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FEASIBILITY REPORT

on

THE HISTORICAL ROLE OF MIGRATIONS BETWEEN SAHELIAN AND COASTAL STATES OF WEST AFRICA

by

Joseph E. Harris (Ph.D.)

April 22, 1977

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ABBREVIATIONS

(1)	CNRS	Centre National De La Recherche Scientifique
(2)	CVRS	Centre Voltaique De La Recherche Scientifique
(3)	ENEA	Ecole Nationale d'Economie Appliquee
(4)	IRSH	Institut De Recherche en Sciences Humaines
(5)	OSTOM	Office de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique Outre-Mer
(6)	SAED	Societe Africaine D'Etude et De Developpement
(7)	WHO	World Health Organization

Feasibility Report

on

The Historical Role of Migrations Between Sahelian and Coastal States of West Africa

March 5 - April 1, 1977

Joseph E. Harris

Statement on Objectives and AID Field Staff

The general purpose of my trip to Paris and five West African countries (Senegal, Mali, Upper Volta, Niger, and Ivory Coast) was to determine the feasibility of my research proposal on "The Historical Role of Migrations in the Functional Integration of Sahelian and Coastal States in West Africa." In determining that feasibility I consulted with African officials and researchers, AID field staff, and other persons knowledgeable about research in those areas related to my proposal.

A specific aim was to seek host country cooperation for the research project and to elicit ideas from African scholars for incorporation in the final proposal. The inclusion of host country researchers' ideas in the proposal should assure focus on problems of local/national interest and encourage direct participation by host collaborators.

An additional objective of the trip was to collect pertinent materials necessary for the conduct of seminars on West African Migrations and which might provide a basis for advising AID and others on the status of population research in the region.

I visited each of the AID field offices and received full cooperation. They had received some information about my proposal and the trip prior to my arrival and assigned office contacts to help facilitate my mission. I had consultations with Arthur Fell in Dakar, Ronald Levin in Bamako, Donald Atwell in Ouagadougou, Albert Baron in Niamey, Daniel Aronson and Roger Poulin in Abidjan, and in each case, I received encouragement to pursue the study and a promise of support from the local AID office. I was impressed that in each case the long-range significance of my proposed research was understood as showing the extent of historical linkages and continuities between the Sahel and the coastal areas as a basis for planning and implementing present and future programs.

Very special mention should be made about the keen interest and support I received from the Assistant Program Officer in Bamako, Myron Golden, whose Malian assistant,

Boubacar Daou, through personal contacts and "savoir faire," enhanced the value of several of my conferences. I also benefited from the personal contacts Myron Golden has established in Bamako.

Murl Baker in Niamey also was very helpful. He arranged conferences, accompanied me on several occasions, and assisted in the acquisition of information and materials in Niamey.

The AID field support was, in sum, very supportive. What follows now is an account primarily of consultations with host country officials and researchers.

In Paris, I consulted with a number of people at CNRS and OSTOM; I also conferred with Ms. Bernus at College de France. Bernus and her husband have written a good deal on migrations in Niger and are partners in the publication of Etudes Nigeriens. In addition to consultations, I purchased a number of books, journals, and local maps of areas in the Sahel where migration studies have been made.

In Dakar, Senegal, I consulted with the Directeur de Cabinet in the Ministry of Higher Education, Rector of the University of Dakar, two professors of history at the University of Dakar, The Director of the National School

for Applied Economics, the Director of the WHO in Dakar, and Dr. Lerner, a U.S. sociologist in Promotions Humaines of the Ministry of National Education. In each case I was encouraged to pursue the project and promised host country support. In particular, the two professors, Mody Cissoko and Barry Boubacar, are already involved in migration-related research and expressed keen interest in a collaborative relationship. Both gave some specific suggestions for inclusion in the final proposal. The Director at the ENEA is an economist who stated that the project should provide needed data on economic history and would therefore be welcomed by him. He has facilitated collaboration previously and would assist in this case. The WHO sends out teams of researchers (medical researchers and social scientists) to collect data on health care problems and would prepare to include a collaborator sent out under this proposal.

Research concerns in Mali have now been placed under the Direction Nationale Des Arts et de la Culture where the Assistant is Mamadou Sarr who gave me several copies of Etudes Maliennes and arranged for me to consult Alpha Konare, Chef de la Division du Patrimoine Historique

et Ethnographique. Konare is also president of the Association of Historians in Mali. He readily identified several areas where migration studies would be welcomed by his office, and the idea of collaboration appealed to him. Interestingly enough, some of Konare's suggestions for Mali border on areas in Senegal where Cissoko suggested work. The Chef de Departement d' Histoire at ENSUP, Dr. R. Keita, who has written three volumes of geography and history of northwestern Mali, is also first vice president to Konare in the Association of Historians in Mali. She promised personal support and cooperation in her Department.

The Africare representative in Bamako arranged for me to meet S.M. Barry who studied medicine in France and now works in traditional medicine for the Ministry of Health. He invited me to meet Dr. Mamadou Koumare who heads the program in traditional medicine but my schedule did not allow for such a conference which I very much wanted to make, because one of my present seminar students is interested in epidemiology and traditional medicine.

I also missed a Malian who tried to contact me to explain how a certain Foula King organized a cattle range

in the nineteenth century, a story an AID contract person on a cattle project finds fascinating and which could conceivably shed light on traditional practices and attitudes about cattle ranges. I have the contact and hope to follow it at a future date.

A main contact in Upper Volta was S. Traore, Director of SAED. His organization participates in consultative research and could assist with my project, although to date very little relating to migration studies has been done by SAED. Traore arranged for me to confer with Marcel Poussi, Director of CVRS where some migration studies have been conducted. Poussi, like Traore, was very receptive and gave suggestions to be included in my project. I was also told about the work of Sidiki Coulibaly, a Voltaic who has published several pieces on Voltaic migrations and who is now studying at the University of Montreal, Canada. I plan to contact him soon.

OSTOM completed a study of migrations for the Ministry of the Plan but that is not available for general circulation. One may use it in the local OSTOM office. It appears to be rather thorough, but it deals only with the Mossi, while I would hope to focus on other

groups not very much studied to date.

The University of Ouagadougou was closed but I did get a conference with the Rector who was most cordial and expressed interest in the project and the possibility of an affiliation for a professor who may be sent to conduct the research.

The Rector tried to locate Professor Ki-Zerbo who was out of the country. Ki-Zerbo has recently edited a volume, Medicine Traditionelle et Pharmacopee Africaines, which is not yet available to the public, but I have requested one through AID and Mr. Atwell, Acting Director, promised to follow through on it for me.

I had hoped to consult with Albert Balima but was told that he has accepted a position in Bordeau, France and is now there.

The last country I visited in the Sahel was Niger where my schedule was very tight because I arrived on the week-end and left on Tuesday. Still, I managed to have some useful conferences.

The Rector of the University, Dr. Ba, and I met on three different occasions. He is especially interested in the project and explained in some detail what the procedures for collaboration are. I also received encourage-

ment from the Minister for Rural Development who made some general suggestions for research focus. The Director of the Institute for Human Sciences, Dioulde Laya, was more cautious. He expressed interest in migrations but stressed an emphasis on "practical over scientific" research, a point which I of course accept. He also shied away from suggesting much except drought-related research. He finally said that he did not oppose the project but felt that it should be formulated first and then presented for acceptance. I explained my aim of soliciting host ideas rather than presenting a finished document for him to approve. He agreed that this was a good idea but still urged that a project be detailed. I later learned that Laya has accepted the Directorship of the OAU's Center for Oral Traditions in Niamey. There is some discussion about the meaning of the move, since the OAU Center has been rather dormant in recent years. In addition, it appears that the Institute of Human Sciences is becoming a more integral part of the University as opposed to its earlier autonomous status. I was also told that the Institute's staff has been drained off and that collaborators are more difficult for them to find. These points may explain Laya's response to my proposal. In any

case, he did not oppose it; indeed, he urged that I write it, submit it, and said he saw no reason for thinking there would be problems.

I also had a good talk with an Africare representative in the Ministry of Health, Niger. He is an Epidemiologist with an interest in traditional medicine. He explained that the Ministry of Health is in the process of launching a project to collect data on tropical diseases in order to establish a bureau of statistics. This could involve aspects of migrations. He indicated that the chances are good that a collaborative effort with his Ministry could be established. He promised to remain as a contact there for me.

Since AID seems to be moving more into health care areas and would therefore see good possibilities in migration studies such as I propose, this could be a good direction in which to move.

In Abidjan I discussed my proposal and the results of my trip through the Sahel with Dan Aronson who readily perceived the long-range implications. He is himself very much interested in migrations as a researcher and as a policy advisor. He agreed that more needs to be known about traditional mechanisms which may be of greater impor-

tance than contemporary boundaries and linkages. He noted the need to identify and consider means of working more through traditional structures. A number of Pan-African people lend themselves to this kind of study.

A brief meeting with Dr. David French,* who was leaving that same day for Washington, revealed possibilities for collaboration on a regional basis in projects similar to those mentioned in my account of discussions in Mali and Niger. Dr. French and I agreed to meet again to pursue the discussion before his return to Abidjan in mid-April.

Professor Mody Cissoko, University of Dakar, had suggested that I discuss my project with Mr. Moustopha Diabate, Director of the Institute of Ethnology, University of Abidjan. Diabate and I did confer and he assured me of his interest in participating in a migrations study. Some of his previous research is on that theme and the possibility of relating population movements in northern Ivory Coast with the Sahel seemed to strike a very responsive chord.

In a meeting with the Rector of the University of Abidjan I was advised to meet with Dr. Kodjo, Chairman

*Director, Project for Strengthening Health Delivery Systems in Central and West Africa

of the Department of History, to discuss my research interests and possible links with Howard University. Dr. Kodjo responded favorably on both counts.

Because of an earlier shift in my research focus (from the Coast primarily to the Sahel, with extensions to the coast), and since my travel plans were based on that, and because I understood that funds for the Sahel could not be used to cover expenses on the coast except for Ivory Coast, I did not include other coastal states in my itinerary. When I was later told that I could include Ghana and Cameroon, two areas I very much want as part of my project, it was too late to change my itinerary and be sure of the availability of my prearranged contacts. I therefore did not visit Ghana or Cameroon. However, when I returned I found a long letter in response to an earlier one I had written to Professor Martin Z. Njeuma, Chef de Departement D'Histoire, University of Yaounde. Dr. Njeuma, himself a well-known scholar, expressed "full support for your proposals. ...You can count on my personal cooperation on providing consultancy for the project."

I deeply regret not having been able to visit Cameroon for a visit with Dr. Njeuma. However, I intend to respond at length by mail and hope that in a subse-

quent visit to West Africa, Cameroon can be included on my itinerary. Cameroon offers good possibilities because it borders on the Sahel and has experienced English and French colonial rule and is thus officially bilingual. I still consider Ghana, Nigeria, Togo and Benin as critical components for my project; but priorities must be established. Still, if the coastal side of my proposal is to receive due attention, they must be involved (see my recommendations below).

Recommendations:

Based on the foregoing reports it is obvious that my trip revealed a good deal of interest in and support for my research proposal. It is also clear that to accomplish the objectives of the proposal in the entire region would require massive efforts and resources. I therefore recommend that the project be implemented in stages, beginning in Senegal and Mali. I select Senegal and Mali for several reasons: the response in both countries was excellent; host suggestions of topics and regions for research focus overlap at the Senegal-Mali southern border which could be extended at some point to include Upper Volta, Ivory Coast, and Guinea(?); both countries

are interested in social and economic developments in the region; the areas include Foula, the same ethnic group as a graduate student I hope to involve in the project; a colleague has done some short-term research in both countries and has contacts there, as I do as well.

I also recommend that if and when the project is approved, a second trip be made to the host countries to assure a clear understanding of mutual responsibilities. At that time, visits to the English-speaking countries should be made. Discussions should go well in those areas because of the more advanced stage of the project and its funded position. Specific arrangements could thus be made during that one visit.

Within 6 - 8 months I recommend that the second phase be introduced along the Niger River from Gao, Mali to the south where Upper Volta, Niger and Benin share borders. Togo is near and is being considered by Niger as an alternate outlet to the sea; Nigeria is also near and a factor in the social and economic developments in the area.

Although the details need to be worked out, I recommend that a serious effort be made to develop a strong and efficient research counterpart in Mali with an understanding of United States research institutions,

scholars, and the government's relationship to them. I think this should be in addition to the specific research project and designed to establish such a trained person in Mali's research hierarchy. This would be a significant step toward moving Mali more into the English-speaking world of scholars and research.

In order to accomplish these goals, I recommend that the project be approved for two years, with the possibility of extension.

After this report was prepared Dr. French and I have had a second conference and he has expressed "eagerness" to assist a researcher sent out under my proposed project. Such a researcher could be involved in one of two established centers for studying and treating diseases. One center already exists in Upper Volta in the area where I propose research; another center is planned for Ghana. Dr. French's work is tied in with these centers and he has good relations with several Ministries of Health where problems of population movement, food, drought, and diseases are serious concerns.

In addition, Dr. French has suggested contacts at Johns Hopkins University's School of Hygiene and Public Health and Atlanta's Center for Disease Control where he

believes a reseacher could spend a few weeks learning the practical application of epidemiology. This could be arranged easily enough and would benefit a social science researcher. He urged me to pursue the project and to call on his assistance as needed.

I understand that AID is seriously considering another research project on migrations for Senegal. For that and the following reasons, I have chosen Mali for this project: (1) It has a rich history as center for great kingdoms, wars, trade, and population movements to several neighboring areas where large numbers of ethnically related people straddle current national borders; (2) Its history includes continuous migrations caused by man-made and natural (e.g. drought, floods, etc.) phenomena; (3) This history is amendable to reconstruction because of the availability of documents, including Islamic records, as well as a conscious preservation of oral data; (4) It is a land-locked country situated in the Sahara and Sahel where economic, ecologic, and social problems are closely intertwined and must be understood for development to succeed; (5) My trip there last March confirmed the feasibility of such a study in terms of available documentation and the willingness, indeed eagerness in some cases, on the part of Malian researchers and government officials to cooperate and participate.

The district of Sikasso is ideal for this study because it is located in southeastern Mali along borders shared with Ivory Coast and Upper Volta, with some population movement to Ghinea and Ghana. The

Mopti district is also ideal in that its large population of Peuls are principal migratory herdsmen who move back and forth to Sikasso district and areas of Upper Volta and northern Ghana. The principal study objectives, therefore, would be on the Senoufo-Minanka in Sikasso and the Peul in Mopti.

Several Malians expressed the serious need for an economic history and analysis of the Sikasso region and its relationship to neighboring countries. This need was underscored during the recent drought when numbers of Peul enlarged the already established small Peul settlements there. Indeed, the drought has combined with other incentives to increase annual immigration into the region to cultivate and harvest cotton.

The Sikasso district would provide a basis for comparative study. One researcher could concentrate on the Malian Senoufo with linkages in Ivory Coast, while another researcher could study the eastern Senoufo areas with bonds in Upper Volta. This should provide very useful data on historical patterns of development, isolating social, economic, and ecologic variables affecting contemporary times. Inferences could be drawn with respect to future development. In particular, the focus on the Sikasso-Bobo Dioulosso link would provide an epidemiological dimension. Dr. David French, Director of the Project for Strengthening Health Delivery Systems in Central and West Africa, has promised to arrange for cooperation between this team and the disease study station in Bobo Dioulosso.

Illustrative of the kinds of questions to be raised and researched in the Sikasso component of this project are: the nature of historical

inter-ethnic attitudes and relationships in the area; perceptions of migrations and resettlement; attitudes toward different kinds of work (The Senoufo, for example, have castes as do other groups); patterns of land tenure; responses to normal and crisis-motivated migration; impact of and on the economies of Mali, Upper Volta, and Ivory Coast; impact of the recent drought; extent and nature of change in ideas and community life; disease transmission, effects, and control.

The other component of this study would focus on the Peul who are ideal as people with cross-national linkages. The Peul are a pan-African group with a long history of migrations across a wide stretch of the Sahel and Savannah regions of West Africa. These movements have been associated with a number of factors, most notably with cattle.

The cattle industry is crucial for development in Mali where a majority of the herdsmen are migratory producers. The Taureg and Arab-related groups are the principal herdsmen in the Sahara, but the Peul dominate the non-desert areas. The three principal migratory production zones in Mali are: The western zone which adjoins Mauretania; the central zone which is north of the Niger River; and the southeastern zone which is south of the Niger and adjoins Upper Volta. It is in the latter area that the Peul constitute the dominant cattle producers; however, some Peul are also semi-sedentary farmers growing cotton, groundnuts, etc. In this latter role, therefore, the Peul serve as a bridge or transition group between migrant herdsmen and sedentary farmers and a serious study of this relationship should prove most valuable to development planners.

Historically, the Peul have had to contend with wars, slavery, drought and other factors adversely affecting their livelihood, but they have survived and remain a vital element in the Mali economy. How they have survived past droughts, for example, could shed needed light on traditional mechanisms, networks and agreements with other groups that might very well provide means for more effective planning and utilization of foreign aid. How many Peul migrants during the recent drought remained in Sikasso, northern Ivory Coast and Ghana and how they have adjusted to their adopted homes may be best assessed within the context of history illuminated by contemporary times.

What is the nature of and how deeply entrenched and unalterable are the ecologic signals to begin the migration to cross rivers and traditional farmlands, and how unchangeable are the traditional pathways? What were the scope and means of accommodation for mass migrations in the past? Why do not Peul and Senoufo engage in fishing, since they often live near rivers? To what extent has the practice of father giving land and cattle to a son contributed to a transition in ideas and practices regarding private ownership and individualism? How deeply engrained is the will to pursue traditional patterns of agriculture, herding, construction of cattle ranges, consumerism, etc?

Since much of Mali's cattle is sold in coastal states, what are the short- and long-range implications of increased imports of South American (Argentine) meat by Ivory Coast? How best might distribution of goods and services be accomplished in such strong, "resistant" societies as the Senoufo and Peul?

There are clearly many pertinent questions to be raised and answered by a project such as this. The two components of the project, Senoufo and Peul, are complementary and interfaced geographically, ecologically, economically, socially, and politically; and the extent of functional linkage between Mali and Upper Volta as Sahelian states, Ivory Coast and Ghana as Coastal states raises many questions of vital concern for policy makers, program officers, and academics.

A particular concern of this project is to assist, where appropriate, in efforts to strengthen Malian capability to work more effectively as peers with United States researchers. In this connection, I have already discussed this project with researchers and government officials in Mali.

Mamadou Sarr, Ministre Adjoint, Direction Nationale Des Arts et De la Culture, spent an hour with me and arranged for a conference with Dr. Alpha Oumar Konare, Chef de la Division Patrimoine Historique et Ethnographique. Dr. Konare made suggestions for the project and promised his cooperation. He in turn recommended that I consult with Dr. R. Keita, Chef de Departement d'Histoire at ENSUP. Dr. Keita not only assured me of her personal support; she also promised a link with her department for lectures and discussions with faculty and students. The Director of ENSUP, Adama Cissoko, extended the same relationship. I also received an offer of support from Cheik Oumar Drame, Director of the National Library in Bamako.

The Howard personnel would share knowledge and resources, provide assistance in areas of their competence, and conduct seminars,

lectures, and discussions. Reports on the field work would be left in Mali and links would be maintained through appropriate mailings and efforts to cultivate faculty and student exchanges.

Increased knowledge and deeper understanding of the problems and culture of Mali and some of its people would be obvious general results. In addition, this project should identify those ideas, institutions, and patterns of life the indigenous peoples regard as basic to their continued survival as well as those most susceptible to change, and this should facilitate the establishment of guidelines for development by focusing more on indigenous perceptions and the kinds, means of delivery, and administration of assistance required by the affected area(s) in Mali, Ivory Coast, and Upper Volta. All of this and more would provide a sounder basis for comparative studies of similar regions and conditions elsewhere and thus help to resolve problems worldwide.