he kept postponing his departure, soon running out of cash. Meanwhile, his elder brothers

Figure 5.1 Refilling and Directing the River: Musa, the Eldest Resident Male in Sumbunu-kunda, with his Younger Daughter Gesa at the Forty Days Commemoration of the Death of his Father Junkung, 2012

abroad became accustomed to liaising with him as their main trustee at home, and eventually encouraged him to stay for good rather than sending money for him to leave for the Congo. Some other young men are stuck in Sabi because they have to take care of an ailing parent, or must wait until their younger brothers are old enough before they can look for a chance to emigrate. Sometimes, an adult man lives in the family compound, but because he was born and bred abroad, he knows little about farming and household management; a younger brother may thus stay by his side.

In other words, rather than an achievement, 'sitting at home' is often depicted by men as a matter of contingency, subordination to seniors' will or perceived moral duty. If viewed against the backdrop of households in the 1950s and 1960s, this situation strikes one as a rather important change. Until this time, in Sabi and in most Soninke areas a 'patriarchal ideal' held sway (Manchuelle 1989); that is, men aspired to marry several wives so as to beget many children and establish themselves as household heads in their own or in a new compound. Migration, as Manchuelle (1989) has argued, was indeed driven by this ideal of finding resources

in order to invest in 'wealth in people'. By contrast, rather than in a scramble for power between brothers, in contemporary Sabi men would seem to be rather willing to pass the onus of *kagumaaxu* on to someone else and leave for greener pastures. Aspirations of family autonomy and leadership have refracted into other models, in particular those brokered by diasporization, such as living with one's wife and children abroad or in Serekunda. But even those who want to leave their wives and children in the paternal *ka* and wish to return to the village tend to stay abroad longer in order to secure financial autonomy for their own *ka* and *dimbaya*. Therefore, even though those who happen to become sub-, proxy or fully fledged *kagumu* tend to imagine their permanence in Sabi as a temporary stop en route to elsewhere, they can seldom shed this responsibility unless the *ka* changes, and may in fact end up staying for years.

The consequences of male emigration for left-behind men has attracted scant scholarly attention. Studies of migrant households in Africa have so far focused on women (Murray 1981; Gunnarsson 2011; Mondain, Randall and Diagne 2012). Similarly, in spite of a growing interest in youth as well as in masculinities in Africa, the role of young adults in the domestic sphere has not been at the forefront of research.[6] Analyses of domesticity have overwhelmingly targeted women and largely obscured or reified the point of view of the patriarch. By contrast, describing the dynamics of 'sitting at home' through the experience of young men who would ordinarily emigrate provides us with an opportunity to understand not only the making of domestic permanence but also patriarchy and its discontents from within. The ambivalent feeling of responsibility and uneasiness with which young men view a fast-tracked ascent to patriarchy prompts us not to take the norms of male dominance at face value as if they naturally ensued from the position the young men occupy. In what follows, therefore, I seek to delineate the contours of male authority by looking at the everyday practices that make and unmake men's presence and leadership in the household.

In a Meal Bowl: Ensuring Subsistence in an Extraverted Domestic Economy

Food has paramount importance in the experience and imagination of the household. The *ka* thrives on *biraado*, a word whose root is the verb *bire* (to live, survive), and which can be aptly translated as survival or subsistence. In a place historically affected by the whims of the ecology and the market, providing enough food for the family has been a nagging concern for most households. Yet providing *biraado* exceeds the immediate needs

of nutrition: to 'make the family survive' (*na ka birandi*) is to project the past into the future by extending cycles of intergenerational reciprocities whereby (social) parents feed children who, over time, replace them and feed them in turn. *Biraado* allows children to grow up, marry and beget and raise children of their own, who will be named after their grandparents, thereby carrying the memory of their forebears forward. Although both men and women have a right to name children after their respective parents, this alimentary-cum-genealogical imagination of the *ka* is particularly important for men; indeed, among the Soninke, as in most other regional settings, it undergirds their claims to moral authority (Meillassoux 1981; Wooten 2009).

The primary duty of the *kagume* is, in fact, to ensure *biraado*. A stern commitment to agricultural production has not exempted households from having to firmly participate in an extraverted cash economy, which has in turn created new needs and wants in and around *biraado*. As various members of the household seek to satisfy such needs by turning especially to migrant relatives, ensuring subsistence implies negotiating access and amounts of redistribution with others. As will be shown, this generates complex situations for the *kagume* and sometimes misgivings around his management of household resources. Documenting what goes into a communal meal bowl (and what does not) thus provides us with a useful entry point into the geography of the domestic political economy and the role of the *kagume* therein.

Biraado refers to the collective food stocks of the *ka*, in particular the grains kept in the granaries or the stores of the compound. The *kagume* normally holds the key of the store where bags of home-grown cereals (millet, sorghum and maize) and store-bought rice are kept, and on a daily basis he opens the store to hand over a set number of tin cups of each type of staple to the women for them to cook three collective meals, typically: the morning millet porridge (*fonde*), rice for lunch and the evening couscous (*futoo*).[7] These meals constitute the core of subsistence to which all the members of the *ka* (or of the *follake* in partitioned *kanu*) are entitled and should contribute to. By contrast, each *dimbaya* is responsible for extra minor meals from their own stores (*saluma*). In particular, as most people find *fonde* too light to fill their stomachs, the *dimbaya* will provide a mid-morning, second breakfast (*suxubanfo*), normally based on loaves of bread with butter, mayonnaise or more elaborate sauces prepared in secondary hearths located at the back of the houses.

For his part, the *kagume* is responsible for producing the cereals for morning and evening meals. He estimates the size of the plot to farm and either provides the implements to till the soil and weed, or has to borrow them from other household heads. He leads the group of farmers

to the fields and decides the timing of the tasks and whether to take on *strange farmers*. The cultivation of food crops represents the core of the household economy; it is what holds it together and guarantees a minimal subsistence against the vagaries of the quest for money outside the village. In a similar vein, Stephen Wooten (2009: ch. 4) has shown that the advent of commercial horticulture in a Bamana (Bambara) community (Mali) has not displaced the significance of what he translates as 'for life' production – an apt translation of *biraado* too – the production of subsistence grains. 'For life' production takes precedence over 'for money' production, through which householders satisfy extra needs and consumerist desires. In Sabi, agricultural production ideally takes precedence over migration, but in practice the 'for life' domain also feeds on the 'for money' one. Rice production in Sabi is almost inexistent, which means more rice has to be bought at the store. As noted, this is considered a duty of the migrants who, by remitting money for bags of rice, make up for their absence from the farm fields (Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2 A Translocal Meal

Aside from rice, there is a general sense that people's subsistence needs and wants are growing. For many elderly people, and even for people in their thirties or forties, commenting on changing times means commenting on changing tastes. Not only was rice more of a rarity in the olden days, but above all people used to eat the morning porridge with no sugar at all. Few people, including elders, have however preserved this habit to date. Now sugar is often considered a component of *biraado*, and it is used in large quantities indeed.[8] This is not an entirely new phenomenon; commercial agriculture and later the advent of the re-export trade have certainly made more products available to the Sabinko and instigated consumerist desires. At the same time, the greater purchasing power afforded by migrant remittances has contributed to satisfying wants and produced new needs in a way that is less dependent on agricultural seasons. As noticed in other Soninke contexts (Weigel 1982: 83–84), alimentary changes only partly reflect shifting subsistence needs; here, food is also used to express social distinction. As bread has become a breakfast staple, Sabi is aligned with Serekunda in terms of consumption habits.[9] Some households do not have sufficient money to afford bread, at least not on a daily basis, and since *dimbayanu* and even women themselves buy it, consuming bread marks a difference not only between but also within *kanu*. Accordingly, some *kanu* take pride in having enough collective money to buy extra food for breakfast, as well as a plethora of ingredients that make meals more palatable: meat, fresh and smoked fish, onions, tomato paste, palm oil, flavour enhancers (stock cubes, crystalline monosodium glutamate) and many more. So evident is the difference that money makes that commenting on the taste of food in a given compound is today an implicit reference to their economic situation. One way I could tell when cash was short in my host compound was by noticing meals becoming less luxurious and savoury than usual over a period of some days.

Changing food habits have created several grey areas in internal arrangements for *biraado*. A good example is what Gambians call *fish money* – the daily allowance for buying ingredients for the sauce served with rice and couscous. Normally, the *kagume* provides the grains, and when a woman other than his wife covers the kitchen shift, her husband (*kina*) will have to give her the *fish money*. The cook is also expected to contribute to the ingredients of the sauce with the vegetables she grows in the compound (or in a separate plot) and especially with the paste she makes from the groundnuts she farms during the rainy season. But tracking who puts what in a meal bowl is often a difficult task because arrangements vary greatly between and within households, and over time. It is not only sugar, but also other ingredients, such as cooking oil, that are

increasingly assimilated to *biraado* staples. Likewise, most women nowadays bring the millet which the *kagume* gives them to mechanical mills to have it pounded into flour for porridge and couscous. Since pounding has been traditionally a female duty, it is often unclear whether the *kagume*, the husband or the woman herself should pay for this service. Arrangements may furthermore vary over time according to the financial possibilities of the *kagume*, the internal subdivision and the number of married men and their wives. Most married men to whom I talked reported that they sometimes ask their wives to help them contribute the *fish money*. Consequently, as in the rest of the Gambia: 'In many marriages, husbands' insufficient economic support was one of the major sources of conflicts' (Skramstad 2008: 123). When women themselves are short of cash, they often buy merchandise on credit from shopkeepers and may ask their own relatives to help them sort out their debts.

For the *kagume*, the shift in household consumption is both an opportunity and a threat. It is an opportunity because it entitles him to greater shares of his dependents' work and resources for the survival of the household. As men tend to concentrate farming on the communal field, the *kagume* has almost exclusive rights on male farm labour. With reference to the upper Senegal River valley in the late 1970s, Weigel (1982: 92) found that the *kagume* managed on average 65 per cent of the remittances, which he used for buying food supplies and for meeting other expenses. I suspect that Sabi households heads would deem this percentage too high, considering that many migrants save up money to build houses and buy properties in the city. My household survey in Sabi nevertheless found that over three quarters of the migrant householders send money to their *kagume*. Nine household heads out of twenty also said that the money they received was enough to cover extra *biraado* items, such as meat and condiments, and to pay for milling the grains. In some of the larger households with several men abroad, migrants have also introduced systematic ways of pooling individual contributions in order to buy rice in bulk and to create a communal pot for the *fish money*. As the main recipient and manager, the household head exercises in such cases discretionary power over considerable sums of money.

It is true that household heads like Alhaji tend to downplay the amounts they receive, complaining that migrants keep most of the money for themselves and give only a paltry sum to their *kagume*. Yet such complaints can be strategies, first to avoid being overwhelmed by requests from other householders, and second to increase the inflow of remittances from abroad. For instance, during an informal visit to a household in 2007, I told the *kagume* that the compound was in my view well built with large mansions. He countered that the buildings were old and his brothers

abroad were not doing enough for him and for the compound. A few days later, I returned to that compound to interview M. (c. 40), one of his migrant brothers recently arrived in Sabi for his holiday. After a while we touched on the same topic:

> M: People are never satisfied … if you don't do it, some would say 'You don't want to help me' and 'You are bad person': that would make me feel bad.
> P: Do you hear these things abroad?
> M: Of course, you hear that people in Sabi say: 'Look, this boy [young man] has been over there for a long time and he's done nothing. Look at the other boy in the other house, he did this and that' … Sometimes even my elder brother [the *kagume*] here [does that] … I don't say anything, but sometimes I say 'What about you? Why don't you go and try? I helped myself, nobody helped me!' … Just last week I received a call from my [other] brother [who is abroad]. He said that he's helping the big [*sic*] brother here all the time, but [the latter] is still complaining. Maybe, he wanted to stop helping him. But I said: 'You're not helping him, you're helping all the family. Don't be mad about that'. You know this man [the *kagume*] went nowhere and he thinks everything is easy over there, that you just pick up money in the street and you want to keep it to yourself.

Jealousy (*suuxe*) vis-à-vis the accomplishments of relatives and neighbours is said to be a strong lever on people's motivation to remit and invest at home. Thus, the *kagume* can mobilize discourses of virtuosity and even fuel competition for prestige in order to ensure an appropriate flow of money from his dependents abroad.

However, although complaining can be a strategy, it also betrays a weakness, namely that the *kagume* is forced to mobilize moral arguments to elicit the distribution of resources he does not possess. On the one hand, by keeping to the basic provision of staples, the *kagume* can step away from the plethora of new needs which have arisen in households, and shift the responsibility for the growing list of products which householders strive to include in the *biraado* to married men and women in his *ka* (though he is also one of them). On the other, by so doing, he legitimizes the autonomy of *dimbayanu* and individuals in his compound, and with it the potential detour of money from the remittances earmarked for *biraado*. The problem for the *kagume* is not only controlling expatriate members and their resources; he is also forced to negotiate access to migrant resources with other stayers, and with their moral power, and willingness, to mobilize people and attract resources. In some households, people may eat together from the same bowl to honour the conviviality of communal consumption, but then they may retreat into their sections

and supplement their diets with other delicacies. In addition to breakfast, some people find couscous not palatable or filling enough, and if money is available, they buy bread or prepare other dishes. Although this is not a new arrangement, people watch very closely what other members of the joint-household are willing to share and what they systematically consume amongst themselves. Needless to say, accusations of stinginess and selfishness abound in households.

Not all *kagumu* are therefore in a position to voice complaints. During one interview, I asked the *kagume* to say whether he deemed the remittances he received sufficient. He rapidly scanned the surroundings and then shook his head and whispered that he was not satisfied with the efforts of his younger brothers. As I leaned forward to hear what he was saying, he explained that he was whispering because he was afraid that the women in the compound might hear him complain and report it to their husbands and sons abroad. He feared that this could have repercussions on him. Like other householders, the activities and behaviour of the *kagume* are under scrutiny. The rumours circulating about Alhaji's flamboyant lifestyle can be read against the backdrop of stories of *kagumu* who mistake remittances earmarked for *biraado* for personal allowances, or squander the fruit of their sons' hard work by, for example, inviting their friends to lavish restaurant meals. For the migrant it would be extremely difficult to protest, partly because of the distance, partly because of the risk of causing a family row which might eventually turn against him. Villagers have thus developed transnational systems to prevent the misappropriation of collective resources. Some migrants have credit arrangements with local shopkeepers to buy and/or deliver rice and other goods directly to their compounds. Shopkeepers are then paid upon the migrant's return or through informal remittance networks (usually external to the household). In this way, the migrant avoids sending raw cash to family members, who may spend it inappropriately. Sometimes the mother or the brother of the migrant acts as the main contact and keeps the migrant informed about the supplies. It must be said that the difference between prevention of misappropriation and marginalization is narrow. Such systems can be put in place with the complicity of given household members to bypass the *kagume* altogether, thereby undermining the substance of his authority while leaving his formal position apparently intact for public decorum.

In sum, declining rural incomes and forms of saving have deprived household heads of assets linked to production. The increasing monetization of *biraado* has further exacerbated dependence on off-farm incomes. As a consequence, the *kagume* relies on normative discourses to maintain a sufficient level of pooling between the components of the household.

To be sure, migrant *hustlers* learn from childhood to remit to their families, and indeed their virtuosity sometimes channels more remittances than needed towards their *kagume* 'sitting' in Sabi. However, as *hustlers* are also subject to multiple requests from other household members, the moral power of the *kagume* is often negotiated with other people too.

Around a Meal Bowl: Creating Conviviality and Male Authority

Meal bowls are also 'good to think' about the social work that *kagumu* and other adult men perform on a daily basis in migrant households. Women carry out most of the domestic chores and rearing of children, and except for farming, they spend most of their day at home. Men, in contrast, are often outside, looking for food and money for their families, or sitting with friends in the *ghettos* or seating platforms. Yet they are expected to be home at given times, in particular during the main meals: eating out on a daily basis might be taken as a sign that food is short or tasteless at home. But sit-down meals are also a vital event for honouring the conviviality of the house, marking gendered spaces and instructing male children in proper rural conduct; in short, for creating and ordering relatedness. By taking a close-up look at the social space around the meal bowl, I thus seek to show how male presence in a migrant household has an accrued value, or is by contrast undercut by other subtle dynamics. Since, as a long-term guest, I was also expected to go back home for meals, I will mainly draw on my observations in Sumbunu-kunda, my host household.

In 2012, the Sumbunu *ka* had two sections which were pooled as one household. All the male elders had either died or settled abroad and in Serekunda. The men in the section where I was lodged were all grown up: Musa (39), Ousman (36) and Ibrahima (24), all sons of the same father and mother. With Tamba (32) gone to Angola to join his only brother Sankung's (42) business, only male children were representing the other section of the *ka*. Ibrahima, Tamba's son, was four years old, whereas Dadi and Hussein, Sankung's sons, were eleven and six respectively. In kinship terms, since all of the grown-up men were agnates of the same generation (i.e., brothers), these boys figured as the sons (*lenyugu*) of Musa, Ousman and Ibrahima.

Besides fathers and sons, there were also two nephews (*negaremmu*) with us at this time. One was Suleyman (8), the son of Kumba (Musa's half-sister, or father's second wife's daughter) who, having divorced her husband in Serekunda, had returned to her father's compound, bringing her three young children along. The latest arrival was Ali (12), the only

child of Haja, a married woman from the Sankung's section. Haja had lived in Serekunda in a house built by her husband who had emigrated to the U.S., but illness had sapped her energies, and being alone and struggling to carry out her daily chores, she decided to find solace and support in her paternal compound.

With a total of five children and three adults (plus myself), occasions to observe the dynamics around the meal bowl abounded. Meals map the social space of the *ka*. A small bowl is usually delivered to the male elder(s), and then a large one is delivered to the adult men. The women will eat from another collective bowl. Until the age of four or five, children eat with their mothers from the women's bowl, and then either join the older children's bowl (if there is one), move to the men's one or team up with the elders, depending on the size, composition and internal organization of the *ka*. At Sumbunu-kunda all men and male children ate from the same bowl. Kneeling down around the men's bowl marks an entry into a gendered space of sociality governed by specific rules. Eating from the same bowl has strong and explicit connotations of sharing and unity, though not necessarily of relaxed commensality and equality. Food is consumed quickly and often in silence, with people kneeling (or sitting on small stools) shoulder to shoulder and portioning food with their right hand, or more rarely with a spoon.[10] When a conversation begins, it is the adult men who start it; children and boys are often too shy to speak freely in front of their seniors, and they are in fact expected to maintain a deferential attitude.

While the space and time around the meal bowl is not necessarily one of austerity and tension, it is certainly one of gendered discipline and respect in which the grown men instruct the young ones. Musa was older than Ousman, and food was delivered to his hut, but of the two, Ousman was the one who grew up in Sabi and knew how to govern the household, organize the farms and look after the livestock. Though Musa certainly added his contribution, Ousman was also the more active one in reprimanding the children for their misconduct around the meal bowl. During lunch and dinner, the sauce would not be poured on the rice or millet until every child had washed his hands and knelt down appropriately and close enough to the bowl to avoid spilling food on the floor whilst eating. Time and again, adult men pointed to the grains of rice lying on the floor before a child, remarking on the waste of *biraado* he had caused, and occasionally forcing him to gather them up (which is also said to fetch *baraji*, divine recompense). Ousman would sometimes glance at a child, waiting to see if he corrected himself, before saying something. And when someone shifted the bowl while taking a handful of food, he sometimes hit them on the head, a punishment which even has a specific name

(*kukki*). As Dadi once explained to me after I witnessed such an event: 'It's good, so when you go to another compound they will say you have respect [*daroye*]'. The boys were expected to show respect in a number of other ways, such as by avoiding looking up and staring at others, something Hussein was often reprimanded for. Also, as I was considered a guest (*mukke*), the older boys began to emulate their fathers/uncles by dropping chunks of meat or fish they found in the sauce on my side of the bowl. Meat is meant for the seniors to share, so that Ousman and his brothers would eventually redistribute it among the children.

Of all the boys around the basin, Ali was the most frequent target of correction. Ali stood out as a city boy: he was chubbier than most children, he had a prickly character and he was prone to whining in the way that most Europeans would accept as childish behaviour, but that in the Gambian countryside denotes lack of character and discipline. Ali preferred to eat at his maternal rather than his paternal *ka*, which was located only two hundred metres away, and where he was supposed to spend time. 'Over there', Ousman explained once with a smile, 'when they see a boy from the city, they beat him like a donkey'. Being among his maternal uncles did not, however, spare Ali from being scolded. At meal times, Ali often landed both knees on the floor, instead of keeping at least one upwards under the chin, and as he was eating somewhat hastily, he often spilt food on the floor. When told off, Ali would often sulk, and sometimes he would answer back impolitely. The informal relationship between uncles and nephews enabled him to get away with his bravado, the theatricality of which was often met with laughter and compassion by the adults. Ousman would tell Ibrahima, who was annoyed by Ali's quick temper and bold attitude, to be patient with the boy: 'That's the life he is used to, you have to go little by little'. But on some occasions, Ousman too would teach him a lesson, though he rarely went beyond threatening him with corporeal punishment. Ali was often described as *bono* (spoiled, wasted), a statement about his lack of discipline. 'The life he is used to' was not simply that of the city, but also that of too close a proximity with his mother, unbalanced by the presence of an adult man. A boy of his age was expected to have moved away some distance from his mother and to help adults instruct his younger agnates. But his father had been away for over ten years, prevented from returning by his 'illegal' status, and in Serekunda his mother lived far away from her relatives. Now that Ali was spending time with his uncles, the latter remarked, he had to learn to know and respect his seniors.

In a household like Sumbunu-kunda, where all the fathers of male children are away to *hustle* for money, social fatherhood is, in sum, performed by the adult men who stay behind. At times, however, I had the

impression that men felt the children's mothers jeopardized their efforts. During late afternoon hours, children often turned to their mothers for extra food. As husbands and relatives abroad sent money to these women, the latter were able to purchase food items, from candies to bread, in shops in order to satisfy the appetites and palates of their children. When we later called for dinner by shouting the names of children around, it so happened that the child or his mother would shout back that he was *fogu* (full, satiated). A man would then reply, sarcastically, *nuwari* (thank you), meaning: more food for us. Alternatively, the child would eat two or three handfuls to honour the commensality and then he would get up and go. On other occasions, we would start eating even if the child was not around, remarking that 'his bread is there' or 'his mother is there', that is: he is not going to starve for his mother will provide for him. The subtext to all such apparently petty comments and events is that the increasing importance of secondary, more privatized meals in a single *dimbaya* can withdraw children from the space around the meal bowl, and thus from the presence of male sociality and authority.

Lest I caricature Ousman and his brothers as severe would-be patriarchs whose authority is subverted by the passive resistance of the married women, let me clarify that the picture is often more complex than that. In Sumbunu-kunda, I never had the impression that women meant to withdraw their children from around the meal bowl, let alone call into question the role of adult men. On the contrary, women often took pride in their sons' conduct at meal time or their ability to perform certain manly tasks in the compound and in the bush. Women were certainly not shy to grab a stick and threaten to whip their children, but when they were met with stubbornness, or when children fought and insulted each other's families in shameful ways, they called on Ousman or Musa to deal with them. Conversely, while women did provide most of the care and affection to the children, men also played a role. When slightly before dusk Ousman opened his small shop by the gate and sat on the veranda, boys and girls often flocked to him to tell about their games, school and skirmishes of the day. Laughter and jokes reverberated from a distance, and the smaller children could be seen climbing onto his lap.

The ritual of the meal, and the other mundane activities that extend from it, are one among several activities through which domesticity is produced as a gendered and pedagogical space. In many households like Sumbunu-kunda, where all the fathers of children have gone *hustling*, adult men are required to act as social husbands and fathers, as well as carers for the ailing elders. Male authority emerges in this space especially from the kind of disciplinary and affective presence that, in addition to farm work, is believed to turn boys into *hustlers*. As with food so

with sociality: this role of household governance is not automatically acknowledged by other members of the *ka*, and is rendered slippery by the numerous intended or unintended detours in the making of everyday commensality and communality. The complaints and sarcasm with which such detours are met by men are indicative of the anxiety surrounding the acknowledgement of male authority in the household.

Governing Change: Cooperation, Conflict and Translocality in Household Formation

Having taken a close-up view of the meal bowl as a microcosm of ordering principles of domesticity, let me now zoom out and give a panoramic view of the cumulative effects of these forms of conviviality. I have already commented upon the wider significance of *biraado* for the patrilineage. In this section I pay specific attention to the longer temporality and wider spatiality of the everyday practices of cooperation and conflict in order to bring into focus how the position and the perception of 'sitting at home' is shaped by translocal dynamics. Governing the household as a *kagume* implies ensuring cooperation, thus preventing conflicts from escalating into schisms that fragment domestic unity. I will show that diasporization and the creating of new homes in Serekunda by migrant householders contribute in positive and negative ways to the onus of male authority, and in particular it makes it more difficult for the *kagume* to predict and control the evolution of household formation.

In addition to sustaining a sense of descent, honour and shared destiny, the continual social and geographical emplacement of the *ka* has been vital for sustaining Soninke mobility. The *ka* provides a safe haven against the odds of life in 'exile'. One may recall here the characterization of the travel-bush or exile as a space of danger and uncertainty, and of home (*kaara*) as a safe, enduring place. The *ka* occupies the most important position in the hierarchy of homes (household, village, nation, etc.) denoted by the term *kaara*. As I was told time and again: 'When the path of travel fails, you can always come back: this is your home'. This has happened often enough in the recent history of Soninke migration to make such statements something more than an idealization of homecoming. It was village households that absorbed the kinsmen fleeing Sierra Leone when civil war broke out there in 1992, as well as the many other migrants who in the subsequent years returned from conflict-ridden or inhospitable countries in West and Central Africa. Similarly, in a period where migrants in the West are affected by ever more uncertain situations – illegalization, deportation and, increasingly,

unemployment – families back home once again bear the costs and failures of the adventure of travel.

The refuge function of rural households is crucial for women as well. Weddings are quite literally rites of passage from the parental to the marital *ka* that mark the beginning of what might be called, drawing on the imaginary of Soninke migration, 'marital exile'. One will never hear a woman describing her husband's compound as her *ka*; for her, going to *kaara* means going to her father's compound, whether this is located a few metres away or in a different village. In addition to ordinary visits, married women return to their *ka* in case of need or crisis. Haja and Ali's return to Sumbunu-kunda exemplifies the role of the *ka* as a source of support, care and affection in times of hardship and logistical difficulty. Even more telling is the case of Kumba, whereby the return to her father's compound signified the end of marriage with a reversal of the outgoing movement marked by the wedding. It is also standard practice for women experiencing conjugal problems or difficulties in their marital *ka* to come back temporarily to their parents in order to force their husbands to reconsider their position or to begin negotiating better treatment. Thus, as a proto-diasporic group, married women also have practical as well as affective interests in cultivating the presence of their *ka*, and therefore legitimizing *kagumaaxu*, at least in their paternal *ka*. This is also the case for *follaku*. One man in his mid thirties once told me that his elder sisters insisted that he should 'sit at home' because their parents had died, and now, with his only other brother living abroad, their section had been left untended. Even though their father's younger brother was the *kagume*, they complained that when they wanted to visit home and commemorate their father they had 'no place to go to'.

The everyday presence of adult men in the *ka* is, in other words, framed within a longer temporality and wider spatiality of social, political, economic, moral and affective exchanges that are vital for villagers' sense of belonging and security. However, households are rarely fully cooperating, pooling and consensual units. If meal bowls are a powerful symbol of sharing, the micro-detours and tensions surrounding them stand for wider disputes over resources and aspirations of autonomy. With reference to the Mandinka household in lower Gambia, Pamela Kea (2013: 110) has argued that the enduring character of its moral economy is premised on a 'logic of negotiation' where men and women make claims on the labour and resources of their dependants. The overall outcome of negotiation is the reinforcement and enforcement of gender and generational hierarchies in the household, something that is also clearly evident among the Soninke, whose cohesion was noticed and admired by many Mandinka elders I knew. On the other hand, negotiation is an important element

of the domestic moral economy precisely because competing claims are structural to the household. What on the outside may appear as large and cohesive units, on a closer look may constitute the outcome of what Amartya Sen (1990) called 'cooperative conflicts' in which the members of the household continuously bargain over contributing to the totality versus dividing resources of various kinds.

In the Mande world, the tension between cooperation and conflict in domestic groups is epitomized by the competing idioms of matrilineal and patrilineal solidarity (Bird and Kendall 1980: 14–16; van Braun and Webb 1989: 516–17; Jansen 1996: 661–62; Razy 2007b: 73; Wooten 2009; Kea 2013: 109–10). In Mande, the figure of the mother is associated with 'peace and harmony' (Jansen 1996: 661). The concept of *maarenmaaxu* (in Mandinka: *badingya*) – literally, being children of the same mother – is used as a metaphor of solidarity and equality in several domains other than that of kinship. The opposite of *maarenmaaxu* is *faabarenmaaxu* or *faabanbanaaxu* (in Mandinka: *fadingya*), being children of the same father. Agnatic relations are in fact thought to be fraught with hierarchy, rivalry and individualism. Ideally, the combination of these two forces produces the 'hierarchical solidarity' (Viti 2007: 168) that holds the household together, where mutuality is complemented by an incentive to excellence that enables change and progress. In a harmonious polygynous marriage, women use their authority and affective grip on their children to encourage the latter to support the *dimbaya* and the *ka* as a whole. However, much as they symbolize unity, mothers are viewed as potential splitters too. From the point of view of men, the danger of children becoming too close to their own mothers (as in the case of Ali) is that they will develop an attachment with their siblings of the same mother, and will be more unfeeling towards their brothers and sisters born of the other wives of their father. Although this emotional dynamic is normal, the (colder) sense of morality associated with the patrilineage should prevent these attachments from degenerating into rivalries and divisions. The *kagume* is thus expected to ensure the balance between *maarenmaaxu* and *faabarenmaaxu*. Not surprisingly, both divisions within a *dimbaya* or a *ka* usually come to the fore after the death of the father or elder, the unifying figure, after which cohorts of siblings may part along the maternal line.

Migration influences dynamics of cooperation and conflict in many ways, one of the most significant being the increasing translocality of household formation. In the past, when a joint-household split, the two resulting households would either remain within the premises of the same *ka*, or the 'junior' household would found a new *ka* in the proximity of the old one or in a different location. Some *dimbayanu* also moved to other villages, especially to farming villages on the Senegalese side of the

border, which have eventually become permanent settlements. These short-distance resettlements continue, but diasporization has added a layer of complexity to the process. To simplify, let me concentrate on the houses that migrants have built in Serekunda.

Unlike the rural *ka*, houses built in the city are the migrant's private property, his investments for the future and eventually a place of future return. Nevertheless, whilst he is still abroad, the migrant may decide to take his wife and children to the city, even when his parents are still alive and, normally, his wife should be working and cooking for the family. One accepted reason for doing so is to provide a quality education for the children. Yet this may conceal other motivations too. As an alternative to family reunions abroad, a wife may put pressure on her migrant husband to buy or rent a house in Serekunda for her, where she will manage her household away from her in-laws, control *biraado* and *fish money*, and moreover skip farm work. So significant is this arrangement that, in order to win them over, some migrants promise the girls whom they court that they will take them to the city right after the wedding. And some effectively do so. After this move, the migrant may still contribute to *biraado* in the Sabi *ka*, thus making it difficult to describe as scission properly speaking. His householders may nevertheless feel that, as a young *kagume* put it, 'he [my brother] spends all he has on his wife' and 'he has dumped us'.

Internal divisions and translocality can work together. Even though urban houses are private properties according to state law, some rural relatives de facto subject them to a process of re-collectivization. One often hears the parents as well as the siblings of a migrant speak of his urban compound as '*our* house in Serekunda'. Some wealthy Sabinko even reserve a section of their urban compound for rural guests, and after the death of the owners, the heirs may be encouraged to keep the compound as a collective family property rather than divide it up or sell it. At the same time, this translocality is often *in* the *ka* but not *of* it. That is to say, the rural–urban extension of the household usually involves one *dimbaya* or *follake*, or even the migrant's mother and the cohort of her children, whilst other sections in the *ka* may not have access to the urban houses or have ones of their own. At the local level, the village *ka* may thus appear as a unique formation, with one hearth and one budget for *biraado*; but when viewed from a broader spatial perspective, it may constitute one pole of a translocal formation in which a significant portion of migrant resources gravitate around the urban property.

The multiplicity and simultaneity of the forces of integration and disaggregation within and without the *ka* make it difficult to establish precise rules or cycles of household formation. It is perhaps this broad range

of possible developments that confront village *kagumu* with an open question about the future. Whereas a man may be in a secure economic situation at one stage, when the moral and social geography of a household changes, the flows of redistribution may follow a different course. Wondering about what would happen when Alhaji's father passed away, his friends reminded him and themselves that governing a household works well insofar as other members keep a foot in it.

* * *

One afternoon in early 2007, I was interviewing Alhaji on the veranda of his house, a brick mansion built by his father's brother with diamond money. As I asked him about the economy of the compound, Alhaji reiterated his complaints about his brothers, especially the young one, who had been away for long years without building anything and sending only miserly amounts for *biraado*. 'The same mother and father!' remarked Alhaji, invoking a normative sibling solidarity to criticize his brother, then adding: 'They think they are not from here, they live a good life there', further emphasizing that his brothers had stepped out of rural hardship. The bitter irony of Alhaji's *kagumaaxu* was, indeed, that his position was undermined by his full brothers and rescued by his agnatic ones, who had formed an autonomous *ka* in Serekunda over a generation ago. This is not very usual in Sabi, but rather than an exception to the process of household formation I have just described, Alhaji's story represents a specific instance of it, one in which cohesion and disaggregation worked together in particular ways.

Despite all positive examples of *kagumaaxu* in Sabi, in the eyes of young men, Alhaji's story epitomized the hesitancy with which young heads of household must entrust their future to other household members. Running a household, especially in a regime of internal and international migration, implies betting on a 'cooperative solution' (Sen 1990), securing the compliance of a multiplicity of persons and mediating diverging aspirations of autonomy and masculinity polarized by urban investments. Powerful norms and mores internalized as virtuous habits during childhood still ensure the loyalty of many expatriate householders; yet many Gambians would find that relatives are always a surprise. It is indeed the word surprise that Alhaji repeatedly uttered on that pitch-dark night when we sat together at his friends' gathering, and when he tried to convince me that he should migrate in order to find 'my own money', not only because, as a man, he was expected to *hustle*, but also because, I would argue, he deemed it safer to reduce his dependency on others in view of future changes in his household structure. Confronted with the unexpectedness of kinship solidarity, some young men thus argue that

they can only 'sit at home' if 'those abroad do everything for me'; even better if migrants provide the *kagume* with an income-generating activity, as we saw in Chapter 3, when Mohamed's brother helped him set up a shop for him to have his own money in lieu of relying on him all the time.

However, travellers sustain *kagumaaxu* also because they depend on it and acquire renown by investing in it. Instead of breaking away, many migrants leave their wives and children in the compound, and when things go wrong abroad, they rely on their fathers and brothers back home to tighten their belts and provide *biraado* for everybody in the compound. Even when migrants proceed to emancipate their nuclear families, as the case of Haja and Ali showed, this process is not necessarily irreversible or disruptive. Migrants' motivations to remit are often reductively described as an insurance strategy (Stark and Lucas 1988), a label which does not quite capture the complexity of motivations, sentiments and power relations that hold people together as members of an enduring domestic moral economy, and especially conceals the mundane work carried out by those who stay in the household to weave relatedness across wide distances. In this chapter, I have shown that *kagumaaxu* maintains its centrality because it helps regenerate on a daily basis the forms of conviviality, the hierarchical solidarities and the gendered spaces that project the translocal *ka* into the future as a community of destiny. The honour and hesitancy of *kagumaaxu* lie, therefore, not simply in (un)fulfilled kinship obligations or (in)secure migrant economies, but in the recognition of this daily labour of presence through which home and domesticity are produced and maintained over time (Buggenhagen 2012). When I asked Alhaji about whether his own brothers had sent him anything of late, he replied: 'I have got pictures from them'. He then leaned forward and, with his head on one side and eyes wide open, asked: 'Do they think I can eat those?!'

Notes

1. I adapt François Bayart's (2000) concept of extraversion – outward orientation of state politics and national economy – to the domestic realm.
2. Reference here is to a later anthropology of gender that, albeit still largely concerned with women, sheds light on the making of gendered subject positions (Abu-Lughod 1993; Moore 1994).
3. On the Soninke *ka*, see also: Pollet and Winter (1971: 356–58) and Razy (2007b: 71ff).
4. Estimate based on my household survey in 2006/7 (see Chapter 1).
5. The Mandinka equivalent of *kingide – sinkiroo* – is often used to define the household (Seibert and Sidibe 1992: 18; Kea 2010: 113). Too much emphasis on consumption,

however, risks leaving out of the picture the migrants, who do not consume within the premises of the compound but still contribute to food stocks.

6. With respect to Senegambia, a partial exception to this tendency is Donna Perry's (2009) article on fathers and sons in a Wolof region of northern Senegal bordering the Gambia. In a recent article, Alice Bellagamba (2013) offers a nuanced analysis of mostly urbanized male elders' struggle for recognition in the Gambia.
7. A minority of poor households, however, eat millet also for lunch.
8. Rice and sugar are also a common Ramadan gift for more distant relatives outside the *ka*.
9. One is led to think that increased rural–urban circulation has played a role in this. Polak (2007), reporting on a Bamana/Bambara (Mali) village, also highlights generational changes being mediated by consumption habits such as sugary porridge and other breakfast foods. Such habits have been largely introduced by rural–urban migrants.
10. Metal spoons are associated with European manners, and people may thus not use them, so as to avoid signalling distinction from the rest or from their rural origins.

Chapter 6

Civic Leaders?

Reviving the Age Groups, Recapturing Permanence

While young men may seek recognition as 'sitters' by becoming established as household authorities, they also do so by collectively assuming responsibilities for the entire village community. Around the mid 2000s, young men stepped up their participation in the public life of Sabi. Acting under the aegis of the Sabi Youth Committee (SYC), a number of vocal young men promoted initiatives aimed at what they claimed to be the progress of the village and its people. They raised funds for small-scale public works, drafted new regulations in order to reinforce the civic sense of the villagers and committed themselves to reforming certain ceremonial etiquettes they deemed costly, ostentatious and ultimately generative of inequalities. This burst of civic activism did not last long, and it was not explicitly aimed at mobility issues. This chapter will nevertheless show that young men's attempt to 'sit' or become established as civil and political agents in their community can only be understood in the light of translocal mobility and relations as well as the degrading conditions of rural permanence.

The SYC was built on the legacy of the age groups. In the past, these were a key social institution of the Mande world as well as one way in which the colonial and postcolonial state was grafted onto local structures of power. This kind of 'decentralized despotism' (Mamdani 1996), so widespread in the African postcolony, contributed not only to the reproduction of 'tradition', but also to its erosion and loss of legitimacy (for a Gambian example, see Bellagamba 2004). As these forms of government

have undergone significant transformation in the neoliberal era, West African citizens have found new avenues of participation in public life, often in ways that break with the past and project them towards the future (Piot 2010). Chapter 4 focused on some of these emerging horizons of self-fashioning. In contrast, this chapter features the ongoing relevance and adaptability of 'traditional' agrarian institutions, both as a means of social control and as vehicles of emancipation. By revitalizing the age group, SYC members agreed to operate within the gerontocratic order holding sway in Sabi. In this way, the young men responded to the onus of making their stay in the village purposeful by executing, as juniors, public works and activities. The spirit and organizational form of age groupings had, however, changed and adapted to the discourses of the Gambian government and transnational non-governmental actors, including migrants' associations, which envisioned youth as a more autonomous category of (implicitly sedentary) citizens. Through the SYC, young men thus sought to overcome their subordinate status as juniors and to become protagonists of the civic reforms in Sabi.

What interests me in this chapter is how long-standing forms of civic participation and organization serve not only to position sedentary young men in a translocal sociopolitical field but also to recapture the meaning of rural permanence. Young men's collective action refracts, like a prism, widespread concerns with social presence and regeneration in Sabi. By trying to reform ritual exchanges and other principles of communal life, young men clearly addressed the norms and mores of both social cohesion and male respectability. As acquiring wealth by emigrating had become increasingly unviable, the SYC can be viewed as an attempt to bring expectations of propriety and maturity in line with the new reality. What is more, in the very act of seeking change by consolidating 'tradition' (Barber 2007: 26), young men identified Sabi and its agrarian order as a repository of continual renovation and progress in a wider world of possibilities. In other words, they sought to determine what they can be and do as 'sitters' in the village by, as it were, 'sitting' Sabi anew, in the sense of reconstituting the foundations of agrarian sociality.

The *Sappanu*

As I was strolling by the central mosque one night in late October 2012, a drowsy voice called out to me. Baidi, a man in his sixties, slowly emerged on the *kora*, the seating platform, struggling with his back pain to sit upright. When I sat down next to him, he scanned the deserted space between the mosque and the chief's compound, chuckled and then

signed to me with his chin, inviting me to look too. Once upon a time, Baidi began to narrate, on nights with a full moon, like this, every youth was out and about in the main square. Groups of youths would sit on this or that side of the square, chatting and playing games. At times the *komo* or the *nyaxamalo* would bring along their drums and urge people to display their dancing skills. Girls would also come to the square and mix freely with the boys; nobody would dare to approach the girls for anything more than a chat, lest young men from the older *sappanu* (age groups system) shamed them in public and gave them a lesson they would not easily forget. Everybody was there together, and everybody knew their own place in the square. On that night in late October, however, the square was empty, the full moon rendering the desolate area both more peaceful and more spectrally grey than usual. The time of the *sappanu* was gone, and the large congregations of youth had given way to smaller and more intimate *ghettos* scattered across a now much more spread-out village. The girls stayed in their compounds or took advantage of the safety granted by the moonlight to stroll up and down their street with a few female friends.

Elders like Baidi as well as younger adult men recall the time of the *sappanu* as a time of orderly, rigid relations between people of different ages, but also one of moral security and communal sociability. Whereas the term *sappa* refers to any voluntary association often recruiting and operating at the village community level, by *sappanu*, in the plural, Soninke speakers refer uniquely to a system of age groups which for men was until the mid 1980s systemic, compulsory and self-perpetuating. At any given time there were four age groups in the village: Jarra, Bakeli, Jiharu and Karantaba.[1] These were ranked according to seniority and mainly served as a tool for both the socialization of the younger villagers and the management of the community. Decisional power was concentrated within the top *sappa*, while the younger men were charged with the more labour-intensive activities, such as cleaning ditches, clearing the village squares and the cemeteries, controlling bush fires and so on. Relations between and within the *sappanu* were reportedly disciplinarian in nature, especially during the formal meetings. Each *sappa* had a leader (*yimanke*) selected from the *hoore* class and advised by *nyaxamala* and *kome* age mates. On the other hand, the *sappanu* was an institution cutting across affiliations of status and family, and thus it provided, within limits, a space for people to interact as peers. Participation in the age groups was compulsory and actually enforced, meaning that all initiated men would belong to a *sappa* until old age. When one or more groups of boys 'took the trousers' by going through the initiation ceremony, they would form a *sappa*, first informally and then, when ready to enter the system, they

would offer a cow and other smaller gifts to the oldest *sappa* for them to agree to disband and pass the name on to the new entry.

Age groups were an important component of village society in Mande groups. In a review paper, Peter Weil (1972) built on his fieldwork among the Mandinka in Wuli, an Upper River district, to describe general features of what he called 'the Mande age grade'. In contrast to the Soninke, the Mandinka organized three grades (*kafolu*) only, distinguishing men essentially along generational lines between unmarried men, married men and elders. Diversity notwithstanding, Weil showed that the structural simplicity and the capacity for mobilization of the age grade provided the village with an effective tool for socialization and management. Although one may sense in Weil's review the influences of structural-functional analyses of the age grades in East Africa (Eisenstadt 1956), his general points are not without a foundation. In a more recent study in southern Mali, Tamba Doumbia (2001: 17, 67–68) has shown that the age groups played an important role in the socialization of youths because they placed emphasis on the spirit of egalitarianism and unity, cross-cutting affiliations of kin and status, as well as mutual assistance and conflict resolution. For Doumbia, some of these characteristics are adapted to classes of pupils in state schools. Indeed, the 'social persistence and cultural flexibility' of age groups was also stressed by Weil (1972), who in the 1960s observed how state agents and political parties such as the PPP exploited the potentials of the age groups for organizing communal works as well as for mobilizing support during election time.

Not all types of age groupings were (and are) subsumed within an overarching structure. Writing about Jafanu (Mali) in the 1960s, Pollet and Winter (1971: 261–65) described the *iire* as an age-based association involved in collective activities as well as assisting its members especially during rites of passage. Although the term *iire* does not resemble any Soninke term in use in Sabi, its characteristics largely overlap with the *lappe*, a group of age mates often set apart by no more than two or three years, but also open to younger or older contemporaries. Internally organized as a *sappa*, the *lappe* is by contrast a voluntary association; nevertheless, the majority of men who have grown up in Sabi (including expatriates) belong to a *lappe*. When a man marries, for instance, his *lappe* will provide labour for the bride service and perform several other tasks, such as issuing the *manyon-tole*, an elaborate pole, at the couple's house. The *lappe* may also contribute to public works in the village.

In contrast to the *lappe*, the *sappanu*, as an overarching, inclusive system, has withered. Evidently nostalgic, Baidi's memories of a square swarming with people in the moonlight are an implicit commentary on the key changes and events that eventually fractured it as a unified space

of socialization. The *sappanu* collapsed in the mid 1980s, a time where cultural and political shifts, including outmigration, had changed village life in profound ways. Male initiation rituals had become obsolete as circumcision was progressively carried out in the early months or years of a man's life in accordance with the Islamic etiquette. Amara (37), one of the last men who attended the ceremony, recalled that at that time children would come back from Sierra Leone, where migrants were exposed to *Sunna* Islam, already circumcised at an early age. Young men from Sierra Leone or from Serekunda would also visit the village sporting shiny clothes, playing music cassettes and sharing experiences of urban youth culture learned in the *vous* or *ghettos* in Serekunda.

A point of no return in the history of age groups was when some *hoore* families began to withdraw their sons from the *sappanu*. Among the men, a vivid memory of the *sappanu* is the harshness of punishments and tasks imposed on boys by the older young men. Though they did not disdain the disciplinary environment of bush life, parents became more wary of such forms of bullying. Since some members of the chiefly Silla championed the withdrawal, the villagers took this as an implicit statement that participation was no longer mandatory and thus began to follow suit. Besides concerns about socialization, there were probably other reasons behind this shift, which many elders were somehow unwilling to discuss, perhaps to avoid reviving unhealed frictions within the village nobility. It appears that party politics, often seen as a divisive factor in the community, played a role in the breakup of the age groups system. In 1984, Nene Fatumata Silla 'sat' on the chiefly stool and took a more overt stance in favour of the ruling party, apparently toying with the idea of using the junior age groups as youth wings of the PPP. However, by the late 1980s youths and Gambians in general had grown resentful towards the long- and self-serving politicians of the Jawara regime and their local allies (Bellagamba 2008: 252). Moreover, international migration to the West was still relatively accessible and West African countries were still popular at that time. Youths were probably more attracted by the idea of leaving the village than of joining age groups. By the 1990s, Sabi youth participation in age-based associations had reached a low point, marking the end of the *sappanu* as known in the past.

Youth, in the Active Voice

The end of the *sappanu* was not the end of age groupings, let alone of the *sappa* as a blueprint of associational life. Not only has the *lappe* survived till the present, but attempts were made in the mid 1990s and in the early

2000s to mobilize young men in a *sappa*, eventually resulting in the Sabi Youth Committee. The disappearance of a system of compulsory recruitment did not in fact invalidate other reasons for forming voluntary youth associations. Ironically, precisely at a time when the capacity of age-related institutions to aggregate and socialize was declining, the discourse on youth, civic participation and associational life became an important aspect of national politics and transnational governance. In order to understand the reasons that led to the emergence of the SYC, therefore, some contextual factors must be outlined.

Age relations in Sabi underwent a peculiar phase during the 1990s. After the breakup of the *sappanu*, communal works were carried out by ad hoc groups of men, usually formed on the basis of neighbourhoods, to which each household had to contribute one unit. At the same time, after the 1994 coup, age politics became a prominent aspect of the new regime, further delineating the idea of an autonomous youth in local societies. Led by a thirty-year-old man of humble origins, first the military junta and then the elected civilian APRC government envisioned youths as the protagonists of a new dawn after the dark ages of long-serving politicians who had short-sightedly squandered the country's resources, leaving none for the future generations (Bellagamba 2008: 255). Youth mobilization, under the banner of the 22nd July Movement, was aimed not only at ousting old politicians and eradicating their allies in local constituencies, but also at recasting the prospects of young people whose hopes of becoming respectable members of their society were more and more centred on leaving the country (see Bellagamba 2008). The movement appropriated symbols of renovation such as the *set setal* – collective cleaning operations of public places – which in Senegal had been pioneered in the late 1980s by civil society organizations to counteract urban degradation (Diouf 2002). Through 'cleaning the nation', youth paraded (and still parade) in the streets of the cities and villages, expressing responsible citizenship and spectacular, almost ritualistic support for the new regime. Emboldened, supporters of the movement kindled disputes in some localities and openly confronted local dignitaries and leaders affiliated with the fallen regime. No longer were the youth merely a workforce at the disposal of the elders: they now commanded respect and were determined to take over decision making.

In Sabi, generational tensions never escalated to an alarming degree. Although Sabi's dignitaries were supportive of the PPP, reliance on business and travel allowed them a significant degree of autonomy from state patronage. In the same year as the coup, a less politicized chief replaced the late Nene Fatumata, and the village swore allegiance to the new regime without much ado. Some of the young Sabinko participated in the

movement and brought back ideas about how young men could acquire respectability and demonstrate civic maturity in the village. Some attempted to form a group, but internal dynamics and, allegedly, mismanagement of funds led to its failure.

In 1999, the 22nd July Movement was outlawed and the regime began to work towards reconciliation and patronage with local dignitaries, pragmatically ensuring governance in the rural areas (see Bellagamba and Gaibazzi 2008). When in April 2000 the army opened fire on a student protest, leaving twelve youths dead on the ground, it became apparent that the time for radical change was over. The political space for youth activism has since been reduced and channelled towards much more controlled and institutionalized forms. In addition, the wane of spontaneous youth mobilization, the government's attack on youth attitudes and in particular the persistence of youth disenfranchisement seem to have undermined young men's confidence in the APRC regime and the idea of staying for the sake of the nation. Although Soninke youths need little external prompting to go back to the land and to *hustle* in their own country, few aspire to solve their employment problems by linking up with party politicians.

Even if its impact on livelihoods remains limited, as a frame for civic engagement the government's discourse on youth resonates with the agenda of transnational organizations working in Africa. As we saw in the case of agriculture, Gambians are not new to campaigns on self-help, which have found new vigour in the wake of Europe's fight against illegal immigration. Similarly, while concerns about the participation of youth in public life have a longer history, since the 1990s donors and international non-governmental organizations have increasingly targeted African children and youth as both a vulnerable category to be empowered and a harbinger of democratization and human rights (De Waal and Argenti 2002; Englund 2006; Durham 2007). In the Gambia, the result has been a mushrooming of youth organizations that seek to link up with foreign philanthropists and organizations. Having in general too poor a Western education to be able to liaise with international interlocutors, however, Soninke youths have belatedly reaped the benefits of these opportunities. This does not mean that the Soninke have been impermeable to the discourse on youth empowerment. Between 2010 and 2012, two Soninke-based associations – the Serahulleh Youth Development Organization (SYDO) and the Dynamic Association – finally became visible at the national level and were even invited to some international summits in neighbouring countries. Both of these Soninke youth associations are based in Serekunda and have adopted 'modern' models of internal organization and public relations strategies.

Development policies have also sustained 'traditional' associations in the rural areas. In the 1990s, as international and national NGOs flooded the African continent to allegedly deliver aid directly to communities, having grassroots organizations as partners in development became an established praxis. In the Gambia, the *sappa*, better known by the Mandinka equivalent term *kafo*, served as a ready-made template for organizing beneficiaries into interest groups, whether around agricultural development, women's rights, youth empowerment or other agendas (Sall 2004: 605–7). Sabi did not experience much interaction with international NGOs, except for the local branch of Youth With A Mission (YWAM), an international Christian youth movement. In Sabi, most networks with donors and development organizations were actually established by hometown associations in the diaspora, one of the main sources identified by donors to tap migrant remittances for local development (Mercer, Page and Evans 2008). Soninke hometown associations, a type of *sappa* with a long history (Manchuelle 1997: 123–28), are known in France as an early example of co-development, being partnerships between immigrant associations and municipalities geared to financing development projects in the immigrants' home communities (Timera 1996: 65–73; Daum 1998). Among the most important projects in Sabi in the course of the 2000s were the construction of a clinic built by the Sabi *sappa* in Spain with the financial support of the Council of Mataró (Catalonia), and a *madrasa* entirely self-funded by the Sabi *sappa* in Serekunda.

In addition to reproducing forms of associational life, migrant transnationalism has reinforced the call for civic engagement. Writing about the Eastern Soninke in France, Timera (1996: 71–73) has argued that participation in hometown associations has been a way for migrants to express patriotism and a commitment to developing the homeland. Likewise, migrants' initiatives are welcomed and commended in Sabi,[2] and hopes of further development projects are often entrusted to expatriate villagers connected to state institutions and civil society in the country of immigration.

In 2002, the Gambian government adapted to the decentralization agenda of donors by passing the Local Government Act. In the 1970s, the Jawara regime had instituted the Village Development Committees (VDC) as agencies for promoting local initiatives and as linchpins for the local government and development organizations. Whether decentralization has resulted in devolution of state functions or in extending the state's control over the rural areas is an open question (Davis, Hulme and Woodhouse 1994). Be that as it may, the 2002 Act revitalized the VDC in Sabi, and with it the typical organizational patterns of village

associations. In the late 2000s, the VDC basically consisted of a council of adult and senior men chaired by a member of the chiefly lineage. It coordinated other groups, such as the women's group, the football committee and, as we shall see, the Sabi Youth Committee.

Finally, some faith-based organizations working in the Gambia have generally reinforced the idea of youth as active civic agents. Marloes Janson (2013) has shown that the Gambian branch of the Tablighi Jama'at has recruited young people in particular, for it promotes reformist Islam as an avenue to modernity and respectability. The Soninke umbrella association Sunpo do Xati has also been strongly influenced by reformist ideas. As noted, however, whereas the *Sunna* is popular among Soninke youths, it is not necessarily patterned along age or generational lines, and it has not coalesced into an association. Ironically, the only faith-based organization in Sabi has been YWAM, whose missionary work in the village has been very low-profile and mainly articulated through their small-scale development agenda. Notwithstanding the limited impact of Islamic organizations on Sabi's associational life, it should be said that religion is an important aspect of village life and thus implicitly pervades the notions of well-being and development. For example, the *Sunna* has consolidated the value of formal education and knowledge as a form of progress.

It is difficult to predict whether the grafting of large governance organizations onto village-based forms of organization will strengthen or weaken them, or both. In the past, the PPP regime mobilized age groups for electoral purposes; it both reproduced local power structures and contributed to the decline of the *sappanu*. In spite of its calling on youth, the APRC regime was thus unable to mobilize Sabi young men within the same structures. It nonetheless entrenched understandings of youth as an autonomous, empowered category of political actors. While migration and the prospect of migration have possibly undermined the participation of youth at the village level, migrant initiatives framed within an international developmental agenda have come with the message that villagers can and should do something to help themselves, and that the *sappa* form is a suitable way to do so. It is at the nexus of these different discourses of empowerment, civic commitment and voluntary association that young men's involvement in local affairs resurged in the course of the 2000s.

The Sabi Youth Committee

If anyone in Sabi embodies the ideal of the committed, village-based youth, it is Musa 'Degume' Silla, the eldest son of the current chief of

Sabi and the leader of the Sabi Youth Committee. In his youth, Degume travelled throughout West Africa before returning to Sabi and sitting in his *ghetto*. Tired of wasting his time with the usual 'lies and jokes', as he put it, he began to consider cultivating a horticultural garden. He cleared some land by the swamp, and little by little he planted bananas, mangoes, papaya and vegetables. YWAM supported him and advised him throughout, as they too experimented with banana gardening in the village. Degume's brothers in Spain provided him with financial support to buy water pumps and fencing materials, but the rest came from his own sweat and effort. Degume, who was in his early forties in the late 2000s, spent most of the day in what he ironically called 'my house'. In 2008, only his two older sons (in their early teens) and a Guinean guest worker staying at his compound helped him out. Although by 2012 some villagers had followed in his footsteps and started horticultural projects, Degume's remained the most developed and productive plantation in Sabi.

In addition to pioneering ways of *hustling* on the land, Degume tried to spread his conviction that young men should pull their socks up and help the village move forward. In the early 2000s, he began to discuss with some age mates the idea of revitalizing the *sappa* of the village youth. The initiative gathered consensus, and a number of young men became involved and contributed to the development of the group. Having the titles and family credentials to head it, Degume assumed leadership and promoted initiatives and external relations.

The institutionalization of Sabi youth as the Sabi Youth Committee did not occur, however, until 2002, when the APRC government passed the Local Government Act. There is evidence that the creation of the SYC was influenced by the VDC and local APRC representatives who possibly thought of resorting to the well-worn strategy of manipulating age groups so as to mobilize youths in support of government initiatives. This would seem to confirm Chauveau's (2005: 22–23) point that the emergence of youth organizations in rural West Africa reveals less the absence of the state and more a pragmatic form of governance negotiated between the government and the rural authorities. On the other hand, though it has flirted with party politics, the SYC has been neither a client nor a wing of any party, and during my time in Sabi it perceived its involvement with party politics as a temporary and instrumental activity only. In 2006, the SYC campaigned for President Jammeh during the presidential elections, yet only four months later it voiced its dissatisfaction with the unpopular Basse MP, whom the APRC had chosen again to stand for the parliamentary elections. Most SYC members rallied behind the opposition candidate (UDP party), though they maintained cordial relations with the local sections of the APRC.

Albeit defunct, the *sappanu* resurfaced in the SYC in more ways than one. Tellingly, the SYC was informally known as *yuttin sappa* (youth *sappa*), a hybrid expression that aptly illustrates the mixture of old and new in its formation. Elements of continuity were also evident in the relationship with other village institutions. During SYC meetings and ordinary conversations, young men referred to the VDC as *xirisu* (seniors, elders), while in VDC meetings the SYC was spoken of as *lenminu* (children, juniors). The types of communal activities carried out by the SYC also fitted into the schemes of the age groups system. The SYC was mainly responsible for communal work (*sappan golle*) and the implementation of village policies (Figure 6.1). For example, young men were responsible for cleaning the streets and the public areas in preparation for festivals, and they built small stables where stray donkeys and horses found wandering in the village at night were kept whilst the owner was identified and

Figure 6.1 Building Civic Responsibility: Restoring the Fence of a Stable for Horses and Donkeys Caught Wandering in the Village at Night, 2008

fined. At the organizational level, the SYC clearly adopted the template of a typical *sappa*. Leadership was, as mentioned, accorded to the village hierarchy, and probably because of this, *kome* members did not seem to be as numerous as those of other classes. Decision making within the SYC was nevertheless diffused. *Nyaxamalo* and *komo* were often vocal participants in discussions and some of them were appointed as neighbourhood leaders.

In contrast with the age groups system, subscription to the SYC was voluntary. The register of the committee listed around 65–70 members in 2008, including myself and a member of YWAM. Openness to foreigners notwithstanding, ethnicity appeared to be a critical factor for participation: at the time of the *sappanu* as well as now, youths from the small Jakhanke neighbourhood in Sabi were absent from the SYC. The SYC included young men aged between twenty and forty-five, and there was no internal subdivision by age or marital status; the majority of members were around their thirties or above. Even though participation was on a voluntary basis, once they had subscribed, young men had to attend meetings, and unless they obtained permission ahead of time, they were fined for their absence. During the weekly meetings, a long session was usually devoted to checking the register, counting those present, administering fines to absentees who had not asked for leave, and collecting fines accumulated by members.[3] The money was subsequently placed in a bank account and used to finance the group's activities.

The reasons for joining the SYC were varied. Some young members were pressurized by their elder brothers to join the group. One member related to the chiefly lineage by maternal kin told me that Degume persuaded him to join up by appealing to the fact that, as a descendant of past leaders, he should actively serve the community. In contrast, a number of youths joined because their peers were already members. Others became involved simply out of curiosity. Regardless of the way they signed up for the SYC, however, a common refrain by the members was that they continued to participate because they were committed to 'doing something to bring our village forward'.

Most young men agreed that, since its revival, the SYC had boosted youth activism in the village. My argument is that the youth association was successful in recruiting members because it provided a useful institution to negotiate a role for the youth in village society under changing sociopolitical conditions and the continuing importance of seniority. Youth mobilization in the 1990s did not significantly affect the power base of the elders in Sabi, though it loosened their tutelage vis-à-vis the youths. Although during the 2000s the political space for youth was shrinking at the national level, at the local level the discourse on the

patriotic involvement of young people in self-development remained an important frame of reference. Its message was that collective action could be organized within the bounds of socially sanctioned institutions such as the *sappa*, while acquiring wider significance. For instance, in 2007/8 the SYC took to organizing the *set setal* on the 'clean the nation day' scheduled by the government. Participation in the *set setal* suggests that youths appropriated the call for patriotic participation in their localities and legitimated their activities within the larger national sphere, to some extent bypassing the intermediation of the elders.

The incentive for civic engagement through village associations was clearly also related to migrant transnationalism. Young adults admired the ethos of active involvement and self-reliance expressed by migrants' development initiatives, while migrants on a visit to Sabi often praised the dynamism of the SYC. Some SYC members saw their objective as 'playing our part' in a joint venture with the village migrants. This is important: it suggests that youths envisaged participation in the SYC as a collective form of complementariness between stayers and travellers. Cooperation with hometown associations in the diaspora was, however, infrequent; village elders usually managed the contacts with the diaspora. SYC members were nonetheless open to other foreign supporters and NGOs. YWAM saw the SYC as a potential partner, and cooperated with it on a project about soil erosion and the related problem of flooding caused by heavy rains. In 2008, the SYC and YWAM staff planted vetiver grass on the hillsides to slow down the water flowing into the village, and also produced a video in Soninke to raise awareness about the soil erosion project.

Other than migrant transnationalism, there was no direct correlation between mobility dynamics and participation in the SYC. Whereas in neighbouring countries the initiatives around undocumented boat migration to Europe created a space for civil society initiatives (Bouilly 2008), in the Gambia such initiatives were few and had limited impact on civil society. On no occasion did I hear the SYC presenting a political discourse on migration policies or migration-related issues like boat migration and repatriation. The SYC was by no means seen as an alternative to emigration. Some active members still looked for a route or planned on moving to Serekunda. If at all, travelling was said to contribute an added value to the SYC. For example, some travelled members of the SYC were seen as having wisdom and awareness (*wulliye*) which they could use for the common good. Despite the pull of emigration, however, I would still argue that the different strands of the discourse on self-reliance and on active citizenship articulated at the local, national and transnational level constituted a frame[4] in which youths who stayed behind could

assume a positive role in society as mature and responsible men. By participating in the SYC, young men seemed to suggest that, whilst in Sabi, they could play an active role as stayers instead of either waiting for an opportunity to travel or leaving the initiative to the migrants and other external agents. As an SYC member once put it: 'Before you sit down all day, you can do something for your village … We [the SYC] want to bring our village forward'.

Quiet Ceremonies: Legal Innovation and Socio-moral Reforms

In the autumn of 2007, the SYC was busy implementing a series of new regulations for the village. This initiative had been introduced by Hamme Silla, the VDC chairman, but the SYC immediately became involved and began to amend the regulations and propose new ones. The regulations were mainly designed to ban the 'party element' at ceremonies and encourage villagers to organize plain ceremonies and keep ritual steps to a minimum. The excessive display of gifts was to be curtailed, while the customary distribution of money to *nyaxamalo* and *komo* was explicitly forbidden, except for those indispensable tasks, such as slaughtering the sacrificial ram and cooking, which had to be compensated (Figure 6.2).

Figure 6.2 Waiting for Redistribution: Women Attending a Naming Ceremony, where Coins and Gifts Will Be Handed Out, 2007

Accordingly, praise-singers were prevented from performing and asking for money. All subjects who were not directly related to the ceremony holders by kin or by other close ties should abstain from attending, so as to avoid putting pressure on the organizer to honour hospitality with gifts of money and food. The regulations also concerned the DJ-set parties sponsored by adolescents' *ghettos*. They had to be either moved to the outskirts of the village, where they would not disturb people, or abolished altogether. A complex system of fines was drawn up.

These regulations were admittedly influenced by Soninke urbanites and Islamic revivalism. Hamme Silla told me he was inspired by similar policies concerning ceremonies in Serekunda, where the association Sunpu do Xati had long tried to raise awareness about ritual proceedings and circulated a protocol of conduct, which gathered some consensus among urban Soninke households. The *sunnanko* condemn lavish ceremonies and noisy dances and music during naming ceremonies and weddings. They sanction more sober ceremonies to preserve the religious meaning of the ritual (cf. Janson 2005). In Sabi, people did not go as far as replacing praise-singers with religious preachers, as I saw happening on some occasions in Serekunda; yet the religious underpinning of the civic reforms was important for some youths in the SYC. The popularity of *Sunna* among Sabi youths played a role in catalysing interest around the legislation; moreover, as young men were at times challenged, they would resort to religious arguments to legitimize their policies. 'This is what the Prophet did', I often heard young men saying during discussions with other villagers.

On the other hand, the religious agenda was not at the forefront, not least because of the religious heterogeneity of the SYC and the politically sensitive topic of religion in the village. The 'anti-party' rules were framed rather towards resolving social inequality and unproductive squandering of resources. The rationale went approximately as follows. People are not equal in terms of wealth. The man who cannot afford to spend large sums on naming ceremonies or weddings would be forced either to contract debts or to beg from more affluent relatives. Crowds of participants demanding to be accommodated, fed and honoured with gifts have to be satisfied; otherwise the organizer will be subjected to the shame of not having granted hospitality to his guests. Money is thus dissipated for the sake of ostentation and renown. After the celebrations are over the man is penniless again, and he will struggle to provide even a basic subsistence for his wife and children.

Societal debates about ritual expenditure have a long history in the region. In Senegal, attempts by the state to regulate marriage transactions and public debates about the morality of lavish ceremonies stretch back to at least the colonial period (Buggenhagen 2012: 127–30). Similarly,

some Sabi elders recalled that in the 1950s there were concerns about the monetization and rising costs of marriages and naming ceremonies.[5] There has always been a tension between on the one hand engaging in ceremonial pomp and conspicuous consumption as a way to vie for prestige, and on the other showing sobriety and humility as moral virtues. By fuelling ceremonies with money, migrants have contributed to making this tension more acute, inflating both ritual expenses and expectations of the participants towards redistribution. Much as the rising costs of ceremonies were linked to the economic power of migrants, however, the new regulations were not against the latter. On the contrary, migrants were seen as potential partners in the reform because of their purported awareness and openness to change. Once, as I was accompanying a delegation of the SYC heading to a wedding held by a migrant, one of the men said that he trusted that since the groom was a traveller, he would easily understand the righteousness of the regulations.

The discourse on equality and squandering struck a chord with young men coping with skyrocketing ceremonial expenses, and certainly contributed to boosting participation in the SYC. In 2007/8, bridewealth (*manyon nabure*) ranged between 4,500 and 7,000 Dalasi (c. €130–200), a price that was considered relatively high. In addition, the groom was supposed to give money, clothes, jewellery, a radio set and other accessories to his bride as presents and as contributions to her trousseau (*manyon bagasi*), and to provide the bed and the furniture for the nuptial house (see also Sommerfelt 2013: 62–63). Though expenditures varied greatly, I estimated the minimal cost of a marriage without pomp to be around 20,000 Dalasi (c. €550–600), assuming that the groom already had a nuptial house in his compound. Today, young men are expected to find the money for their wedding and naming ceremonies of their children, but few manage to raise such an amount on their own. Unless they have a remunerative activity, young men who stay in Sabi depend on other relatives to finance the ceremonial proceedings. Receiving help is not necessarily a problem. Indeed, as villagers believe marriage to be a vital event for the family, men living and working abroad are under an obligation to help their younger brothers to find a wife. 'Receiving a woman', and thus the possibility of having children, nevertheless leaves the young man in debt and places him under a moral obligation to respect the authority of his older brothers with regard to other decisions too.

By mid October, the anti-party regulations were finalized. On a Friday, the village chief announced the regulations to an audience of adult men congregating in the mosque square after prayer. The regulations were spelled out and the population was warned that breaches would result in a fine. In the end, the SYC had to negotiate with the VDC for a

considerable reduction of the fines from 2,000 to 500 Dalasi, an amount that many young men deemed insufficient as a deterrent, though one that might be easier to charge (the SYC was administering the fines). After the announcement, the SYC members began to organize themselves in small patrols to preside over the ceremonies being held in the village. Some stood at the gates of the compounds, watching people going in and out and warning them that handouts of cash (*sanke*) were no longer allowed. Others ensured that the materials of the dowry would not be put on display in the courtyard of the compound.

The regulations provoked some discontent in the village. When SYC members began to patrol ceremonies, threatening to fine those who entered with the intention of begging for money, some men and women began to voice their complaints and accuse the SYC and the VDC of doing away with tradition (*laada*). The regulations were gender-biased, for they hardly addressed the interests of women in the ceremonies. For women, ritual proceedings are important public events, in which exchanges of money, textiles and other gifts play a crucial role in negotiating prestige.[6] In addition, although the neighbours and casted people with a direct customary relationship with the family holding the ceremony were allowed to claim their shares, numerous other acquaintances, *nyaxamalo* and *komo* were excluded.

In this way, legal innovation brought to the surface all the contradictions of the SYC and the VDC in political terms. By undermining customary exchanges, in the eyes of some *nyaxamalo* and *komo* these committees showed themselves to be a '*hoore* business' seeking to defend the corporate interests of the nobles (the typical patrons of large ceremonies now facing economic dire straits) while preserving their privileges in village politics. The SYC remained rather elusive in response to people's grumblings, which never escalated to overt protest, and they enlisted sympathizers across the status hierarchy and among women. For most youths, the regulations had nothing to do with status: they were meant to restore equality and thus social cohesion, on the one hand; and to ensure conditions for self-reliance and hard work, rather than begging and dependency, on the other.

Given the socio-moral nature of life rituals, attempts to change ritual proceedings are necessarily attempts to reshape the very production of societal norms. In fact, in addition to rituals, the SYC targeted specific practices deemed 'not civilized', as many SYC members put it, by proposing or passing regulations in domains as diverse as rape and the beating of wives; stray donkeys and horses entering compounds at night; cars and motorbikes speeding through town; and smoking in the streets in the dry season (causing accidental fires).

In the weeks that followed, the SYC proposed new reforms and carried out patrols with fervour. It aspired to become the main arbiter and watchman of the village, and even tried to ensure that those committing certain criminal offences should be tried and fined by the SYC before being reported to the police. I see this as a claim to maturity: the SYC were attempting to provide the village with an institution above the parties, implementing regulations rigorously, and avoiding family and status biases.[7] The insistence on the 'rule of law' can be read as a way to partly circumscribe the power of the elders in the mediation of conflicts and community affairs. By forcefully trying to be impartial, the SYC imposed fines on people of any status, including some leading members of the noble elite. It also took issue with the VDC, accusing it of being overly ambivalent about implementation and thus risking a reversion to nepotism when family affiliations overlapped with VDC membership.

In March 2008, a case of sexual abuse occurred in the village. The SYC wanted to take over from the usual inter- and intra-family diplomacy. They wanted to make a public case out of it and administer an exemplary punishment to the culprit, a young man from the village. However, the elders of the respective families did not wait. The father of the victim, a young married woman, reported the harasser to the police, and the family of the accused subsequently settled the matter through private transactions, allegedly with the tacit approval of some village leaders. Bypassed, the SYC pulled out of the regulations as a sign of protest, polemically leaving to the village elders and the VDC the impossible task of enforcement without the indispensable personnel provided by the youth *sappa*.

* * *

The 2008 standoff, to which the village was unable to react, marked the beginning of a progressive decline of youth activism in Sabi. Over the following months, the SYC managed to channel young men's attention towards the reconstruction of a small bridge next to the central mosque, a self-financed project which the committee completed by 2008. But over the period that followed, attendance and participation seem to have waned. When I returned to the village four years later, Degume Silla was leading a much-downsized version of the *yuttin sappa*, and was directing his unstinting commitment to village development towards an incipient association of horticultural gardeners who had followed in his footsteps. Many youths had pulled out or simply lost touch with the SYC, and the village returned to ad hoc strategies for public works. The VDC was equally dormant. In 2012, the clearing of the central square in view of the Tobaski (i.e., the *Eid al Adha* Muslim festival) celebrations was carried out by a group of men recruited on a one-compound-one-man basis. Some

lappe, which by contrast were thriving as usual, offered to help by weeding the two cemeteries.

From what I gathered, internal and circumstantial factors had contributed to the decline of the youth committee. The enthusiasm that had characterized the period of legal innovation had evaporated, along with the hope of effecting real change. If back in 2008 some young men already manifested unease at the frequent and long meetings spent discussing sanctions and unimportant issues, now many more saw few reasons to attend. From weekly meetings, the committee moved to fortnightly ones, before ceasing them altogether. Moreover, some of the most charismatic and vocal members of the *sappa* had moved to the city to work and do business. As Degume could now count only on his close collaborators, some complained that decision making had become more centralized.

In neighbouring villages, the youth committee had been reportedly more long-lasting and successful. There, young men were equally at the forefront of civic and socio-moral reform. In the region, experiments in legal innovation are not new (Snyder 1978), and, more generally, civic participation at the local level seems to be an important way for young people to express active citizenship (e.g., Diouf 2002; Baller 2007). On the wings of the Arab Spring, in 2012, Senegalese youths took to the streets to protest against constitutional changes made by President Abdoulaye Wade, who was seeking re-election, and they contributed to a regime change. The momentum of youth activism in the region had little resonance in the Gambia, however, where the regime's grip on the youth and the rest of the population has continued to be firm. In truth, Sabi had its own small revolution during the 2012 National Assembly elections, in which Muhammad Mangasi, a 36-year-old man from Sabi, schooled in Senegal and founder of SYDO in Serekunda, won the parliamentary seat in the Basse district. Mangasi ran as an independent candidate after falling out with the APRC national headquarters, which disregarded popular antipathies towards the then MP Sellu Bah and chose the latter as party's candidate for the third time in a row.

This courageous protest vote and affirmation of the people's voice,[8] together with the fact that the new deputy was a young man, did not trigger another Sabi Spring of youth activism. This is possibly less a sign that 'traditional' institutions are no longer able to mobilize youths for political aims and more a symptom that party politics are not necessarily the main driver of civic participation in Sabi. Certainly, the shrinking space for political opportunities for Gambian youths after the 1990s motivated Sabi youth to opt for reform rather than for open confrontation (cf. Dea 2008). The well-worn institution of age groups served as a suitable

template for organizing young men in recognisable patterns within the bounds of local structures of authority, which Sabi hometown associations and international organizations moreover reinforced as grassroots models for civic participation and development. However, what motivated them to mobilize was not solely a wish to link up with state patronage or, for that matter, to become visible to the transnational market of development and human rights projects. While the SYC participated in political rallies and actively responded to the government's endorsement of self-help, and partly as a result of this, its actions bespoke an attempt to carve spaces of autonomous government partly outside of the state. The telos of modernization, in particular development and the idealized state (namely, citizenship and the impartiality of law) paradoxically provided a language for reforming customary authority and grassroots participation, and for creating partly autonomous regulatory institutions at the village level.[9]

My argument in this chapter has been that what moved young men to act were primarily their deep-seated concerns about social presence and permanence in Sabi. Albeit short-lived, the SYC belonged to a longer history of subordination and emancipation of youth in rural society (cf. Last 2005). As the age groups system faded in the 1980s, young men acquired a voice in the village, mainly by amassing wealth elsewhere and by investing it at home. Since restrictions on freedom of movement curtailed the exit option, however, young men regained their voice at home. This was framed less as an alternative to exiting, which some of its vocal members continued to practise, and more as an assertion both of young men's autonomy in decision making and of their capacity to direct change. The outcome was a youth committee seeking to position itself vis-à-vis a translocal civil society as a village-based agent, and a complementary one to the hometown associations. I do not confine 'civil society' here to its liberal-political meaning as an intermediate category between state and society; rather, I use 'civility' in the pre-Enlightenment sense as a concept that was 'equally encompassing governance and manners, state and society' (Karlstrom 1999: 116). Albeit not entirely endogenous, the agenda of civic reforms promoted by the SYC clearly revealed preoccupations with controlling the production and exchange of social values by which ideas of manhood are fashioned. The SYC did not abolish the ideal of the self-reliant, breadwinning man, but it tried to set limits to the social currency of wealth. The mundane experience of being penniless was certainly the backdrop to the notion of equality intended by the ceremonial reforms. Young men envisioned a code of respectability that was founded less on material displays and more on the higher moral ground and on civic virtues.

In their attempt to recalibrate ritual life and gendered subjectivities, the young citizens of Sabi were making a point about their capacity to produce and govern the renewal of the village by 'sitting'. It was more than a way for young men to emerge from the social shade of the mango tree where the young 'just sit'; weaving the threads of the committee was arguably an attempt to breathe once again some of the bygone spirit of the central square on a moonlit night. It was not so much a nostalgic return to the past as a way to recentre on the village the vital forces of regeneration that the transnational migrant economy had dispersed to other places and actors, particularly to the village migrants and migrant associations in Serekunda and abroad.

Acknowledgement

An earlier version of this chapter was published in 2008 as 'The Sabi Youth Committee: State, "Age Groups" and Civic Participation in a Soninke Village (Upper River Region, Gambia)', *Mande Studies* 10: 25–48.

Notes

1. Although some of these names are possibly place names (such as Bakel, in the Upper Senegal), the elders I talked to did not know their origins and said 'they are just names'.
2. There have also been some frictions between migrants and villagers, especially in the areas of education and infrastructure, but on the whole, migrants' initiatives have been accepted.
3. In 2007/8, fines were: 5 Dalasi for being late, 15 Dalasi for unjustified absence, 50 Dalasi for unjustified absence on collective work days. Interestingly, absence due to travel (urban or foreign) automatically counted as an exemption.
4. The concept of frame is derived from new social movement studies and refers to an understanding of social reality together with a language to communicate and a set of strategies for action (Della Porta and Diani 1999: 69ff).
5. Esp. interview with Ba Xore Sumbunu, 12 December 2007, Sabi.
6. Buggenhagen (2012) and Sommerfelt (2013) provide a detailed description of the ritual exchanges and their significance for women in urban Senegal and rural Gambia respectively.
7. Insistence on law and order may be partly rooted in the wider political context. Some of the SYC members were using the motto 'no compromise', echoing the government's 'Operation No Compromise', a campaign against corruption that has actually served to centralize authority. This does not mean that the SYC youths framed their

activity within that operation. Many of them were unimpressed by the politicians' projected image as anti-corruption champions.

8. The elections were boycotted by the UDP, the main opposition party. APRC candidates won all seats except five, four of which went to independent candidates, and one to the NRP. Electing an independent candidate was a courageous act because the regime often threatened to cut off disloyal constituencies from state-controlled development aid (see Bellagamba and Gaibazzi 2008).
9. As noted, rather than an anarchist project this is a form of governance in which the state is grafted onto local forms of power. However, it also reflects a profoundly ambivalent commitment to the postcolonial state, and in particular to the government and party politics. By the 1990s, the government and party politics had become regarded as a kind of necessary evil, something to show allegiance to in order to keep it at a safe distance from local matters.

Conclusion

Possibilities

If…

Throughout my stay in the Gambia, and during my desk-bound writing, I have continually asked myself the same question: what would happen in Sabi if restrictions to the freedom of movement were lifted or finally done away with? True, this is a question that I neither found in the bush in Sabi nor brought to it; it is rather one that reached me in the travel-bush, in Europe, via political debates and social movements. Yet if a work of anthropology should consider and reflect on social alternatives across the world so as to 'keep possibilities open' (Graeber 2007: 1), then wondering whether the bush stories in this book can contribute to a critique or a different imagination of mobility in today's world appears to be a legitimate intellectual exercise. As Michel Agier (2008: 9–11) suggests in the opening pages of his book on the humanitarian government of migration, the imagination of the world is today dominated by a spectral science-fiction scenario in which those undesirables from the 'rest of the world' who are on the move are systematically tracked down through the latest biometric technologies, excluded, encamped and removed. Confronted with this grim reality show, repossessing the means of critical imagination beyond the existing and the near-future is a significant endeavour. Indeed, it can be a crucial resource in the quest to remain attentive to and critical towards certain prevailing assumptions about human nature and freedom, where such

assumptions can become crystallized as an order of things and ideas and are then used as common sense justifications for exclusion and oppression (Bamyeh 2009: 4–5).

So, if free movement were to be granted, what would happen in the upper Gambia River valley? Well, in truth, probably not much. Young men in Sabi would no doubt take advantage of newly opened routes to Europe, provided that this remained an attractive destination for them. But little of the exodus and invasion in the proportions dreaded by some observers and politicians in the West would, in my view, materialize. Imagining possibilities is here not a utopian dream of a borderless world but an extrapolation of the social reality I have analysed in this book. I have demonstrated that permanence on the land remains important even in a valley where the injurious effects of the global economy and the whims of climate change have made living off the land a gloomy prospect compared to emigration. This is not because people are firmly attached to their bucolic lifestyles, and even less because they think of themselves as a sedentary people. Rather, 'sitting' in Sabi is a way of inhabiting a mobile world that has been such since before living memory can recall, certainly before the emergence of Europe as a popular destination. When we look at Soninke men – both words being synonyms of long-distance travel in this region – the underlying assumption that West African youths simply day-dream of Eldorado Europe and that their needy families push them onto boats bound to Spain quickly dissolves into a kaleidoscopic vision of other possibilities. In this book, I have tried to peep into the kaleidoscope and bring into focus the bush-bound trajectories of young men grappling with the hardships of rural life and yet feeling encouraged to come to know it, bear it with fortitude and make it part of their own way of being in the world. Visions of Europe and other migrant destinations do constitute a compelling element of the picture; on the other hand, the lure of travel can only be interpreted in the light (or obscurity) of the forces that wear immobility down and reduce it to bareness, a form of emplacement that is bereft of value and only worth leaving behind. Since the securitarian politics of mobility feature prominently among such forces, here lies the paradox that excluding people from the legal right to move across borders while promoting a normative sedentariness is what actually degrades their ability to stay put and further foments their aspiration to emigrate. If movement across borders were to become freer, perhaps it would alleviate these young men's burdensome thoughts of emigration and leave their fantasies freer to explore other possibilities, such as what freedom to stay means.

Placing Immobility in Migration

In fact, while focusing on bush-bound young men in Sabi has given us glimpses of a different image of migrant West Africa, it has also led us to consider the possibility of an analytics of mobility based on fixity. Views from Sabi do more than recast a world that scholars have grown accustomed to representing as being on the move; they show how sedentariness is woven into the thread of migration. What may appear from the outside as old agrarian institutions resilient to change in the face of contemporary global flows, have in fact been shown to be core elements of such mobilities. There is, stricto sensu, no beginning of migration in Sabi, for the village was itself a product of complex mobilities unfolding in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in what we too often forget was one of the cradles of economic globalization. Sabi was created on the expanding groundnut-growing basin partly so that the opportunities of long-distance trade and commercial agriculture could be seized. The intensification of outmigration in the second half of the twentieth century has built on past mobility patterns, but also on the villagers' capacity to continue producing emplacement. Far from being antithetical, mobility and immobility are mutually intertwined in the social organization of everyday life in Sabi. I have therefore described the village, its households and their farms as 'moorings' (Urry 2003: ch. 5; 2007) or 'actual permanences' (Harvey 1996: 38), socio-material infrastructures that sustain mobility by preparing men to undertake a search for money away from the village, and enabling them to do so by taking care of those they leave behind, cultivating their reputation when they find their bounty and bring it back home, and offering a safe port to return to when the turbulent waters of the global political economy disrupt their journeys.

Bringing a historical and anthropological sensitivity to a growing field of migration and mobility studies, I have characterized (im)mobility as a geo-social field. Positions and relations in this field spanning local and national boundaries are associated with specific values and abilities whose cultural underpinnings I have tried to capture through the lens of age and gender. Following the life course of young men until early adulthood has meant tracing the moments and circumstances in which stillness becomes socially valuable as a form of immobility that sustains and is sustained by mobility. Farming, for instance, serves as a pedagogical tool for turning children and boys into *hustlers*. When the time for *hustling* arrives, young men continue to accept agriculture as a way of contributing to family subsistence, but they also feel alienated by farm work for, unlike working for a salary, it earns them no money and thus they have no possibility of

meeting the financial demands of manhood. Going to the bush to farm becomes important to men again when they assume a leading role in their households by managing subsistence and in turn educating their sons, and those of their migrant brothers, in the fields.

Through the local notion of *taaxu* or 'sitting', this book has analysed the process of creating, inhabiting and experiencing sedentary positions in the relational field of (im)mobility. While both the relational field and the positions in it evolve, often in rapid and unforeseen ways, 'sitting' has been shown to be a dynamic process that defies any definition of immobility as an innate or residual state of sedentariness. This is evident among the young men who are striving to earn a living in Sabi and in the Gambia. For them, opportunities are seldom readily available and instead must be looked for or even created ad hoc by mobilizing the support of migrant relatives. Even where positions are established and lasting, notably in the case of household heads, becoming established as a 'sitter' or stayer involves tactical manoeuvring on slippery grounds. In a neoliberal regime of chronic economic precariousness, 'sitting' depends to a significant extent on attracting flows of resources from abroad, not simply money remitted by migrants but also the children of the migrants, for example, who are sent back to be reared in a rural, family-oriented environment. Becoming established in Sabi implies, in other words, making a strong claim for 'sitting' for the very sake of travel and travellers. As other ways of urban 'sitting' have emerged, however, these combine as well as compete with Sabi, reshaping the geography of the moorings of mobility, and with it the distribution of resources needed to substantiate the position of the 'sitters'.

A spectre of bare immobility consequently looms over 'sitting'. Most evident among the unemployed and visa-less young men 'just sitting' through the day in the dry season, this abject mode of immobility also surfaces in the various forms of hesitancy, alienation and 'confusion' with which they experience more socially rewarding sedentary positions. They seek to avert the spectre of bare immobility in several ways other than by simply emigrating. In addition to *hustling* in the Gambia and 'sitting at home', they adapt multiple cultural imaginaries from both home and away to rethink their position as youth and young adults in Sabi, and even to recast the terms in which sedentary manhood is understood and achieved. They make a virtue out of necessity by framing their stay in the Gambia in relation to a religiously sanctioned temporality of possibility which concomitantly gives them hope and a purpose for continuing to strive in the present. They bear the burden of permanence not only as individuals but also as groups, whether by socializing with their age mates or by mobilizing them to lift the village out of underdevelopment and civic decay.

Certainly, we should be wary of using celebratory overtones to describe 'sitting' as yet another form of African creativity, while being oblivious to the wondrous economic and legal-political constraints that force the young men of Sabi to constantly reinvent their sedentary lives. Nevertheless, if scholars of migration ever needed to be convinced of the analytical usefulness of studying immobility in processual terms, the energies channelled into contemplating, fashioning or merely despising a settled life in a migrant-sending place like Sabi are compelling evidence for it. Although the increasingly popular use of the term '(im)mobility' in academic writing indicates growing attentiveness to the relational character of mobility and immobility, in practice human mobility still claims the lion's share of scholarly work on the subject. Strands of research nevertheless exist that, often prior and parallel to the mobility turn in the social sciences, sanction the need for straddling analytically the divide between stillness and movement. West Africa has been, in this respect, an observatory of how displacement and settlement occupy centre stage in the history and memory of its rural dwellers, and how combining agrarian and migrant livelihoods is not only a matter of survival but also an issue of social organization and cultural identity. On these foundations, *Bush Bound* has made a strong case for placing immobility more firmly in the empirical and conceptual purview of migration and agrarian studies. By exploring the dynamics of 'sitting', it has shown that immobility can be studied as a set of subject positions whose geo-social ambit must be delineated through inquiry rather than be assumed a priori to be a category of already formed subjects – the left-behind – on whose lives emigration impinges.

Trailing on

Recentring attention on the bush has done more than provincializing (Chakrabarty 2000) Eurocentric narratives of migrant West Africa and analytical positions in migration research. As Jeffrey Cohen (2004: 150–51) has remarked in his study of migrant-sending communities in southern Mexico: 'Understanding migration in rural Oaxaca begins by understanding its households and communities. To jump to the United States is to lose that foundation and to miss the profound forces that frame and organize the very processes we hope to explain'. Beginning an ethnographic inquiry of migration with the migrant-sending village is not a nostalgic return to the local and the ethnic in anthropology; it is to begin with the concerns and histories of the people who have decided to embark on worldwide journeys in order to remain peasants. A

fuller appreciation of migration requires, I have argued, considering travel also as an extension of the social and moral order surrounding the bush, complete with its ways of attributing value to people, places and activities (cf. Munn 1986; Chu 2010).

Through the notion of permanence I have identified the concern, latent in the dynamics of 'sitting', with the continual spatial and temporal extension of the agrarian world. Making stillness valuable in migrant Sabi implies to some degree stilling the social and cultural tenets of rural life by making it, in an apparent paradox, mobile. The bush is turned into a travel-bush through semantic extrapolation but also especially by making it a built-in regulatory mechanism of conduct for it to be transportable to other locations while at the same time anchoring the traveller in the life-world of the village. On this extendibility or mobility of agrarian institutions depends, as noted, the subsistence and prosperity of the households and 'sitters', who, however, represent themselves less as mere recipients of remittances than as the source of the traveller's success. 'This is where it all began', say the villagers. In their view, the ability of expatriate men to reap good harvests in the travel-bush literally stems from the bush, that is, from the social and ethical virtues cultivated in the farms as well as from the blessings that honouring the conviviality and reciprocities of domestic rural life channels to expatriate household members from the river of the patrilineage, which they too are expected to refill.

At the same time, the enormous amount of social work put into 'making things stick' (Barber 2007) concomitantly reveals the profound anxieties surrounding the viability of rural permanence. Over the past few decades, extending the social order of Sabi has also become a way to recapture the diaspora. In a valley where peasants are increasingly dispossessed of their means of subsistence, household heads, among others, mobilize moral arguments in order to claim a sizeable share of the harvests in the travel-bush. In so doing, they implicitly acknowledge the fact that the material bases of their power and of social reproduction at large are now found away from the village. Their entitlements must be therefore balanced against other aspirations, of both those living in Sabi and those living abroad. Migrants acquire fame and secure their future by investing no longer solely in household and development projects in the village, but also in properties and new homes in the cities. Even the most committed and least ambitious young man who 'sits' in Sabi must reckon with the imperative of looking for money, and therefore of looking for markets in which to sell his capacity to labour, acquired as a boy in the bush.

Already in the mid 1970s, while migration from the Western Sahel to France was still flourishing, Claude Meillassoux (1981) had warned against the long-term corrosive effects of the cash economy on the

agrarian community. No doubt inspired by his research among the Soninke as much as by dependency theory, Meillassoux viewed labour migration as a form of exploitation through which industrial capitalism extracted the workforce from rural communities whilst sustaining its permanence on the land; in so doing, the cost of social reproduction of the workforce could be borne by the peasants. While the articulation between capitalist and domestic modes of production allowed the agrarian social order to thrive, this Faustian contract of regeneration would eventually lead to dangerous doldrums. Following his mentor Balandier (1961: 19), Meillassoux acknowledged that the migrants' 'sociological investments' would neutralize the disruptive power of money earned outside the farms controlled by the elders; nevertheless, in his view, monetization, combined with the double impoverishment or precariousness of peasants and migrant workers, led to a trend of privatization of savings that undermined the collectivistic logic of domestic units, thereby creating an 'uncertain future' for the agrarian community (Meillassoux 1981: 130–31).

Certainly, the French anthropologist did not do enough justice to the longevity of labour migration among the Soninke (Manchuelle 1997), let alone the importance of trade migration, which turned some Sabi villagers into capitalists of sorts. In addition, although the notion of articulation is still useful in certain domains of analysis, several elements of the peasant society, such as the agrarian ethos of Soninke migration, reveal a greater interpenetration, even a synthesis, of the economic systems at play (see also Galvan 2004; Guyer 2004; Shipton 2009). One should also give credit to the many Gambians who remark on the Soninke's obsession with money whilst admiring their ability to keep their large families spread across the world so united. Yet, forty years after the publication of *Maidens, Meal and Money*, echoes of Meillassoux's lucid analysis reverberate in Sabi men's complaints about the inability to obtain money by either earning a salary or by receiving a share of their brothers'. While considering the villagers as agents in their navigation of the unequal terrain of the global political economy, I have also shown how the Sabinko have participated in creating the very conditions in which they have since become trapped (Chalcraft 2008): once extended and locked into the capitalist circuits of trade and labour, the seeds of contradiction have thus been sown.

The uncertain yields of rural permanence are addressed in Sabi through neither cultural immobilism nor a radical departure from 'our fathers' path'. In West Africa, in a neoliberal moment in which 'traditions' that allegedly no longer serve to mediate state sovereignty are increasingly left 'rotting away in the villages' (Piot 2010: 163), people have embraced new

futures and sometimes neglected their pasts. In Sabi, young men have been responsive to new social models but have generally used them to preserve and bring new life to 'tradition'. As we saw, *Sunna* or reformist Islam, which is often depicted as a firm departure from traditional forms of religiosity, was used by young men to revitalize the age groups, an almost rotten institution of local governance. It was indeed the resulting youth committee that emerged in the late 2000s as the most articulate, collective attempt to deal with the contradictions of monetization and inflationary trends in social exchanges. By simultaneously acting within the bounds of social seniority and pushing them further, Sabi young men sought to trim the outgrowths of a moneyman model no longer at hand and prepared the ground for the seeds of a more viable bushman model to be sown. In an ongoing attempt to strike a balance between cooperation and individual autonomy, stability and change, *maarenmaaxu* and *faabarenmaaxu*, young men thus cultivate the field of 'tradition' while at the same time experimenting with new cultural techniques and crops.

This brings us back, at last, to the question of possibilities. Anthropology, Michael Carrithers (2005: 434) has suggested, should consider not only certainties but also possibilities in the societies under investigation. This book has been first and foremost an ethnographic depiction of young peasants in contemporary West Africa, and the ways in which they explore the possibilities and impossibilities of creating and inhabiting agrarian futures. While the problem of producing a viable future is not new in Africa (Weiss 2004a), it has assumed ominous proportions for many African youths from the 1990s onwards. For them, permanence often means living in a state of permanent 'waithood' in which the long-walked paths to social adulthood seem to be no longer viable (Mains 2011; Honwana 2012). Zooming into the *ghettos* where young men just sit and wait has given us a flavour of the gravity of this experience, temporal as well as spatial and kinaesthetic, of stalled social reproduction. However, a 'waithood' perspective alone has limited purchase in Sabi both because it obscures *ghettos* as sites of production of alternative spatialities and temporalities (Masquelier 2013: 475), and especially because it limits social analysis to the present. As Beth Buggenhagen (2012) has shown, understanding everyday life in times of economic hardship and volatility requires investigating not only short-term coping strategies but also the long-term modalities through which Africans create and preserve value by investing in assets as well as in people. A focus on men projected towards adulthood and seniority has thus served to show us how, against all the odds and despite the contradictions, rural dwellers strive to make paths to male emancipation and respectability still possible. That is to say, permanence is not only a burden; it is also a bonus.

In Antonio Machado's poem, an excerpt from which features as the epigraph to the introduction of this book, the paths of human life are impermanent. Like trails ploughed across the sea, they disappear behind us and with us. Yet, while everything passes, everything also remains. No doubt young men 'sitting' in Sabi often perceive their wanderings on agrarian grounds as leaving barely visible traces compared to the larger avenues made by migrants and moneymen in the travel-bush. Upper River people are nevertheless rarely lone wayfarers; in this region, 'path' (*kille*) serves also as a metaphor for moving together, especially along the trails of the patrilineage, the household and the village community (see also Jackson 1989: 36; Wooten 2009: 146–47; Pelckmans 2011; Kea 2013: 109). What remains is therefore the imperative to keep trailing on, for 'the trail is made by walking', as Machado writes. What stays is the onus of walking, if not uniquely on 'our fathers' path', then in the same direction as them. And in Sabi, young men keep walking and making trails, trails bound to the bush.

Glossary

Note: The plural version (in brackets) is provided only for those Soninke terms which are used both in the singular and the plural in the text.

Ataya: Sugary green tea
Babylon: (In the context of migration) Europe and North America
Barake: Blessing, state of grace
Biraado: Means of Subsistence
Dimbaya(nu): Approx. Nuclear Family (a person's spouses, children and eventually parents)
Faabarenmaaxu: Being of the same father; rivalry between agnatic brothers
Fish money: Daily allowance for buying food supplies
Follake(-u): Section of the *ka*
Ghetto: Meeting and socialising place for male youths
Gunne: Bush, farming area
Hanmi: Concern, ambition
Hoore(-o): Noble
Hustle: To work, make a living, look for money, to migrate
Hustler: Off-farm worker, migrant
Juula: (Muslim) trader in Mande languages
Ka(nu): Household, family compound
Kaara: Home place (i.e. father's *ka*, village, home country)
Kagumaaxu: Leadership of the *ka*
Kagume(-u): Head of the household (*ka*)
Kille: Path, way, migratory route
Kingide (also: kinŋu): Hearth of the *ka*
Kome(-o): Slave, slave descendant
Kora (also: koranlenme): Seating platform
Kunda: A suffix meaning either 'the household/compound of' or 'the settlement of'
Laada: Custom, tradition

Lappe: Group of male age mates
Lumo: Market, market place
Maarenmaaxu: Being of the same mother; unity, solidarity
Madrasa: Islamic school
Maisi: Upper Quranic school
Mande: A group of related languages and people distributed over a large area of Sahelian West Africa (the centre being Mali)
Marabout (Soninke: moodi): Islamic specialist and teacher typical of Sufi Islam
Nerves syndrome: Longing for travel, distress about inability to travel/lack of opportunities (see also: *hanmi*)
Nyaxamala(-o): Casted artisan
Sappa: Association, grouping; usually village-based
Sappanu: Age groups system
Semester: Migrant to the West, especially one associated with consumerism and sophistication
Senbe: Force, strength
Soninkaara: Homeland of the Soninke
Strange farmer: Also: stranger farmer; seasonal migrant farmer in commercial groundnut cultivation (known as *navétan* in Senegal)
Sunna: Usually: words and deeds of the Prophet, in Soninke, also: Islamic reformism
Sunnanke(-o): Follower of *Sunna*, Islamic reformist
Supporter: Helper
Taaxu: To sit, to take office, to become settled
Tanpiye: Hardship, fatigue, suffering
Taxaana: 'Sitter' or 'stayer', person who does not travel
Teraana: Traveller
Tere: To travel, to walk
Terende: Travel, approx. international migration
Terenden-gunne: lit. Travel-bush, foreign land or travel destination
Travel-bush: *Terenden-gunne* (author's translation of)
Tunŋa: Foreign place, travel destination, land of exile
Vous: Meeting and socialising place (especially in urban Gambia)
Wulliye: Awareness
Xabila(-nu): Descent group
Xalisi: Money
Xalisi mundiye: Quest for money
Xaranyinmbe: Basic Quranic school

Bibliography

Abercrombie, N., S. Hill and B.S. Turner. 1986. *Sovereign Individuals of Capitalism*. London: Allen & Unwin.

Abu-Lughod, L. 1993. *Writing Women's Worlds: Bedouin Stories*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Adams, A. 1977. *Le Long Voyage des Gens du Fleuve*. Paris: F. Maspero.

———. 1985. *La Terre et les Gens du Fleuve: Jalons, Balises*. Paris: L'Harmattan.

Adey, P. 2010. *Mobility*. London: Routledge.

Agamben, G. 1995. *Homo Sacer: Il Potere Sovrano e la Nuda Vita*. Torino: G. Einaudi.

Agier, M. 1983. *Commerce et Sociabilité: Les Négociants Soudanais du Quartier Zongo de Lomé (Togo)*. Paris: ORSTOM.

———. 2008. *Gérer les Indésirables: Des Camps de Réfugiés au Gouvernement Humanitaire*. Paris: Flammarion.

Ajuntament de Mataró. 2003. 'Projects de Cooperació i Sensibilatzió 2003'. Mataró: Mataró City Council.

———. 2004. 'Projects de Cooperació i Sensibilatzió 2004'. Mataró: Mataró City Council.

Ali, S. 2007. '"Go West Young Man": The Culture of Migration among Muslims in Hyderabad, India', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 33(1): 37–58.

Alpes, M.J. 2013. 'Imagining a Future in "Bush": Migration Aspirations at Times of Crisis in Anglophone Cameroon', *Identities* 21(3): 259–74.

Alter, J.S. 1993. 'The Body of One Color: Indian Wrestling, the Indian State, and Utopian Somatics', *Cultural Anthropology* 8(1): 49–72.

Amit, V. and N. Dyck. 2012. 'Introduction. Pursuing Respectable Adulthood: Social Reproduction in Times of Uncertainty', in V. Amit and N. Dyck (eds), *Young Men in Uncertain Times*. Oxford: Berghahn Books, pp. 1–31.

Amselle, J.-L. 1976. 'Aspects et Significations du Phénomène Migratoire en Afrique', in M. Aghassian and J.-L. Amselle (eds), *Les Migrations Africaines: Réseaux et Processus Migratoires*. Paris: F. Maspero, pp. 9–42.

———. 1977. *Les Négociants de la Savane: Histoire et Organisation Sociale des Kooroko, Mali*. Paris: Anthropos.

———. 1998. *Mestizo Logics: Anthropology of Identity in Africa and Elsewhere*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Ba, A. 2008. 'Les Femmes Mourides à New York: Une Renégociation de l'Identité Musulmane en Migration', in M.C. Diop (ed.), *Le Sénégal des Migrations: Mobilités, Identités et Sociétés*. Paris; Dakar; Nairobi: Karthala; CREPOS; ONU-habitat, pp. 389–408.

Ba, C.-O. 2003. 'Les Sénégalaises en Afrique Centrale: De la Migration d'Accompagnement à l'Émergence des Groupes des Femmes', in C. Coquery-Vidrovitch (ed.), *Etre Étranger et Migrant en Afrique au XXe Siècle: Enjeux Identitaires et Modes d'Insertion*. Paris: L'Harmattan, pp. 279–92.

Baker, K.M. 1995. 'Drought, Agriculture and Environment: A Case Study from the Gambia, West Africa', *African Affairs* 94(374): 67–86.

Baker, K.M. and R.L. Edmonds. 2004. 'Transfer of Taiwanese Ideas and Technology to the Gambia, West Africa: A Viable Approach to Rural Development?', *The Geographical Journal* 170(3): 189–211.

Bakewell, O. 2008. '"Keeping Them in Their Place": The Ambivalent Relationship between Development and Migration in Africa', *Third World Quarterly* 29(7): 1341–58.

Balandier, G. 1961. 'Phénomènes Sociaux Totaux et Dynamique Sociale', *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie* 30: 21–36.

Baller, S. 2007. 'Youth, Theatre and Sports: Creating Conscious Citizens within the Senegalese Nawetaan Movement', *Africa Insight* 37(3): 376–87.

Bamyeh, M.A. 2009. *Anarchy as Order: The History and Future of Civic Humanity*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Barber, K. 2007. 'Improvisation and the Art of Making Things Stick', in E. Hallam and T. Ingold (eds), *Creativity and Cultural Improvisation*. New York: Berg, pp. 25–44.

Barrett, H.R. 1988. *The Marketing of Foodstuffs in the Gambia, 1400–1980: A Geographical Analysis*. Aldershot: Avebury.

Basch, L.G., N. Glick Schiller and C. Szanton Blanc. 1994. *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments, and Deterritorialized Nation-States*. London: Routledge.

Bathily, A. 1989. *Les Portes de l'Or: Le Royaume de Galam, Sénégal, de l'Ère Musulmane au Temps Des Négriers, VIIIe–XVIIIe Siècle*. Paris: L'Harmattan.

Bauman, Z. 1998. *Globalization: The Human Consequences*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Bayart, J.F. 2000. 'Africa in the World: A History of Extraversion', *African Affairs* 99(395): 217–67.

Bellagamba, A. 2000. *Ricordati di Ieri. Storia e Storie in una Regione del Gambia*. Torino: L'Harmattan Italia.

———. 2004. 'Entrustment and Its Changing Political Meanings in Fuladu, the Gambia (1880–1994)', *Africa* 74(3): 383–410.

———. 2005. 'Slavery and Emancipation in the Colonial Archives: British Officials, Slave-Owners and Slaves in the Protectorate of the Gambia (c.1890–1936)', *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 39(1): 5–41.

———. 2008. 'Today's Elders, Yesterday's Youths: Generations and Politics in the 20th Century Gambia', in E. Alber, S. van der Geest and S. Reynolds-Whyte (eds), *Generations in Africa: Connections and Conflicts*. Berlin: Lit Verlag, pp. 237–66.

———. 2011. 'Quando lo Sguardo si Sposta sull'Africa', in A. Bellagamba (ed.), *Migrazioni, Dal Lato dell'Africa*. Pavia: Altravista, pp. 9–29.

———. 2013. 'My Elderly Friends of the Gambia: Masculinity and Social Presence in the Later Part of Life', *Cahiers d' Études Africaines* 53(209–210): 345–66.

Bellagamba, A. and P. Gaibazzi. 2008. 'Nient'altro da Votare. Dinamiche di Partecipazione Politica e Disillusione nella Repubblica del Gambia (Africa Occidentale)', in F. Viti (ed.), *Dipendenza Personale, Lavoro e Politica*. Modena: Edizioni Il Fiorino, pp. 46–79.

Berry, S. 1993. *No Condition Is Permanent: The Social Dynamics of Agrarian Change in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Bertoncello, B. and S. Bredeloup. 2004. *Colporteurs Africains à Marseille: Un Siècle d'Aventures*. Paris: Autrement.
Beuving, J. 2004. 'Cotonou's Klondike: African Traders and Second-hand Car Markets in Bénin', *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 42(4): 511–37.
Bird, C.S. and M.B. Kendall. 1980. 'The Mande Hero', in I. Karp and C.S. Bird (eds), *Explorations in African Systems of Thought*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 13–26.
Bissell, D. and G. Fuller. 2010. 'Stilness Unbound', in D. Bissell and G. Fuller (eds), *Stillness in a Mobile World*. London: Routledge, pp. 1–17.
Bledsoe, C. 1990. '"No Success without Struggle": Social Mobility and Hardship for Foster Children in Sierra Leone', *Man* 25(1): 70–88.
———. 2002. *Contingent Lives: Fertility, Time, and Aging in West Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Bledsoe, C. and P. Sow. 2011. 'Back to Africa: Second Chances for the Children of West African Immigrants', *Journal of Marriage and Family* 73(4): 747–62.
Boesen, E., and L. Marfaing. 2014. *Mobilités Dans l'Espace Ouest-Africain: Ressources, Développement Local et Intégration Régionale*. Paris: Karthala.
Boesen, E., L. Marfaing and M. de Bruijn. 2014. 'Nomadism and Mobility in the Sahara-Sahel: Introduction', *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 48(1): 1–12.
Bolt, M. 2013. 'Producing Permanence: Employment, Domesticity and the Flexible Future on a South African Border Farm', *Economy and Society* 42(2): 197–225.
Bordonaro, L. 2009. 'Sai Fora: Youth, Disconnectedness and Aspiration to Mobility in the Bijagó Islands (Guinea-Bissau)', *Etnográfica* 13(1): 125–44.
Bouilly, E. 2008. 'Les Enjeux Féminins de la Migration Masculine: Le Collectif des Femmes Pour la Lutte Contre l'Immigration Clandestine de Thiaroye-Sur-Mer', *Politique Africaine* 109: 16–31.
Bourdieu, P. 1985. 'The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups', *Theory and Society* 14(6): 723–44.
Bourdillon, M.F. and G. Spittler. 2012. 'African Children at Work: Working and Learning in Growing up for Life', in G. Spittler and M.F. Bourdillon (eds), *African Children at Work: Working and Learning in Growing up for Life*. Munich: Lit Verlag, pp. 1–22.
Boyer, F. 2005. 'Le Projet Migratoire des Migrants Touaregs de la Zone de Bankilaré: La Pauvreté Désavouée', *Stichproben - Vienna Journal of African Studies* 8(5): 47–69.
Bredeloup, S. 1999. 'La Fièvre du Diamant au Temps des Colonies (Afrique)', *Autrepart* 11: 171–89.
———. 2007. *La Diams'pora du Fleuve Sénégal: Sociologie des Migrations Africaines*. Toulouse; Paris: Presses Universitaires du Mirail; IRD éditions.
Brenner, L. 2001. *Controlling Knowledge: Religion, Power, and Schooling in a West African Muslim Society*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
Brooks, G.E. 1993. *Landlords and Strangers: Ecology, Society, and Trade in Western Africa, 1000–1630*. Boulder: Westview Press.
Bryceson, D.F. and V. Jamal. 1997. *Farewell to Farms: De-agrarianisation and Employment in Africa*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
Buggenhagen, B. 2012. *Muslim Families in Global Senegal: Money Takes Care of Shame*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
Calavita, K. 2005. *Immigrants at the Margins: Law, Race, and Exclusion in Southern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Capello, C. 2008. *Le Prigioni Invisibili: Etnografia Multisituata Della Migrazione Marocchina*. Milano: F. Angeli.

Carling, J. 2002. 'Migration in the Age of Involuntary Immobility: Theoretical Reflections and Cape Verdean Experiences', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 28(1): 5–42.
Carling, J. and M. Hernández-Carretero. 2011. 'Protecting Europe and Protecting Migrants? Strategies for Managing Unauthorised Migration from Africa', *The British Journal of Politics & International Relations* 13(1): 42–58.
Carney, J. and M. Watts. 1990. 'Manufacturing Dissent: Work, Gender and the Politics of Meaning in a Peasant Society', *Africa* 60(2): 207–41.
Carrithers, M. 2005. 'Anthropology as a Moral Science of Possibilities', *Current Anthropology* 46(3): 433–56.
Carsten, J. 2000. 'Introduction: Cultures of Relatedness', in J. Carsten (ed.), *Cultures of Relatedness: New Approaches to the Study of Kinship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1–35.
———. 2004. *After Kinship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Central Statistics Department. 1976. 'Population Census 1973'. Banjul: Government of The Gambia.
Chakrabarty, D. 2000. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Chalcraft, J.T. 2008. *The Invisible Cage: Syrian Migrant Workers in Lebanon*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Chauveau, J.-P. 2005. 'Introduction Thématique – Les Jeunes Ruraux à la Croisée des Chemins', *Afrique Contemporaine* 214: 15–122.
Choplin, A. 2010. '"Quand la Mer se Ferme". Du Transit au Post-transit Migratoire en Mauritanie', *Hommes et Migrations* 4–5(1286–1287): 74–85.
Chu, J.Y. 2010. *Cosmologies of Credit: Transnational Mobility and the Politics of Destination in China*. Durham: Duke University Press.
Ciavolella, R. 2010. *Les Peuls et l'État en Mauritanie: Une Anthropologie des Marges*. Paris; Milan: Karthala; University of Milan-Bicocca.
Clark, A.F. 1996. 'The Fulbe of Bundu (Senegambia): From Theocracy to Secularization', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 29(1): 1–23.
———. 1999. *From Frontier to Backwater: Economy and Society in the Upper Senegal Valley, West Africa, 1850–1920*. Lanham: University Press of America.
Clifford, J. 1997. *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
Cohen, J.H. 2004. *The Culture of Migration in Southern Mexico*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
Cole, J. and D.L. Durham. 2007. 'Introduction: Age, Regeneration, and the Politics of Gobalization', in J. Cole and D.L. Durham (eds), *Generations and Globalization: Youth, Age, and Family in the New World Economy*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 1–28.
Cooper, E. 2012. 'Sitting and Standing: How Families Are Fixing Trust in Uncertain Times', *Africa* 82(3): 437–56.
Cresswell, T. 1996. *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
———. 2006. *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World*. New York: Routledge.
———. 2012. 'Mobilities II: Still', *Progress in Human Geography* 36(5): 645–53.
Cross, H. 2013. *Migrants, Borders and Global Capitalism: West African Labour Mobility and EU Borders*. London: Routledge.
Csordas, T.J. 1993. 'Somatic Modes of Attention', *Cultural Anthropology* 8(2): 135–56.

Curtin, P.D. 1975. *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
Dampha, Y. 2007. 'Groundnut Trade Plummets', *Foroyaa*, 25 May.
Dantioko, O.M. 2003. *Dictionnaire Soninke–Français*. Bamako: Jamana.
Darboe, M. 2007. 'The Gambia: Islam and Politics', in W.F.S. Miles (ed.), *Political Islam in West Africa: State–Society Relations Transformed*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, pp. 140–58.
Daum, C. 1998. *Les Associations de Maliens en France: Migrations, Développement et Citoyenneté*. Paris: Karthala.
Davidheiser, M. 2006. 'Joking for Peace: Social Organization, Tradition, and Change in Gambian Conflict Management', *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 184(4): 835–59.
Davidson, J. 2009. '"We Work Hard": Customary Imperatives of the Diola Work Regime in the Context of Environmental and Economic Change', *African Studies Review* 52(2): 119–41.
Davis, D., D. Hulme and P. Woodhouse. 1994. 'Decentralization by Default: Local Governance and the View from the Village in the Gambia', *Public Administration and Development* 14(3): 253–69.
de Bruijn, M., H. van Dijk and R. van Dijk. 2001. 'Cultures of Travel: Fulbe Pastoralists in Central Mali and Pentecostalism in Ghana', in M. de Bruijn, R. van Dijk and D. Foeken (eds), *Mobile Africa: Changing Patterns of Movement in Africa and Beyond*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 63–88.
de Bruijn, M., R. van Dijk and D. Foeken (eds). 2001. *Mobile Africa: Changing Patterns of Movement in Africa and Beyond*. Leiden: Brill.
de Certeau, M. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Dea, D. 2008. 'Changing Youth Religiosity in Ethiopia: A Generational Perspective', in E. Alber, S. van der Geest and S. Reynolds-Whyte (eds), *Generations in Africa. Connections and Conflicts*. Munich: Lit Verlag, pp. 237–66.
de Haan, A. 1999. 'Livelihoods and Poverty: The Role of Migration – A Critical Review of the Migration Literature', *The Journal of Development Studies* 36(2): 1–47.
de Haas, H. 2008a. *Irregular Migration from West Africa to the Maghreb and the European Union: An Overview of Recent Trends*. Geneva: International Organization for Migration.
———. 2008b. 'The Myth of Invasion: The Inconvenient Realities of African Migration to Europe', *Third World Quarterly* 29(7): 1305–22.
degli Uberti, S. 2011. 'Turismo e Immaginari Migratori: Esperienze dell'Altrove nel Senegal Urbano', *Archivio Antropologico Mediterraneo* 13(1): 67–83.
Della Porta, D. and M. Diani. 1999. *Social Movements: An Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell.
De Waal, A. and N. Argenti (eds). 2002. *Young Africa: Realising the Rights of Children and Youth*. Trenton: Africa World Press.
Diagana, O.M. 2011. *Dictionnaire Soninké–Français: Mauritanie*. Paris: Karthala.
Diawara, M. 2003. 'Ce Que Veut Dire Traviller Dans le Monde Mandé', in H. d'Almeida-Topor, M. Lakroum and G. Spittler (eds), *Le Travail en Afrique Noire: Représentations et Pratiques à l'Epoque Contemporaine*. Paris: Karthala, pp. 67–80.
Dibba, A. 2009. '"Not Back to the Land, but Investment on the Land!" Say Farmers', *Foroyaa*, 24 November. Available from <http://www.foroyaa.gm/modules/news/print.php?storyid=3988> (retrieved 12 September 2013).
Dilley, R.M. 2004. *Islamic and Caste Knowledge Practices among the Haalpulaar'en in Senegal: Between Mosque and Termite Mound*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Diouf, M. 2002. 'Les Jeunes Dakarois Dans le Champ Politique', in D.B. Cruise O'Brien, M.C. Diop and M. Diouf (eds), *La Construction de l'État au Sénégal*. Paris: Karthala, pp. 157–68.

Doumbia, T. 2001. *Groupes d'Âge et Éducation Chez Les Malinké Du Sud Du Mali*. Paris: L'Harmattan.

Durham, D.L. 2000. 'Youth and the Social Imagination in Africa', *Anthropological Quarterly* 73(3): 113–20.

———. 2007. 'Empowering Youth: Making Citizens in Botswana', in J. Cole and D.L. Durham (eds), *Generations and Globalization: Youth, Age, and Family in the New World Economy*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 102–31.

Ebron, P.A. 2002. *Performing Africa*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Eisenstadt, S.N. 1956. *From Generation to Generation: Age Groups and Social Structure*. Glencoe: Free Press.

Elliot, A. 2012. 'Reckoning with the Outside: Emigration and the Imagination of Life in Central Morocco', Ph.D. dissertation. London: University College London.

Ellis, F. 2003. *A Livelihoods Approach to Migration and Poverty Reduction*. Norwich: Department for International Development. Available at Research Gate <http://www.researchgate.net> (retrieved 4 April 2014).

Englund, H. 2006. *Prisoners of Freedom: Human Rights and the African Poor*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Fabietti, U. 1998. *L'Identità Etnica*. Roma: Carocci.

Fairhead, J., M. Leach and M. Small. 2006. 'Where Techno-Science Meets Poverty: Medical Research and the Economy of Blood in the Gambia, West Africa', *Social Science & Medicine* 63(4): 1109–20.

Farjas Bonet, A. 2002. 'El Procés Migratori Gambià Comarques Gironines: El Cas de Banyoles, Olot i Salt', Ph.D. dissertation. Girona: University of Girona.

Farmer, P. 2004. 'An Anthropology of Structural Violence', *Current Anthropology* 45(3): 305–25.

Faubion, J.D. 2011. *An Anthropology of Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ferguson, J. 1999. *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Ferrer-Gallardo, X. 2008. 'The Spanish–Moroccan Border Complex: Processes of Geopolitical, Functional and Symbolic Rebordering', *Political Geography* 27(3): 301–21.

Findley, S.E. and S. Sow. 1998. 'From Season to Season: Agriculture, Poverty and Migration in the Senegal River Valley, Mali', in R.T. Appleyard (ed.), *Emigration Dynamics in Developing Countries*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Fog Olwig, K. and N. Nyberg Sørensen. 2002. 'Mobile Livelihoods: Making a Living in the World', in N. Nyberg Sørensen and K. Fog Olwig (eds), *Work and Migration: Life and Livelihoods in a Globalizing World*. London: Routledge, pp. 1–20.

Fortier, C. 2005. 'Infléchir le Destin Car la Vraie Souffrance Est à Venir (Société Maure – Islam Sunnite)', *Systèmes de Pensée en Afrique Noire* 17: 195–217.

Foucault, M. 1984. 'Des Espaces Autres', *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité* 5: 46–49. Available from <http://foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.heteroTopia.fr.html> (retrieved 24 April 2013).

———. 1988. 'Technologies of the Self', in M. Foucault, *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, (eds) L.H. Martin, H. Gutman and P.H. Hutton. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, pp. 50–63.

———. 1990. *The History of Sexuality. Volume 2: the Use of Pleasure*. New York: Vintage Books.

Fouquet, T. 2008. 'Migrations et "Glocalisation" Dakaroises', in M.C. Diop (ed.), *Le Sénégal des Migrations: Mobilités, Identités et Sociétés*. Paris; Dakar; Nairobi: Karthala; CREPOS; ONU-habitat, pp. 241–76.

Frontex. 2009. 'Hera 2008 and Nautilus 2008 Statistics'. Warsaw: Frontex.

Gabrielli, L. 2007. 'Les Enjeux de la Sécurisation de la Question Migratoire Dans les Relations de l'Union Européenne Avec l'Afrique. Un Essai d'Analyse', *Politique Européenne* 22: 149–73.

Gaibazzi, P. 2010. 'Qui, nell'Altrove: Giovani, Migrazione e Immaginazione Geo-sociale nel Gambia Rurale', *Mondi Migranti* (3): 117–29.

———. 2012a. '"God's Time Is the Best": Gambian Youth and the Wait for Emigration in the Age of Immobility', in K. Graw and S. Schielke (eds), *The Global Horizon: Expectations of Migration in Africa and the Middle East*. Leuven: Leuven University Press, pp. 121–35.

———. 2012b. 'The Rank Effect: Post-emancipation Immobility in a Soninke Village', *Journal of African History* 53(2): 215–34.

———. 2013. 'Diaspora without Homeland: Slave Descendants and the Cultural Politics of Ancestry in the Upper Gambia River Valley', *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales* 29(1): 23–43.

———. 2014. 'Visa Problem: Certification, Kinship, and the Production of "Ineligibility" in the Gambia', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 20(1): 38–55.

Gailey, H.A. 1964. *A History of the Gambia*. London: Routledge & Keagan Paul.

Gajigo, O. and A. Saine. 2011. 'The Effects of Government Policies on Cereal Consumption Pattern Change in the Gambia', *Review of African Political Economy* 38(130): 517–36.

Galvan, D. 2004. *The State Must Be Our Master of Fire: How Peasants Craft Culturally Sustainable Development in Senegal*. Berkley: University of California Press.

Gambia Bureau of Statistics. 2006. 'Population and Housing Census 2003'. Banjul: Government of The Gambia.

———. 2013. 'The Gambia 2013 Population and Housing Census Preliminary Results'. Banjul: Government of The Gambia.

Gardner, K. 1995. *Global Migrants, Local Lives: Travel and Transformation in Rural Bangladesh*. Oxford, New York: Clarendon Press, Oxford University Press.

Gary-Tounkara, D. 2008. *Migrants Soudanais-Maliens et Conscience Ivoirienne: Les Étrangers en Côte d'Ivoire, 1903–1980*. Paris: L'Harmattan.

Geschiere, P. and F. Nyamnjoh. 2000. 'Capitalism and Autochthony: The Seesaw of Mobility and Belonging', *Public Culture* 12(2): 423–52.

Geurts, K.L. 2002. *Culture and the Senses: Bodily Ways of Knowing an African Community*. Berkley: University of California Press.

Giddens, A. 1984. *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Girier, C. 1996. *Parlons Soninké*. Paris: Harmattan.

Glick Schiller, N. and N. Salazar. 2013. 'Regimes of Mobility across the Globe', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 39(2): 183–200.

Gomez, M.A. 1992. *Pragmatism in the Age of Jihad: The Precolonial State of Bundu*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gomez-Perez, M. and M.N. LeBlanc. 2012. 'Introduction: De la Jeunesse à l'Intergénérationnel', in M. Gomez-Perez and M.N. LeBlanc (eds.). *L'Afrique des Générations: Entre Tensions et Négociations*. Paris: Karthala, pp. 11–34.

Goody, E.N. 1982. *Parenthood and Social Reproduction: Fostering and Occupational Roles in West Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Government of The Gambia. 1998. 'National Youth Policy 1999–2008'. Banjul: Government of The Gambia.

Graeber, D. 2007. *Possibilities: Essays on Hierarchy, Rebellion, and Desire*. Oakland: AK Press.

Graw, K. 2009. 'Beyond Expertise: Reflections on Specialist Agency and the Autonomy of the Divinatory Ritual Process', *Africa* 79(1): 92–109.

Graw, K. and S. Schielke (eds). 2012. *The Global Horizon: Expectations of Migration in Africa and the Middle East*. Leuven: Leuven University Press.

Gray, W. and S.S. Dochard.1825. *Travels in Western Africa, in the Years 1818, 19, 20, and 21, from the River Gambia, through Woolli, Bondoo, Galam, Kasson, Kaarta, and Foolidoo*. London: J. Murray.

Gunnarsson, B. 2011. 'The Influence of Male Migration on Female Resources, Independence, and Development in Gambian Villages', *Gender & Development* 19(1): 115–28.

Guyer, J.I. 2004. *Marginal Gains: Monetary Transactions in Atlantic Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Guyer, J.I. and P.E. Peters. 1987. 'Conceptualizing the Household: Issues of Theory and Policy in Africa', *Development and Change* 18(2): 197–214.

Hage, G. 2005. 'A Not so Multi-sited Ethnography of a Not so Imagined Community', *Anthropological Theory* 5(4): 463–75.

Hamdy, S.F. 2009. 'Islam, Fatalism, and Medical Intervention: Lessons from Egypt on the Cultivation of Forbearance (Sabr) and Reliance on God (Tawakkul)', *Anthropological Quarterly* 82(1): 173–96.

Hamès, C. (ed.). 2007. *Coran et Talismans: Textes et Pratiques Magiques en Milieu Musulman*. Paris: Karthala.

Hammar, T. and K. Tamas. 1997. 'Why Do People Go or Stay?', in T. Hammar, G. Brochman, K. Tamas and T. Faist (eds), *Interntional Migration, Immobility, and Development: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*. Oxford: Berg, pp. 1–19.

Hampshire, K. 2006. 'Flexibility in Domestic Organization and Seasonal Migration among the Fulani of Northern Burkina Faso', *Africa* 76(3): 402–26.

Hannerz, U. 1996. *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places*. London: Routledge.

Harris, O. 1984. 'Households as Natural Units', in K. Young, C. Wolkowitz and R. McCullagh (eds), *Of Marriage and the Market: Women's Subordination Internationally and Its Lessons*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, pp. 136–55.

Harvey, D. 1996. *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference*. Cambridge: Blackwell.

Hashim, I. and D. Thorsen. 2011. *Child Migration in Africa*. London; Uppsala: Zed Books; Nordic Africa Institute.

Heidegger, M. 1993. 'Building Dwelling Thinking', in D.F. Krell (ed.), *Basic Writings: From Being and Time (1927) to the Task of Thinking (1964)*. San Francisco: Harper, pp. 343–64.

Honwana, A. 2012. *The Time of Youth: Work, Social Change, and Politics in Africa*. Boulder: Kumarian Press.

Honwana, A. and F. De Boeck (eds). 2005. *Makers & Breakers: Children & Youth in Postcolonial Africa*. Oxford; Dakar: James Currey; CODESRIA.

Horst, C. 2006. 'Buufis Amongst Somalis in Dadaab: The Transnational and Historical Logics Behind Resettlement Dreams', *Journal of Refugee Studies* 19(2): 143–57.
Howard, A.M. and R.M. Shain. 2005. 'Introduction: African History and Social Space in Africa', in A.M. Howard and R.M. Shain (eds), *The Spatial Factor in African History: The Relationship of the Social, Material, and Perceptual*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 1–20.
Hughes, A. and D. Perfect. 2006. *A Political History of the Gambia, 1816–1994*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press.
Igue, O.J. and B.G. Soule. 1992. *L' État Entrepôt au Bénin: Commerce Informel ou Solution à la Crise?*. Paris: Karthala.
Iliffe, J. 2005. *Honour in African History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
International Monetary Fund. 2009. 'The Gambia: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper – Annual Progress Report'. Washington.
Ingold, T. 2000. *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling & Skill*. London: Routledge.
Jackson, M. 1983. 'Knowledge of the Body', *Man* 18(2): 327–45.
———. 1989. *Paths toward a Clearing: Radical Empiricism and Ethnographic Inquiry*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
Jaffe, R. 2012. 'Talkin' 'Bout the Ghetto: Popular Culture and Urban Imaginaries of Immobility', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 36(4): 674–88.
Jalloh, A. and D.E. Skinner (eds). 1997. *Islam and Trade in Sierra Leone*. Trenton: Africa World Press.
Jallow, M.K. 2012. 'The "Diaspora Summit" Was More Bluster Than Substance', *Jollofnews Online*, 7 January. Available at <http://www.jollofnews.com/commentary-opinion/3012-20120107gambia-the-diaspora-summit-that-was-more-bluster-than-substance> (retrieved 10 February 2012).
Jallow, M.L. 2006. '"Nerves" an Apotheosis of a Whole Generation', *Gainako News*, 21 December. Available at <http://www.gainako.com/fejango/Issue~037-2006> (retrieved 20 May 2007).
Janko, S.S. 2012. '"Operation No Back Way to Europe" Keeps Young Farmers at Home in Gambia', *Inter Press Service*, 24 August. Available at <http://www.ipsnews.net/2012/08/operation-no-back-way-to-europe-keeps-young-farmers-at-home-in-gambia> (retrieved 11 April 2014).
Jansen, J. 1996. 'The Younger Brother and the Stranger: In Search of a Status Discourse for Mande', *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 36(144): 659–88.
Janson, M. 2002. *The Best Hand Is the Hand That Always Gives: Griottes and Their Profession in Eastern Gambia*. Leiden: Research School CNWS.
———. 2005. 'Roaming About for God's Sake: The Upsurge of the Tabligh Jama'at in the Gambia', *Journal of Religion in Africa* 35(4): 450–81.
———. 2011. 'Living Islam through Death: Demarcating Muslim Identity in a Rural Serahuli Community in the Gambia', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 17(1): 100–15.
———. 2012. '"We Don't Despair, since We Know That Islam Is the Truth": New Expressions of Religiosity in Yong Adherents of the Tabligh Jama'at in the Gambia', in M. Gomez-Perez and M.N. LeBlanc (eds), *L'Afrique des Générations: Entre Tensions et Négociations*. Paris: Karthala, pp. 579–615.
———. 2013. *Islam, Youth and Modernity in the Gambia: The Tablighi Jama'at*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Jeffrey, C. 2010. *Timepass: Youth, Class, and the Politics of Waiting in India*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Jónsson, G. 2007. 'The Mirage of Migration: Migration Aspirations and Immobility in a Malian Soninke Village', MA dissertation. Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen.

———. 2012. 'Migration, Identity and Immobility in a Malian Soninke Village', in K. Graw and S. Schielke (eds), *The Global Horizon: Expectations of Migration in Africa and the Middle East*. Leuven: Leuven University Press, pp. 105–20.

Junquera, N. 2007. 'España Invierte Un Millón de Euros en Gambia Para Formar Mano de Obra', *El Pais*, 9 August. Available at El País Archivo <http://elpais.com/archivo/> (retrieved 19 July 2009).

Kabbanji, L. 2013. 'Towards a Global Agenda on Migration and Development? Evidence from Senegal', *Population, Space and Place* 19(4): 415–29.

Kabeer, N. 2000. 'Inter-Generational Contracts, Demographic Transitions and the "Quantity–Quality" Tradeoff: Parents, Children and Investing in the Future', *Journal of International Development* 12(4): 463–82.

Kandel, W. and D.S. Massey. 2002. 'The Culture of Mexican Migration: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis', *Social Forces* 80(3): 981–1004.

Kane, F. and A. Lericollais. 1975. 'L'Émigration en Pays Soninké', *Cahiers ORSTOM* 12(2): 177–87.

Kaplan, A. 1998. *De Senegambia a Cataluña. Procesos De Aculturación E Integración Social*. Barcelona: Fundació la Caixa.

Karlstrom, M. 1999. 'Civil Society and Its Presuppositions: Lessons from Uganda', in J.L. Comaroff and J. Comaroff (eds), *Civil Society and the Political Imagination in Africa: Critical Perspectives*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 104–23.

Kaufmann, V. 2002. *Re-Thinking Mobility: Contemporary Sociology*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Kea, P. 2007. 'Girl Farm Labour and Double-Shift Schooling in the Gambia: The Paradox of Development Intervention', *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 41(2): 258–88.

———. 2010. *Land, Labour and Entrustment: West African Female Farmers and the Politics of Difference*. Leiden: Brill.

———. 2013. '"The Complexity of an Enduring Relationship": Gender, Generation, and the Moral Economy of the Gambian Mandinka Household', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 19(1): 102–19.

Klute, G. and H.P. Hahn. 2008. 'Cultures of Migration: Introduction', in H.P. Hahn and G. Klute (eds), *Cultures of Migration: African Perspectives*. Münster: Lit Verlag, pp. 9–27.

Konate, M. 1997. '*Tunga*: A Study of Malian Soninke Labor Migration to France', Ph.D. dissertation. Los Angeles: University of California.

Lahire, N., R. Johanson and R.T. Wilcox. 2011. *Youth Employment and Skills Development in the Gambia*. Washington: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development; World Bank.

Lambek, M. 2008. 'Value and Virtue', *Anthropological Theory* 8(2): 133–57.

Lambert, A. 1994. 'Les Commerçants et l'Intégration Régionale', in M.C. Diop (ed.), *Le Sénégal et Ses Voisins*. Dakar-Etoile: Sociétés-Espaces-Temps, pp. 81–94.

Lambert, M.C. 2002. *Longing for Exile: Migration and the Making of a Translocal Community in Senegal, West Africa*. Portmouth: Heinemann.

Last, M. 2000. 'Children and the Experience of Violence: Contrasting Cultures of Punishment in Northern Nigeria', *Africa* 70(3): 359–93.

———. 2005. 'Towards a Political History of Youth in Muslim Northern Nigeria, 1750–2000', in J. Abbink and I. van Kessel (eds), *Vanguard or Vandals: Youth, Politics, and Conflict in Africa*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 37–54.

Lefebvre, H. 1991. *The Production of Space*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Lemarie, M. 2005. 'Le Travail de la Souffrance: Parcours Biographique du Cultivateur Sénoufo (Côte d'Ivoire)', *Systèmes de Pensée en Afrique Noire* 17: 71–90.
Lentz, C. 2013. *Land, Mobility, and Belonging in West Africa: Natives and Strangers*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
Levitt, P. 2001. *The Transnational Villagers*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Levitt, P. and N.G. Schiller. 2004. 'Conceptualizing Simultaneity: A Transnational Social Field Perspective on Society', *International Migration Review* 38(3): 1002–39.
Lindquist, J.A. 2009. *The Anxieties of Mobility: Migration and Tourism in the Indonesian Borderlands*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
Loimeier, R. 2003. 'Patterns and Peculiarities of Islamic Reform in Africa', *Journal of Religion in Africa* 33(3): 237–62.
Machado, A. 2004 [1912]. 'Proverbios y Cantares', in W. Barnstone (ed.), *Border of a Dream: Selected Poems of Antonio Machado*. Port Townsend: Copper Canyon Press, pp. 274–78.
Mahmood, S. 2005. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Mains, D. 2007. 'Neoliberal Times: Progress, Boredom, and Shame among Young Men in Urban Ethiopia', *American Ethnologist* 34(4): 659–73.
———. 2011. *Hope Is Cut: Youth, Unemployment, and the Future in Urban Ethiopia*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
Malkki, L.H. 1992. 'National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees', *Cultural Anthropology* 7(1): 24–44.
Mamdani, M. 1996. *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Manchuelle, F. 1989. 'The "Patriarchal Ideal" of Soninke Labor Migrants – from Slave Owners to Employers of Free Labor', *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 23(1): 106–25.
———. 1997. *Willing Migrants: Soninke Labor Diasporas, 1848–1960*. Athens; London: Ohio University Press; James Currey.
Martínez Bermejo, E. and J. Rivero Rodríguez. 2008. *Migraciones y Cooperación: El Plan Reva y La Ayuda Española*. Madrid: Grupo de Estudios Africanos.
Marx, K. 2000. *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. Moscow: Progress Publishers. Available at Marxists Internet Archive <https://www.marxists.org> (retrieved 17 August 2012).
Masquelier, A. 2013. 'Teatime: Boredom and the Temporalities of Young Men in Niger', *Africa* 83(3): 470–91.
Maurer, B. 2006. 'The Anthropology of Money', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 35(1): 15–36.
Mavhunga, C.C. 2014. *Transient Workspaces: Technologies of Everyday Innovation in Zimbabwe*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
Mbodji, M. 1992. 'D'Une Frontière à l'Autre, ou l'Histoire de la Marginalisation des Commerçants Senegambiens Sur la Longue Durée: La Gambie de 1816 à 1979', in P. Kipré, L. Harding and B. Barry (eds), *Commerce et Commerçants en Afrique de l'Ouest*. Paris: L'Harmattan, pp. 191–241.
McMorran, C. 2015. 'Mobilities amid the Production of Fixities: Labor in a Japanese Inn', *Mobilities* 10(1): 83–99.
McNamara, P.E. and P.M. Shipton. 1995. 'Rural Credit and Savings', in M.F. McPherson and S.C. Radelet (eds), *Economic Recovery in the Gambia: Insights for Adjustment in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, pp. 95–110.

Meagher, K. 2003. 'A Back Door to Globalisation? Structural Adjustment, Globalisation and Transborder Trade in West Africa', *Review of African Political Economy* 30(95): 57–75.

———. 2005. 'Social Capital or Analytical Liability? Social Networks and African Informal Economies', *Global Networks* 5(3): 217–38.

Meillassoux, C. (ed.). 1971. *The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa: Studies Presented and Discussed at the Tenth International African Seminar at Fourah Bay College, Freetown, December 1969*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

———. 1981. *Maidens, Meal, and Money: Capitalism and the Domestic Community*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Melly, C. 2010. 'Inside-out Houses: Urban Belonging and Imagined Futures in Dakar, Senegal', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 52(1): 37–65.

Mercer, C., B. Page and M. Evans. 2008. *Development and the African Diaspora: Place and the Politics of Home*. London: Zed Books.

Miescher, S. and L.A. Lindsay. 2003. 'Introduction', in S. Miescher and L.A. Lindsay (eds), *Men and Masculinities in Modern Africa*. Portsmouth: Heinemann, pp. 1–29.

Ministère de la Jeunesse et l'Emplois des Jeunes, Senegal. 2007. 'Emigration Clandestine: Le Contrat Avec l'Espagne'. Dakar: Government of Senegal.

Mondain, N., S. Randall and A. Diagne. 2012. 'Les Effets de l'Émigration Masculine Sur les Femmes et leur Autonomie: Entre Maintien et Transformation des Rapports Sociaux de Sexe Traditionnels au Sénégal', *Autrepart* 61(2): 81–97.

Moore, H.L. 1994. *A Passion for Difference: Essays in Anthropology and Gender*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Munn, N.D. 1986. *The Fame of Gawa: A Symbolic Study of Value Transformation in a Massim (Papua New Guinea) Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Murray, C. 1981. *Families Divided: The Impact of Migrant Labour in Lesotho*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Newell, S. 2012. *The Modernity Bluff: Crime, Consumption, and Citizenship in Côte D'Ivoire*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

N'jie, M.M. 1995. 'The Politics of Urban Governance and Its Implications on Urban Poverty and Social Structure, the Greater Banjul Municipal Area Example', in A.G. Onibokun and A. Faniran (eds), *Governance and Urban Poverty in Anglophone West Africa*. Ibadan: Centre for African Settlement Studies and Development, pp. 199–209.

Nyanzi, S. 2011. 'Ghettoisation, Migration or Sexual Connection? Negotiating Survival among Gambian Male Youths', in S. Chant (ed.), *The International Handbook of Gender and Poverty: Concepts, Research, Policy*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, pp. 207–14.

Nyíri, P. 2010. *Mobility and Cultural Authority in Contemporary China*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Online Etymology Dictionary. 2014. Available at <http//etymonline.com> (retrieved 13 June 2014).

Osella, F. and C. Osella. 2000. 'Migration, Money and Masculinity in Kerala', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 6(1): 117–33.

Oxford English Dictionary Online. 2014. Available from Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin Services <http://staatsbibliothek-berlin.de> (retrieved 13 June 2014).

Pandian, A. 2009. *Crooked Stalks: Cultivating Virtue in South India*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Pandolfo, S. 2007. '"The Burning": Finitude and the Politico-Theological Imagination of Illegal Migration', *Anthropological Theory* 7(3): 329–63.

Park, M. 1816. *Travels in the Interior of Africa: Performed in the Years 1795, 1796 and 1797, with an Account of a Subsequent Mission to That Country in 1805*. London: J. Murray.
Parry, J.P. and M. Bloch (eds). 1989. *Money and the Morality of Exchange*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Pelckmans, L. 2011. *Travelling Hiearchies: Roads in and out of Slave Status in a Central Malian Fulbe Network*. Leiden: African Studies Centre.
Perry, D. 2004. 'Muslim Child Disciples, Global Civil Society, and Children's Rights in Senegal: The Discourses of Strategic Structuralism', *Anthropological Quarterly* 77(1): 47–86.
———. 2009. 'Fathers, Sons, and the State: Discipline and Punishment in a Wolof Hinterland', *Cultural Anthropology* 24(1): 33–67.
Pian, A. 2005. 'Aventuriers et Commerçants Sénégalais à Casablanca: Des Parcours Entrecroisés', *Autrepart* 36: 167–82.
Piot, C. 1999. *Remotely Global: Village Modernity in West Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
———. 2010. *Nostalgia for the Future: West Africa after the Cold War*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Polak, B. 2007. 'The Taste of a New Generation. Exploring the Relation between Work and Consumption in a Malian Village', *First ECAS Conference, Panel 28: Generations of West African Migrants, Leiden, 11–14 July 2007*. Leiden: African Studies Centre.
———. 2012. 'Peasants in the Making: Bamana Children at Work', in G. Spittler and M.F. Bourdillon (eds), *African Children at Work: Working and Learning in Growing up for Life*. Munich: Lit Verlag, pp. 87–122.
Pollet, E. and G. Winter. 1971. *La Société Soninké (Dyahunu, Mali)*. Bruxelles: Éditions de l'Institut de Sociologie.
Porcelli, P. 2011. 'Fosterage et Résilience: Discours Collectifs et Trajectoires Individuelles de Mobilité des Enfants en Milieu Bambara', *Journal des Africanistes* 81(1): 119–44.
Potts, D. 2010. *Circular Migration in Zimbabwe & Contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa*. Woodbridge: James Currey.
Quiminal, C. 1991. *Gens d'Içi, Gens d'Ailleurs. Migrations Soninké et Trasformations Villageois*. Paris: C. Bourgois Editeur.
Quinn, C.A. 1972. *Mandingo Kingdoms of the Senegambia: Traditionalism, Islam, and European Expansion*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
Rain, D. 1999. *Eaters of the Dry Season: Circular Labor Migration in the West African Sahel*. Boulder: Westview Press.
Randall, S. and A. Giuffrida. 2006. 'Forced Migration, Sedentarisation and Social Change: Malian Kel Tamasheq', in D. Chatty (ed.), *Nomadic Societies in the Middle East and North Africa: Entering the 21st Century*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 431–62.
Razy, E. 2007a. 'Les Sens Contraires de la Migration: La Circulation des Jeunes Filles d'Origine Soninké Entre la France et le Mali', *Journal des Africanistes* 77(2): 19–43.
———. 2007b. *Naître et Devenir: Anthropologie de la Petite Enfance en Pays Soninké (Mali)*. Nanterre: Société d'Ethnologie.
Reeves, M. 2011. 'Staying Put? Towards a Relational Politics of Mobility at a Time of Migration', *Central Asian Survey* 30(3–4): 555–76.
Reggi, M. 2011. '"Welcome to Marqaan Station". Falliti Tentativi d'Emigrazione e Disagio Mentale nella Somalia Contemporanea', in A. Bellagamba (ed.), *Migrazioni dal Lato dell'Africa*. Pavia: Edizioni Altravista, pp. 31–58.
Rialland, M. 1998. 'Hypothèse Sur les Origines d'un Mouvement Fondamentaliste en Pays Soninke', *Islam et Societé au Sud du Sahara* 12: 75–85.

Riccio, B. 2005. 'Talkin' About Migration – Some Ethnographic Notes on the Ambivalent Representation of Migrants in Contemporary Senegal', *Stichproben – Vienna Journal of African Studies* 8(5): 99–118.

———. 2007. *Toubab e Vu Cumpra: Transnazionalità e Rappresentazioni nelle Migrazioni Senegalesi in Italia*. Padova: CLEUP.

Rice, B. 1968. *Enter Gambia: The Birth of an Improbable Nation*. London: Angus and Robertson.

Richards, A.I. 1939. *Land, Labour and Diet in Northern Rhodesia: An Economic Study of the Bemba Tribe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rockefeller, S.A. 2011. '"Flow"', *Current Anthropology* 52(4): 557–78.

Rodet, M. 2009. *Les Migrantes Ignorées du Haut-Sénégal: 1900–1946*. Paris: Karthala.

Rogaly, B. 2003. 'Who Goes? Who Stays Back? Seasonal Migration and Staying Put among Rural Manual Workers in Eastern India', *Journal of International Development* 15(5): 623–32.

Sahlins, M. 2011. 'What Kinship Is (Part One)', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 17(1): 2–19.

Saho, L. 1979. 'Tesito: A Grassroots Doctrine for National Development in the Gambia', *Advance Workshop on Communication for Social Development, Banjul, 26 February 1979*. Banjul: Public Records Office of The Gambia.

Saine, A.S. 2009. *The Paradox of Third World Democratization in Africa: The Gambia under Afprc–Aprc Rule, 1994–2008*. Lanham: Lexington Books.

Salazar, N.B. 2010. 'Towards an Anthropology of Cultural Mobilities', *Crossings: Journal of Migration and Culture* 1(1): 53–68.

Salazar, N.B. and A. Smart. 2011. 'Anthropological Takes on (Im)Mobility', *Identities* 18(6): i–ix.

Sall, E. 2004. 'Social Movements in the Renegotiation of the Bases for Citizenship in West Africa', *Current Sociology* 52(4): 595–614.

Sall, E. and H. Sallah. 1994. 'Senegal and the Gambia: The Politics of Integration', in M.C. Diop (ed.), *Le Sénégal et Ses Voisins*. Dakar: Sociétés-Espaces-Temps, pp. 117–41.

Sallah, T.M. 1990. 'Economics and Politics in the Gambia', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 28(4): 621–48.

Sanneh, L.O. 1979. *The Jakhanke: The History of an Islamic Clerical People of the Senegambia*. London: International African Institute.

Sassen, S. (ed.). 1991. *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Sayad, A. 1999. *La Double Absence: Des Illusions de l'Émigré aux Souffrances de l'Immigré*. Paris: Seuil.

Schapendonk, J. 2013. 'Sub-Saharan Migrants Heading North: A Mobility Perspective', in A. Triulzi and R. McKenzie (eds), *Long Journeys. African Migrants on the Road*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 9–23.

Scheper-Hughes, N. 2008. 'A Talent for Life: Reflections on Human Vulnerability and Resilience', *Ethnos* 73(1): 25–56.

Scheper Hughes, N. and M. Lock. 1987. 'The Mindful Body: A Prolegomenon to Future Work in Medical Anthropology', *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 1(1): 6–41.

Schielke, S. 2008. 'Boredom and Despair in Rural Egypt', *Contemporary Islam* 2(3): 251–70.

———. 2009. 'Being Good in Ramadan: Ambivalence, Fragmentation, and the Moral Self in the Lives of Young Egyptians', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15(S1): S24–S40.

Schmitz, J. 2008. 'Migrants Ouest-Africains Vers l'Europe: Historicité et Espaces Moraux', *Politique Africaine* 109: 6–15.
Schroeder, R.A. 1999. *Shady Practices: Agroforestry and Gender Politics in the Gambia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Scoones, I. 1998. 'Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: A Framework for Analysis', *IDS Working Paper* 72: 1–22.
Secretaría General de Inmigración y Emigración, Spain. 2007. 'Anuario Estadìstico de Immigración 2006. Madrid: Government of Spain.
Seibert, K. and B.K. Sidibe. 1992. *Problems and Potentials of 10 Villages of the URDIP Project Area: Needs Assessment of Villagers*. Banjul: National Council for Arts and Council.
Sen, A. 1990. 'Gender and Cooperative Conflicts', in I. Tinker (ed.), *Persistent Inequalities: Women and World Development*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 123–49.
Sheller, M. and J. Urry. 2006. 'The New Mobilities Paradigm', *Environment and Planning A* 38(2): 207–26.
Shipton, P.M. 1995. 'How Gambians Save: Culture and Economic Strategy at an Ethnic Crossroads', in J.I. Guyer (ed.), *Money Matters: Instability, Values, and Social Payments in the Modern History of West African Communities*. Portsmouth; London: Heinemann; James Currey, pp. 245–76.
———. 2009. *Mortgaging the Ancestors: Ideologies of Attachment in Africa*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
Skramstad, H. 2008. 'Making and Managing Femaleness, Fertility and Motherhood within an Urban Gambian Area', Ph.D. dissertation. Bergen: University of Bergen.
Snyder, F.G. 1978. 'Legal Innovation and Social Change in a Peasant Community: A Senegalese Village Police', *Africa* 48(3): 231–47.
Soares, B.F. 2004. 'Islam and Public Piety in Mali', in A. Salvatore and D.F. Eickelman (eds), *Public Islam and the Common Good*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 205–26.
———. 2005. *Islam and the Prayer Economy: History and Authority in a Malian Town*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
Sommerfelt, T. 1999. 'Shares and Sharing. Dynamics of Exchange, Identity and Rank in a Gambian Town', MA dissertation. Oslo: University of Oslo.
Sommerfelt, T. 2013. 'From Cutting to Fading: A Relational Perspective on Marriage Exchange and Sociality in Rural Gambia', *Social Analysis* 57(3): 58–75.
Stark, O. and D.E. Bloom. 1985. 'The New Economics of Labor Migration', *American Economic Review* 7(2): 173–77.
Stark, O. and R.E. Lucas. 1988. 'Migration, Remittances, and the Family', *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 36(3): 465–81.
State House of The Gambia. 2003. 'President's Seasonal Harvest: Report on an Interview with President Yahya Jammeh'. Available at <http://www.statehouse.gm/kanilaifarm-interview/interview-president.htm> (retrieved 20 July 2009).
Steiner, C.B. 1994. *African Art in Transit*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Stoller, P. 2002. *Money Has No Smell: The Africanization of New York City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Streiff-Fenart, J. and A.W. Kabwe-Segatti (eds). 2012. *The Challenge of the Threshold: Border Closures and Migration Movements in Africa*. Lanham: Lexington Books.
Sumberg, J., et al. 2012. 'Introduction: The Young People and Agriculture "Problem" in Africa', *IDS Bulletin* 43(6): 1–8.
Swindell, K. 1982. 'From Migrant Farmer to Permanent Settler: The Strange Farmers of the Gambia', in J.I. Clarke and L.A. Kosinski (eds), *Redistribution of Population in Africa*. London: Heinemann, pp. 96–101.

Swindell, K. and A. Jeng. 2006. *Migrants, Credit and Climate: The Gambian Groundnut Trade, 1834–1934*. Leiden: Brill.

Tall, S.M. 2008. 'La Migration Internationale Sénégalaise: Des Recrutements de Main-d'Oeuvre aux Pirogues', in M.C. Diop (ed.), *Le Sénégal des Migrations: Mobilités, Identités et Sociétés*. Paris, Dakar, Nairobi: Karthala, CREPOS, ONU-habitat, pp. 37–68.

———. 2009. *Investir Dans la Ville Africaine – Les Émigrés et l'Habitat à Dakar*. Dakar; Paris: CREPOS; Karthala.

Timera, M. 1996. *Les Soninké en France*. Paris: Karthala.

———. 2001a. 'Les Migrations des Jeunes Saheliens: Affirmation de Soi et Emancipation', *Autrepart* 18: 37–49.

———. 2001b. 'Traiettorie del Fondamentalismo tra le Comunità Soninké Musulmane Immigrate in Francia', in A. Piga (ed.), *Islam e Città nell'Africa a Sud del Sahara: Tra Sufismo e Fondamentalismo*. Napoli: Liguori.

Toyota, M., B. Yeoh and L. Nguyen. 2007. 'Editorial Introduction: Bringing the "Left-Behind" Back into View in Asia: A Framework for Understanding the "Migration-Left Behind Nexus"', *Population, Space and Place* 13(3): 157–61.

Treffgarne, C.B.W. 1978. 'Language Uses and Language Policies in Senegambia: Local Responses to the Anglophone/Francophone Division of a Multilingual Region', Ph.D. dissertation. London: University of London.

Truitt, A. 2007. 'Hot Loans and Cold Cash in Saigon', in S.J. Senders and A. Truitt (eds), *Money: Ethnographic Encounters*. Oxford: Berg, pp. 57–67.

Turner, T. 1995. 'Social Body and Embodied Subject: Bodiliness, Subjectivity, and Sociality among the Kayapo', *Cultural Anthropology* 10(2): 143–70.

United Nations Development Programme. 2013. 'The Human Development Report'. New York: UNDP.

Urry, J. 2000. *Sociology Beyond Societies: Mobilities for the Twenty-First Century*. London: Routledge.

———. 2003. *Global Complexity*. Cambridge: Polity.

———. 2007. *Mobilities*. Cambridge: Polity.

van Braun, J. and P. Webb. 1989. 'The Impact of New Crop Technology on the Agricultural Division of Labor in a West African Setting', *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 37(3): 513–34.

van der Geest, S. 1997. 'Money and Respect: The Changing Value of Old Age in Rural Ghana', *Africa* 67(4): 534–559.

van Dokkum, A. 1992. *You Cannot Fight a Wild Beast Alone: Land, Labour and Relations in the Strange Farmer System of the Gambia*. Leiden: State University of Leiden.

van Vleet, K.E. 2008. *Performing Kinship: Narrative, Gender, and the Intimacies of Power in the Andes*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Vertovec, S. 2004. 'Migrant Transnationalism and Modes of Transformation', *The International Migration Review* 38(3): 970–1001.

Vigh, H. 2006. *Navigating Terrains of War: Youth and Soldiering in Guinea-Bissau*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

———. 2009a. 'Motion Squared: A Second Look at the Concept of Social Navigation', *Anthropological Theory* 9(4): 419–38.

———. 2009b. 'Wayward Migration: On Imagined Futures and Technological Voids', *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology* 74(1): 91–109.

Viti, F. 2007. *Schiavi, Servi e Dipendenti: Antropologia delle Forme di Dipendenza Personale in Africa*. Milano: R. Cortina.

Wagner, U. and B. Yamba. 1986. 'Going North and Getting Attached: The Case of the Gambians', *Ethnos* 51(3–4): 199–222.
Walters, W. 2006. 'Border/Control', *European Journal of Social Theory* 9(2): 187–203.
Webb, J. 1992. 'Ecological and Economic Change Along the Middle Reaches of the Gambia River, 1945–1985', *African Affairs* 91(365): 543–65.
Webb, P. 1991. 'When Projects Collapse: Irrigation Failure in the Gambia from a Household Perspective', *Journal of International Development* 3(4): 339–53.
Weber, M. 2005. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. London: Routledge.
Weigel, J.Y. 1982. *Migration et Production Domestique des Soninké du Sénégal*. Paris: ORSTOM.
Weil, P.M. 1972. 'Mande Age Grade Systems: Social Persistence and Cultural Flexibility', *Conference on Manding Studies, London*. London: School of Oriental and African Studies.
———. 1984. 'Slavery, Groundnuts and the European Capitalism in the Wuli Kingdom of Senegambia 1820–1930', *Research in Economic Anthropology* 6: 77–119.
Weiner, A. 1992. *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving*. Berkley: University of California Press.
Weiss, B. 2004a. 'Introduction: Contentious Futures: Past and Present', in B. Weiss (ed.), *Producing African Futures: Ritual and Reproduction in a Neoliberal Age*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 1–20.
———. 2004b. 'Street Dreams: Inhabiting Masculine Fantasy in Neoliberal Tanzania', in B. Weiss (ed.), *Producing African Futures: Ritual and Reproduction in a Neoliberal Age*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 193–228.
———. 2005. 'The Barber in Pain. Consciousness, Affliction and Alterity in Urban East Africa', in A. Honwana and F. De Boeck (eds), *Makers & Breakers: Children & Youth in Postcolonial Africa*. Oxford; Dakar: James Currey; CODESRIA, pp. 102–21.
———. 2009. *Street Dreams and Hip Hop Barbershops: Global Fantasy in Urban Tanzania*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
White, B. 2012. 'Agriculture and the Generation Problem: Rural Youth, Employment and the Future of Farming', *IDS Bulletin* 43(6): 9–19.
Whitehead, A. 2002. 'Tracking Livelihood Change: Theoretical, Methodological and Empirical Perspectives from North-East Ghana', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 28(3): 575–98.
Whitehouse, B. 2003. 'Staying Soninké: Migration, Multilocality and Identity in a Community of the West African Sahel', MA dissertation. Providence: Brown University.
———. 2009. 'Transnational Childrearing and the Preservation of Transnational Identity in Brazzaville, Congo', *Global Networks* 9(1): 82–99.
———. 2012a. 'Centripetal Forces: Reconciling Cosmopolitan Lives and Local Loyalty in a Malian Transnational Social Field', in M.O. Okome and O. Vaughan (eds), *West African Migrations: Transnational and Global Pathways in a New Century*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 144–65.
———. 2012b. *Migrants and Strangers in an African City*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
———. 2013. 'Overcoming the Economicist Fallacy: Social Determinants of Voluntary Migration from the Sahel to the Congo Basin', in A. Kane and T.H. Leedy (eds), *African Migrations: Patterns and Perspectives*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 19–34.

Willems, R. 2008. 'Les "Fous de la Mer". Les Migrants Clandestins du Sénégal aux Îles Canaires en 2006', in M.C. Diop (ed.), *Le Sénégal des Migrations: Mobilités, Identités et Sociétés*. Paris; Dakar; Nairobi: Karthala; CREPOS; ONU-habitat, pp. 277–304.

———. 2014. 'Local Realities and Global Possibilities: Deconstructing the Imaginations of Aspiring Migrants in Senegal', *Identities* 21(3): 320–35.

Wiseman, J.A. 1996. 'Military Rule in the Gambia: An Interim Assessment', *Third World Quarterly* 17(5): 917–40.

Wooten, S.R. 2009. *The Art of Livelihood: Creating Expressive Agri-culture in Rural Mali*. Durham, CA: Carolina Academic Press.

Wright, D.R. 1977. 'Darbo Jula: The Role of a Mandinka Jula Clan in the Long-distance Trade of the Gambia River and Its Hinterland', *African Economic History* 3: 33–45.

———. 2004. *The World and a Very Small Place in Africa: A History of Globalization in Niumi, the Gambia*. Armonk: M.E. Sharpe.

YWAM. 2006. *Sabi Monographic Study*. Sabi, The Gambia: Youth With A Mission.

Zack-Williams, A. 1995. *Tributors, Supporters, and Merchant Capital: Mining and Underdevelopment in Sierra Leone*. Aldershot: Avebury.

Zampagni, F. 2011. *A Visa for Schengen's Europe: Consular Practices and Regular Migration from Senegal to Italy*. Florence: CARIM Analytic and Synthetic Notes.

Zigon, J. 2009. 'Hope Dies Last: Two Aspects of Hope in Contemporary Moscow', *Anthropological Theory* 9(3): 253–71.

Index