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IRRIGATION AND DYNAMICS OF ACCESS TO LAND AMONG THE SONINK
Field Research Impressions from Tuabou and Moudery

by

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I. INTRODUCTION

This paper presents some findings and impressions of a six-month field research trip in the department of Bakel during the period of January 1988 - July 1988. The research undertaken was one component of the Irrigation and Water Management I Project and had as a general objective the study of the dynamics of land tenure on a number of small-scale irrigation perimeters along the Senegal and Falémé Rivers in the Tambacounda Region of Eastern Senegal.

USAID's BSIP and IWM-I Projects, in collaboration with SAED, have sponsored the development of irrigation schemes based on universal participation of village members and equal distribution of parcels to all participants. These perimeters have been and continue to be established in societies in which control over land has traditionally been the privilege of a minority. The principal motivation for the research, then, was the expectation that the traditional landed elite would either recognize the economic opportunities inherent in irrigation and try to dominate what was intended to be an egalitarian project, or that they would perceive the implementation of egalitarian irrigation schemes as a factor destructive of their social and political hegemony. In the first case, irrigated land initially distributed in an egalitarian fashion might, with time, revert back into the hands of those traditionally associated with land rights. In the second case, it might lead to efforts on the part of the landed elite to prove irrigation a failure.

Because the research is still on-going, this report addresses only some of the issues regarding land tenure dynamics both on and off the village irrigation systems; two questions in particular have guided the development of this paper:

- 1) How have land ownership and land acquisition practices changed over time? Are they today consistent with the dictates of the National Land Law?
- 2) What sectors (noble, artisans, descendants of slaves, men, women) of Soninké society have easiest access to the perimeters and can this be attributed to traditional tenure privileges?

A. Conclusions

The tentative conclusions drawn can be summarized as follows:

1) The penetration of the National Land Law in the region has introduced an element of insecurity as well as of opportunity for the traditional landed elite and other sectors of Soninké society. For it simultaneously threatens traditional tenure practices, which in the past have ensured certain power and reciprocity relations among the different groups in society, and presents an opportunity for the various sectors of society to enhance their patronage relations as well as their economic position. Thus, traditional tenure practices coexist and at times come into conflict with the dictates of the National Land Law.

2) Access to irrigated land takes a variety of forms:

i) Access to land suitable for irrigation.

Those in the best position to acquire land suited for irrigation are the traditional landed elite and the newly emerging political elite, oftentimes one and the same group. Indeed, in some respects, the traditional landed elites are finding their control over land strengthened with the introduction of the Rural Communities.

ii) Access to participation in irrigation groups at the time of their inception.

Today, those who are in a position to acquire land suitable for irrigation and to organize the establishment of a perimeter, are, in effect, selecting participants. This is the outcome of the strengthening of the traditional landed elite (due to the establishment of the Rural Communities), and of the withdrawal of SAED as the policing body of the irrigated perimeters.

iii) Continued access over time to participation in irrigation groups.

There is no indication that members of long established perimeters are finding their position in the irrigation groups threatened in any way.

iv) The Arrival of Irrigation, Land Insecurity for Women.

Women risk losing land in two different ways when irrigation arrives. First, land they have farmed traditionally may be taken for new irrigated perimeters. Second, they may lose rights to irrigated plots if the head of the family decides to merge them into family fields.

B. Background

In order to ensure a more thorough understanding of what is to be presented in this report, outlined below is the cultural and historical background as well as the current legal context influential to present day land tenure tradition and practice.

1) Social and Land Hierarchies

In the Bakel region there are various ethnic groups: the Soninké, the Toucouleur, the Bambara and the Peulh. The Soninké, the dominant group along the 80-kilometer stretch from Ballou to Waounde on the left bank of the Senegal river, are the focus of this paper.

Soninké society has traditionally been stratified with hooro (nobles), nyaxamala (artisans), and komo (descendants of slaves) as the three principal groups. It is the hooro who have historically had allocative rights to land and therefor have enjoyed free access to the best lands. Nyaxamala and komo, on the other hand, have acquired rights to land from the hooro in exchange for payment, in kind or in labor. Though this categorization is rather simplistic, it points out the hierarchical nature of Soninké society and how access to land is a function of social standing.

The privileges of nobles, and those closely associated with them, with respect to access to land, were, and still are, most evident on the highest quality lands. Essentially, land in the Bakel region can be categorized from most to least productive in the following way:

1. Walo lands are the lands subject to natural flooding. These are by far the best lands; not only are they well-watered, but the deposit of silt during floods makes them quite fertile. Those walo lands situated on the shores of the river (known as falo lands) are tightly controlled by the hooro, for they serve as their primary food source. Generally, hooro farm these lands themselves. However, these lands are sometimes ceded to komo to be farmed if the hoore family does not have the necessary labor power to do so. The arrangement is usually a share-cropping one whereby the kome agrees to return a certain portion of the harvest to the hoore in exchange for the land.

2. Walo lands also include kollanga lands. These are inland basins that receive a substantial amount of water from rainfall as well as from the river's flood waters. These lands are farmed during the dry season as are falo lands. It is from such lands that nobles receive the bulk of their land payments.

3. In addition, there are what might be termed intermediary lands, or fonde lands. These are situated fairly high up on the banks of the river and thus are flooded only during the highest flood years. Their soils do, however, maintain moisture for a fairly long period of time. These lands are also ceded by nobles to non land- controlling families in exchange for land payments. A good number of the irrigated perimeters are on fonde lands.

4. Finally, there are dieri lands. Dieri lands are those watered exclusively by rainfall. Such lands can usually be cropped consecutively for only three years, after which they lose their fertility. Land tenure pressures are least pronounced on these lands because of their abundance and their relatively poor quality.

2) Historical Background

The Soninké first established themselves in the region in the fifteenth century, the outcome of the warring efforts of the Bacilis, the royal Soninké clan, and their allies. In the years following the conquest, a complex land tenure system developed as the Bacilis distributed land to neighboring peoples and villages to ensure political security and economic prosperity. (Traore 1987, pp. 3-4) The outcome of these efforts was the creation of an extensive network of 'survival alliances' between those with allocative rights to land and those pursuing access to land.

Within their own kingdom of Gajaaga, the Bacilis of Tuabou allocated land to other villages in one of two ways. They either granted definitive rights to land, or they granted usufructury rights to land. When granting definitive rights to land, the Bacilis forfeited all allocative rights to the land, and thus the right to receive any sort of payment in exchange for use of the land. When granting usufructury rights to land, the Bacilis simply put the land at the disposal of others with the understanding that some kind of land payment would be made. Manaël, Yellingara, and Diawara were granted definitive rights to their lands. Moudery, Gallade, and Gandé were granted usufructury rights. (Traore 1987, pp. 6-7)

In the case of Manaël, the Bacilis felt compelled to grant their military chiefs and conciliators (mangu), the Jallo's, such rights because of their unrelenting defense of the Bacilis during times of conflict. The Jallo's, in turn, granted definitive rights to some of these lands to the two principal maraboutic families (religious leaders) in Manaël, the Koyita and Daraame families, as well as to a nyaxamala family, the Gaajigo family. (Traore 1987, pp. 19-23)

In Yellingara the situation was somewhat similar. The Suumare of Yellingara, closely associated to the Bacilis through an ancestral blood alliance, were the recipients of the land grant. They too redistributed some of that land definitively to other families in the village. The Siibi family -the mangue of the Suumares-, the Dukkure family -a maraboutic family-, and the Faadiga family -a nyaxamala family-, all received definitive rights to certain tracts of land. (Traore 1987, pp. 23-26)

The case of Diawara is markedly different in that the Saaxo actually purchased their land from the Bacilis. In this they were helped by their marabouts, the Ba and the Dukkure, as well as by their blacksmiths (tege), the bommu. These latter eventually received from the Saaxo definitive rights to some of that land in exchange for the help given to the Saaxo.
(Traore 1987, pp. 26-19)

Table 1 presents the principal land-holding families in these three villages. A couple of important things can be gleaned here. First, it is clear that allocative rights to land are not rigidly caste-determined, and second, the inclusion of non-nobles in the land-controlling group suggests the existence of a network of 'survival alliances.'

TABLE 1
Land-holding families in Manaël, Yellingara and Diawara

VILLAGE	LAND-HOLDING FAMILY
Manaël	Jallo (Mangu)
	Koyita (Moodi)
	Daraame (Moodi)
	Gaa jigo (Nyaxamala)
Yellingara	Suumare (Hoore)
	Siibi (Mangu)
	Dukkure (Moodi)
	Faadiga (Nyaxamala)
Diawara	Saaxo (Moodi)
	Ba (Moodi)
	Dukkure (Moodi)
	Bommu (Nyaxamala)
	Koyita (Moodi)

The Bacilis were a warrior people, reaping their livelihood not so much from farming as from the land payments they collected from those to whom they distributed land. Clearly, then, they could not distribute all of their lands on a definitive basis. Moudery, Galladé and Gandé were those villages granted usufructury rights to land. The Bacilis distributed land surrounding these villages to the Ndiaye, Bacili, and Tuure families respectively. In effect, these families were entrusted with managing and developing these lands. But they were also expected to pay dues for the use of the land. The collection of such land payments was the responsibility of the jaagarafu, or warrior servants of the Bacilis.

As in the cases of Manaël, Yellingara, and Diawara, other families played an important role too. Management and development of the land was also the perquisite of the Sek and Daraame families of Moudery and of the Gunjam and Daraame families of Galladé. In Gandé the Tuure family served as the jaagarafu for the Bacilis. (Traore 1987, pp.29-32)

Table 2 shows the principal land-administering families in Moudery, Galladé, and Gandé. It is important to note that these families were in a privileged position because of their managerial role; they were in a better position to acquire access to choice lands and at times were even exempted from the payment of land dues. As does the table presented above, this table gives some indication of the special position of portions of non-noble society and again suggests the existence of 'survival alliances.'

TABLE 2
Land-administering families in Moudery, Galladé and Gandé

VILLAGE	LAND-ADMINISTERING FAMILIES
Moudery	Ndiaye (hoore) Sek (mangu) Daraame (moodi) Kamara (jaagarafu) Jaagola (jaagarafu) Dia (jaagarafu)
Galladé	Bacili (hoore) Gunjam (mangu) Daraame (moodi)
Gandé	Tuure (kome, jaagarafu)

3) The National Land Law

The traditional land tenure system of the Soninké survived more or less intact until the advent of the Loi sur le Domaine National in 1964, or more correctly, until the implementation in the department of Bakel, in 1982, of the 1972 national administrative reform. Under the 1964 law, almost the entire land area of the country was designated as national domain, to be managed by the government. Private ownership of land was not recognized. For the most part, however, those farmers who had been cultivating tracts of land prior to the implementation of the law maintained their use rights on condition that they continue to farm the land actively. The law, however, prohibited traditional landowning nobilities from enforcing any claims they had on farmers in exchange for access to their land.

In 1972 the Loi Relative aux Communautés Rurales mandated that rural councils in each rural community allocate land and direct the development and farming of such land. These elected rural councils were to give their approval to any use of land in their area of jurisprudence, with the proviso that the land be distributed according to the ability of the applicant to exploit it in the most productive manner possible. In anticipation of elite control of the rural councils, those who drew up the administrative reform made it illegal for any village chief to serve

as president of a rural community and gave final power over allotment of land to the regional sous-préfets.

It should be noted that the Loi sur le Domaine National of 1964 and the subsequent administrative reform of 1972 did not have as objective the complete dismantling of traditional land tenure practices, but rather the development of a more efficient agricultural sector. (Traore, February 1987, p. 10) Indeed, desirable aspects of customary African tenure systems were incorporated into the law alongside the more modern egalitarian and democratic tenets.

This, then, is the cultural, historical, and legal context for analyzing land tenure concerns both on and off the perimeters. It is particularly interesting to study such concerns within this context given the organizational format for the perimeters insisted on by SAED, the rural implementing agency. From the very beginning, SAED encouraged universal participation of village members in the perimeters and required equal distribution of parcels to all participants.

II. Methodology

The field research took place over a five month period from February to June 1988. The information collected was largely qualitative in nature and based on informal interviews. The author asked all the questions and was assisted by an interpreter, a local Soninké man.

Interviews were conducted primarily in two villages, Tuabou and Moudery, though initially interviews had been planned in three villages, Tuabou, Moudery, and Manael. The reason for Manael's refusal to participate has been attributed to its reluctance to violate the decision of the Federation not to collaborate with outside researchers. In any case, Tuabou was chosen because it was the village hosting the author and also the seat of the royal Bacili family. In addition, its perimeter had had very little success since its inception. Moudery was chosen because it was the village in which anthropological research was being conducted for the project by another researcher; the idea was to try and coordinate activities in some way. Moudery also had a number of very successful perimeters, a nice contrast to Tuabou, and it was not closely tied to the Federation.

The interviews took place in two separate periods. The first set was conducted during the month of March. In Tuabou and Manael the village chief was approached and asked to call a meeting of the village elders. At the meetings, the subject of the research was introduced and permission was asked to interview three families, or kas, one of small size, one of medium size, and one of large size. The actual number of people in each ka is not known, though the question was posed. In Soninké culture, revealing the number of individuals is perceived to carry with it some sort of risk.

The reception in both villages was warm, but upon return to Manael, on the day scheduled for the interviews, we were told the interviews could not take place. Fortunately, the president of the irrigation group was quite sympathetic to researchers, and he agreed to speak with us.

Thus, the first set of interviews included the interviews of the three families in Tuabou and the interview with the president of Manaël's irrigation group.

The second set of interviews was conducted in case-study fashion in the month of June, and took place in Tuabou and Moudery. Individuals were selected by caste and gender. A total of sixteen people were interviewed:

Men				Women		
Xoore	Moodi	Naxamala	Kome	Xoore	Naxamala	Kome
5	1	1	5	1	0	3

In addition, the head of the rural development agency (SAED) responsible for the implementation of the perimeters, and a Soninké scholar at the University of Dakar were interviewed.

The questions asked focused on three main aspects of land tenure practices: land tenure practices in the past, land tenure practices today both on and off the perimeters, and conflicts over land. (For a sample listing of the types of questions asked please see Appendix A)

III. Key Interviews

Below are presented the responses of a few key interviews on which the tentative conclusions of this report are based. The responses were elicited from the sorts of questions mentioned above. Because these responses were literally transcribed, they contain some extraneous material. Also, any names below have been selected to protect the anonymity of the interviewee and thus are not the true names of the respondents.

A. Traditional Bacili Land

This interview took place at the home of Tuabou's village chief, the eldest living member of the royal Bacili clan. The objective was to acquire a better understanding of land tenure practices and xoore/kome relations in the early part of the century in order that gradual changes in these practices and relations over time might better be discerned.

1) Narrative - Tuabou village chief

When I was young, I farmed in Mauritania during the rainy season. The land in Mauritania was called jamu jamu. I cultivated in Mauritania because there was more water there. In 1918 I began working abroad. My family continued to farm in Mauritania. They stopped going there in 1960.

My ka was quite large then since the young men had not yet begun migrating. Also, there was slavery at the time. I would go to the dieri with 100 komo (60 men, 40 women). Actually, though, it was not until 1914 that we (the Bacilis) started to cultivate. We started to cultivate then because in 1907 slavery had been abolished, "liberte et egalite".

Before 1907 we would go to Mauritania with our 100 komo. After 1907, we gave some land to our komo. We kept the rest for ourselves. Some komo, by choice, continued to work for us.

In the past, Mauritania's dieri belonged to my family (the Bacilis). Now, with the national boundaries, it is the Mauritians who have control over the dieri. Still, our komo continue to farm the Mauritanian dieri. Now, with Independence, they are free to choose whether or not to give me a part of the harvest from these lands. Before going they let the prefet of Gure know. Even the falo land located on the Mauritanian side of the river is our's. Currently, we farm it with some of our komo.

We have plenty of land in Senegal. Right now we only farm a portion of it because so many young men have left for France. Thus, there is plenty of empty land. If someone would like land, he makes a request to the CR. But first, he must ask me if I need the land. If I have no need for the land, then the request is brought before the CR. My family is keeping portions of the empty lands because our sons, when they grow up, will use them as salumnas.

If the Après Barrage brings much water as expected, the komo will no longer go to the dieri. They will farm next to the river where there is plenty of land. The komo will request land from me.

If someone wants to build a home on my land, he can purchase the land for anywhere between 50,000 and 100,000 CFA. In this situation the land is sold. As far as land acquired for cultivation is concerned, however, there is no buying or selling. All falo land is for the hooro. If a hoore wants he can offer some of his land to a kome; in return the kome helps the hoore construct a fence for the hoore's falo field, but does not give him anything else.

2. Observations

The responses recorded give some indication of the period of transition in which the Soninké find themselves. It is clear that traditional tenure and social relations are not as clearly defined as they once were, yet it is equally clear that such relations continue to play a large role. The village chief's family may no longer go to farm with 100 komo and expect automatically to receive payment for land rendered, but requests for land are directed first to the village chief and only subsequently to the CR. Also, hooro claims to dieri land are much weaker now. This can be attributed to a couple of factors: first, the hooro can no longer call on the labour power of their komo, en masse, to farm these vast tracts, and second, the diminished annual rainfall has simply made these lands much less desirable. However, hooro claims to the more productive falo lands remain very much intact.

B. Acquiring Land: a Kome's Perspective

This interview was conducted in the home of a kome in Tuabou. In Soninké society, a kome son offers allegiance to the hoore family with which his mother was associated. Thus, particular kome and hoore families are tied to each other over generations. The kome interviewed,

called Mamadou (not his real name), was the kome of the family of Tuabou's village chief, as his ancestors had been for generations. The questions posed during the interview were intended to get information on how komo acquire land, and on what restrictions, if any, they come up against in doing so.

1) Narrative

It has been nine years since I began farming my current te xooore. The land belongs to a Peulh. Earlier the Peulh cultivated the land as kollanga. When water was no longer abundant, the Peulh stopped cultivating. I went to ask the Peulh for the land. The Peulh told me that he used to farm it during the contre-saison, but he left the land due to lack of water. The Peulh agreed to cede me the land on the condition that if water should once again be abundant I would return the land to him. I have never given anything as recompense to the Peulh, nor has the Peulh ever asked for anything.

I have been kagumme for about thirty years. I have changed te xooore quite a few times. Before, I used to farm on dieri land in Mauritania. Today my te xooore is in Senegal. In Mauritania there was much vacant land. Bacili land. "Mais nous sommes comme les Bacili puisque nous sommes leurs esclaves. On peut travailler le terrain sans demander parce qu'on fait partie de la meme famille." I eventually left Mauritania because I was tired of having to move each winter.

I also farm a small falo field given to me by Tuabou's village chief. I farm it alone, but the harvest goes into the ka's granary. In return I help the Bacilis out on their falo land.

When my sons reached the age at which sons begin to farm salumnas, or when the young women entered the compound as young brides, I went to ask for additional land. If my sons find vacant dieri land, they simply begin to clear it. If dieri land has been left vacant for more than five years, they need not ask for it, they simply clear it.

2) Observations

Again, what can be gleaned from this short excerpt is the relatively free access komo have to dieri land, but the restricted access to the more productive falo land. Mamadou and his family need not even ask Tuabou's village chief to farm on the dieri, nor is there much in the way of recompense given for the use of that land. However, they have only very limited access to the higher quality falo land, access to which they must repay in labor on the falo land of the village chief.

C. Acquiring Land: a Women's Perspective

Foulemata, as she will be called, is a kome woman in Tuabou. She is an older woman with married daughters. Currently she farms with her divorced sister. She cultivates rice, millet, peanut, indigo, and gumbo fields. The questions posed in the interview were intended to get information on how komo women acquire land and what restrictions they must face in doing so.

1) Narrative

I have been farming my rice field four years row. And it has been eight years since my husband and I left Mauritania. I left the dieri there because 'je ne suis qu'une simple femme', and so when my husband decided it was too tiring to move each winter to Mauritania, I also left.

In the last eight years I have changed rice fields several times. First, I farmed rice in an area near Sanchane (a marre). The following year I moved next to the marigot Chande. There I farmed only for one year because the woman to whom the land belonged had lent it to me for one year only. The next year I moved to Seyou on the way to Bakel. I have been there ever since. Seyou is Ibrahim Bacili's (not his real name) land and it is he who granted me use rights to the land. Ever since I began farming there, he has never asked for anything in return. And I have not given him anything. Also, I have not had to ask him each year for the land. The first time sufficed.

I don't not think Ibrahim Bacili would take my field because he is practically family. But it does occur. Among the Soninké, if a landowner has need of a field one year, he will tell the farmer before the start of the growing season not to plant, to leave the field.

2) Observations

The land farmed in this case is not dieri land. It most likely is kollanga land which is suitable for growing rice. It is interesting to note that it is from kollanga land that hooro have traditionally reaped the bulk of their land payments, yet Ibrahim Bacili receives nothing, in the way of payment, from Foulemata.

D. Falo and Irrigated Land: Hooro, Komo, and Women

Siliman Traoré is a hoore from Moudery who belongs to Moudery II, one of seven perimeters in Moudery. The questions posed during this interview were similar to those posed in the others. Of particular interest here are the comments made with respect to the farming of falo land and with respect to the women of his ka and their access to irrigated land.

1) Narrative

I have been irrigating for three years on Moudery II. I was in France when Moudery I began. The parcel I farm on the perimeter is a te-xoore; there I grow rice and a bit of millet. My sons farm parcels on other perimeters as salumnas.

During the contre-saison I farm falo in Mauritania. The falo has been with my family for generations. Practically all of Moudery has falo in Mauritania, though the president of Moudery II, a kome, does not. In fact, during the contre-saison I let the president of Moudery II farm my parcel. The falo yields plentiful harvests. At harvest time I bring in as many as 100 kande of millet (one kande of unthreshed millet equals 5 mulde of threshed millet, one mulde equals approximately 3.3 kg.). Also,

this year I harvested plenty of maize, beans, bitter tomatoes, and sweet potatoes.

There are no problems with farming in Mauritania. Some Mauritanians have land in Senegal. There are few villagers who do not have falo in Mauritania. I myself share my falo with my komo. Before, the komo would farm for me on my falo. Today, I give them part of the falo land and they in turn give me part of the harvest. Some komo still help me out on my falo land, but now that is up to them. The komo do not help me out on the perimeter.

I love my falo land very much but realize that with the Après -barrage I may lose that land. Just about everyone who farms the falo land farms on the perimeters. I myself am one of those who has the most falo land and I am a member of Moudery II.

My parcel is a te xooore. In the morning all the men of the ka work on it. Up until this year the women did not work on the te xooore because they had their own parcels. This year I have taken the 12 parcels previously farmed by the 12 women and added them to the te xooore. The 12 women have joined other perimeters. When I first acquired the parcel three years ago, I divided it up among the 12 women because I was leaving for France. Plus, the children were still very young. Now that I am back, and retired, and now that my sons have grown, I have taken back the parcels. Also, my brothers have returned from France and I hire some Malians.

2) Observations

Moudery has much greater tracts of falo land than does Tuabou. This may explain the overall village participation in farming these areas. That is, the hooro may not have the necessary manpower to farm these areas entirely on their own, therefore falo land is distributed to others in the village.

The hoore/kome relationship has somewhat changed in that the hooro are no longer in a position to call on the labour power of the komo as they once did, though they still maintain claims on the komo via the payments they receive as recompense for the lending of falo land.

These responses also shed some light on the position women find themselves in with the introduction of irrigation. One interpretation might be that women have little parcel security when irrigated land is granted to kas. Not only can women lose their individual rainfed fields, as occurred in Moudery, if the land is suitable for, and chosen as the site for, an irrigated perimeter, but they can also lose parcels on the perimeters if these are registered under the name of the kagumme. Note, had these parcels farmed by the women been traditional women's fields, this kagumme would not have been able to re-appropriate them.

E. Traditional Tenure Privileges and the Rural Communities

These are the comments of a villager from Moudery and the researcher's interpreter (a Bacili from Tuabou) regarding the control the Bacilis continue to maintain over kollanga land in Moudery. These responses are interesting in that they reveal the existing tension between traditional allocative rights to land and the dictates of the National Land Law.

In Moudery, a villager called the interpreter aside to tell him that some villagers from Moudery would like to build a perimeter on the Bacili's kollanga in Moudery. So far, according to the interpreter, the CR has not dared touch the land. In effect, for the moment, this land lies outside the domain of the National Land Law. Some among the hooro of Tuabou, contrary to what the CR claims, insist that kollanga and falo land does not come under the jurisdiction of the CR. The interpreter also stated that there is no chance the Bacilis will grant the land for the perimeter, for that would mean losing it. The Bacilis are, however, prepared to grant the land under contract for 3 or 4 years to whomever wants to farm it in exchange for payment of some sort.

What these comments reveal is not only the tension that exists between the traditional land tenure system and national legal strictures regarding land, but also the possibility of heightened conflict, as attempts are made to establish perimeters on the more productive tracts of land, between those who risk losing their privileged access to the best lands as well as their allocative rights to such lands, and those who are in a position to benefit from the opportunities presented by the existence of the National Land Law and the establishment of irrigated perimeters.

F. Land Conflicts on the Perimeters

The following responses come from various sources: the head of SAED in Bakel, the president of the Communaute Rurale, a delegate to the CR from Tuabou, a Soninké scholar at the University of Dakar, and the president of the woman's group in Tuabou. All spoke of the existence of land conflict on the perimeters and the reasons behind it.

According to the head of SAED in Bakel, there are no serious land tenure conflicts on the perimeters in the department of Bakel. The serious conflicts or problems are found in the department of Matam. In Bakel land tenure problems are not pronounced. There has never been a land tenure problem which has prohibited SAED from preparing land for irrigation, except for the case in Diawara. There, an outsider was granted 50 hectares by the CR. The villagers of Diawara claimed that they had planned to exploit the 50 hectare tract themselves. Why then should they forfeit it to a non-villager?

The head of SAED attributed the lack of land conflict in the department of Bakel, compared to elsewhere along the river, to the relatively small number of hectares under irrigation in the department of Bakel (1,870 ha. in Bakel vs. 5,900 in Matam, 8,800 in Podor, and 13,200 in Dagana, approximately, in 1967).

He did state, though, that land conflicts can be expected to surface as additional land is brought under irrigation.

The head of SAED, despite his assertion that there is little if any land conflict in the region of Bakel, went on to explain the hoore/kome conflict in Dembankane. Work on Dembankane III (a proposed 80 hectare site) has been stopped due to conflict between hooro and casted farmers. The hooro do not want casted villagers in the groupement. The University of Dakar scholar traces the origins of the conflict back to France. There, the communal fund for the Soninké migrants from Diawara was at one point administered by some mangue. Over time the komo became angered because they felt the hooro had easier access to the fund for such things as illnesses, tickets home, etc. The komo eventually brought the issue to court and won. The fund was split in two. So too, then, was the perimeter and also the position of village chief. Now Dembankane has both a xoore village chief and a kome village chief.

The women's irrigation group in Tuabou has been trying to acquire land for a perimeter for several years. Time and again they have come up against obstacles. The president of the women's group in Tuabou explained the history of the women's efforts to obtain land for a perimeter:

A few years ago, the men offered the women some land next to the land irrigated by Tuabou's youth group. SAED prepared the land for them and FAO promised them a pump. But the agents from FAO objected to the site given to the women because it was too small in area given the capacity of the motorpump. The chief of zone at Diawara, therefore, went to see a Bacili to request that he give the women land where Tuabou's first perimeter had been located. Bacili agreed. Unfortunately, Bacili had not well understood which land the women were requesting. He thought they had asked for the small area of land next to the marre behind Tuabou where vegetable gardening was done.

SAED, in the meantime, with the approval of Bacili had arrived to prepare the land where the first perimeter had been located. When the president of the men's irrigation group in Tuabou, also a Bacili, saw the bulldozers, he blocked any further work on the land. So the women went to see Tuabou's village chief, the eldest living Bacili. Tuabou's village chief suggested that the women establish their perimeter on land, called Guffure, between Manaël and Tuabou. The women asked the CR for Guffure, but as of June 1988 had not heard anything.

A delegate to the CR from Tuabou who has worked with the women's irrigation group took great interest in this problem. He wanted to see SAED prepare land for the women next to the men's perimeter. The head of SAED insisted that a request first be brought before the CR and then be approved by the CR before SAED could do any work on the land. The delegate responded that the women have had a motorpump at their disposal for the past three years, but they have been unable to use it.

He urged that the women and the youth group give irrigation a try before bringing the matter before the CR. "Depuis trois ans il y a la motopompe. Avant qu'on fait tout la deliberation, on voudrait laisser les femmes et les jeunes cultiver pour les encourager."

The president of the CR (a hoore from Moudery) was also interviewed briefly and asked what he thought of the women's desire to acquire land. He clearly stated that he was prepared to sign over 25 hectares for the women's group and 25 hectares for the young people's group, on the condition, though, that these groups be headed by someone from the Socialist Party. He justified or defended this statement by explaining that he would not lend any assistance to the opposition which continuously attacks the government for doing things wrong.

These remarks both reinforce some of the points made above and introduce new ones. First, conflict over land is becoming increasingly evident; this is both the symptom of deeply rooted political and religious divisions and the consequence of selecting productive land for irrigation. Second, it is interesting to see that requests for land for the women's perimeter in Tuabou were made first to the Bacilis and only subsequently to the president of the CR. Third, women currently do not seem to enjoy secure rights to irrigated land. This is likely attributable to the fact that the irrigated land they farm as a group has not been officially accorded to them by the CR. Is it merely a coincidence that a delegate to the CR from Tuabou requested that SAED prepare land for the women's irrigation group without formal approval by the CR? Or can it be conjectured that this was done because once land is granted to the women by the CR, they have permanent access to that land? Fourth, and finally, political ties and alliances continue to figure greatly in the process of acquiring access to land, whether irrigated or not. The striking response of the president of the CR, who is now one of the most powerful players in the land game, is good indication of that.

G. Summary Remarks

This final interview with the Soninké scholar was meant to bring together loose ends of previous interviews as well as to get the viewpoint of someone with a very solid understanding of the Soninké and their way of life. It took place in Bakel during a short field research trip of his.

Participation in the perimeters, in all villages except Moudery and Diawara, is open to all. In Moudery and Diawara access to the perimeters is very much based on the relationship the individual has to the head of the irrigation group. For example, Moudery III is open to family members and political allies; the situation is similar with regard to Moudery IV. Both Diawara and Moudery also have an "Al Fallah" perimeter. Participation is contingent on belonging to the Al Fallah moslem sect. A similar arrangement exists on Bailou I and II.

Without political ties it is very difficult to acquire land on which to establish a perimeter. Political power and influence continue to fuel the process of land distribution and acquisition. First, it is the traditional land-controlling elite who hold the key positions in the CR. Ironically, their control over land may even have been strengthened with the establishment of the CR. "C'est la reprise en main par les nobles, maintenant plus puissant au niveau de la CR." Second, the requests that have been brought before the CR for land have at times been blocked because the president of the CR insists that he will grant land only to those groups headed by members of the Socialist Party. And third, though the president of the CR claims he grants land for perimeters exclusively to groups and not individuals, in practice, he has been granting land to individuals (e.g. himself, the president of Moudery ??) who then select other participants on the basis of family or political ties. However, as far as already established perimeters are concerned, there has not been any visible change with respect to participants in favor of the hooro.

Conflicts over land are likely to increase in the future as additional land is brought under irrigation. This is due not only to the fact that irrigable tracts are not in abundance, but also to the fact that many villagers are planning to put traditional fields left in fallow back under cultivation in order not to lose their land to the CR.

In response to the claim by some villagers that falo and kollanga lands fall outside of the jurisdiction of the CR and are still administered according to traditional practice, I can say that at least for falo land, the question of whether or not the CR has control over these lands is not really an issue because falo lands are always cultivated. However, the Bacilis will eventually have to cede the kollanga land in Moudery presently being requested for a perimeter. The Bacilis themselves cannot farm the kollanga in Moudery because land is now assigned to villages, the 'terrains villageois'. Thus, any non-villagers who wish to get land must settle in the village corresponding to the land they wish to farm. Once the 'Après-barrage' is in full swing, despite the risk of conflict over land, the kollanga land will be assigned to perimeters.

Finally, with regard to the situation of women, I cannot help but contrast it with that of women's groups in the interior of the country. There, women's groups are very well organized and have the means at their disposal to exploit the land; they are in a position to benefit from the establishment of the national land law and the CR. In the interior 'les femmes ont autonomie de gestion et moyens économiques.' In contrast, the women's groups near Bakel still depend very much on the men and are poorly organized.

IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS

All that has been presented above can best be synthesized and understood within the framework of a single paradigm. Goran Hyden offers just such a paradigm in his article "The Invisible Economy of Smallholder Agriculture in Africa".

There he argues effectively that african peasants in both capitalist and socialist societies operate in an economy within an economy. Their economic behavior, so to speak, is governed by the laws of what he terms 'the economy of affection' or 'political economy'.

In his words the 'economy of affection' denotes networks of support, communications and interaction among structurally defined groups that are connected by blood, kin, community or other affinities, e.g., religion.' (Moock 1986, p. 23) In other words, personal or group survival and well-being are to a large extent based on productive inter-personal relations; they are as much a function of people as they are of resources. As such, Hyden demonstrates that

... the state realm is generally regarded as an arena from which one seeks to make gains, if possible, to enhance patronage relations...Property rights are politicized rather than privatized and are used by the budding bourgeoisie to safeguard their own position. As a result, the politics of affection is characterized at all levels by investments in patronage relations.

(Moock 1986, p. 25)

The history of land acquisition and distribution among the Soninké, as presented in this paper, lends weight to this notion that 'property rights are politicized rather than privatized' and that patronage relations characterize investment at all levels. From the very beginning, immediately following the conquest of territory, the Bacilis distributed land to neighboring peoples and villages to ensure political security and economic prosperity. What emerged was a situation in which the Bacilis asserted their political power by offering other sectors of society a 'piece of the pie'. Allocative rights to land and the enjoyment of special privileges were not rigidly caste-determined. Similarly today, at least a portion of hoore society is successfully strengthening its control over people and resources by exploiting opportunities presented by the land law and the irrigated perimeters and by distributing some of the benefits outside of their immediate circle. This is not to say that tension and conflict are not emerging with the implementation of the National Land Law and the irrigated perimeters. It is quite clear that privileged sectors of society feel their position of power threatened as the more productive tracts of land, control over which in the past allowed them to place claims on other groups in society, are appropriated for irrigated perimeters.

The operation of individuals in Soninké society within such an economy of affection', then, has certainly influenced land ownership and acquisition practices on the perimeters. A good example is that of the president of the CR and of Moudery II. His political connections have enabled him to acquire not only appropriate land on which to establish a perimeter, but also have provided him with subsidized gasoil, otherwise very costly. In turn he has been able to further invest in 'patronage relations' by distributing irrigated land to family, friends, and party members.

Another example is with regards to women's ease of access to the perimeters. One possible explanation for the difficulties they at times encounter is that historically, and today as well, women have been very much on the periphery of the 'politics of affection.' It may be true that the 'politics of affection is characterized at all levels by investments in patronage relations', but these investments are almost exclusively male oriented. From the viewpoint of men, there is little to gain in the way of enhancing patronage relations by distributing land to women. Still, this does not mean that all doors are effectively closed to women. As the experience in the interior of the country suggests, by organizing themselves effectively, both politically and financially, women can acquire land officially from the CR and can establish viable irrigation schemes.

APPENDIX A

Land Tenure Questions for Perimeter

- * Whom did you ask to have a parcel?
- * Do the original owners of the land on which the perimeter is located still maintain rights to the land?
- * Is it possible to have more than one irrigated parcel?
- * Whom must one ask for an additional parcel?
- * Who can take from you your irrigated parcel?
- * Who decides who will inherit the parcel?
- * Will your children continue cultivating this parcel?
- * Can you sell your irrigated parcel?
- * Can you lease your irrigated parcel?
- * If so, what do you receive as payment?
- * Have you ever been in a dispute regarding your irrigated parcel?

These questions were asked primarily during the first set of interviews and were intended to shed some light on land tenure relations on the perimeter as opposed to those off the perimeter. Was there a change in land-use and land-ownership practices as a result of the introduction of irrigation?

Land Tenure Questions for Non-irrigated Land

Access to Land in the Past:

- * Has your family been farming a long time?
- * How did your family originally get land?
- * Whom did your family ask for the land?
- * Who in your family requested the land?
- * How did your family select the land?

Access to Land in the Present:

- * When did you acquire X field?
- * From whom did you acquire it?
- * Under what conditions?
- * Does your ka have a te-xoore?
- * When did you acquire it?
- * Why did you want that particular piece of land?
- * When your sons grow up and work in fields, how will you get additional fields for them?
- * When a new married woman enters the compound, where does she get her individual fields?
- * Are te-xoores in same place every year?
- * Are salumnas in same place every year?
- * Are women's fields in same place every year?

Land Security Questions:

- * Can you lose your land in any way?
- * Can anyone take your land from you?
- * Do you know of any cases where people who have farmed land have had to give it up?

These questions were asked to see to what extent land tenure practices today differ from those in the past.

GLOSSARY

Dieri	Rainfed tracts of land.
Falo	Arable land situated on the shores of the river.
Fonde	Arable land situated on the elevated banks of the river.
Hoore, Hooro (pl.)	Noble.
Jaagarafu	Those within the 'slave' caste who maintain a special relationship with their 'noble' because of the services they render as managers of the 'noble's' land.
Ka	The term that denotes both the residential unit and the production and consumption unit.
Kagumme	The head of the compound production and consumption unit.
Kollanga	Inland basin which receives both rain and river flood waters.
Kome, Komo (pl.)	Slave.
Mangu	Warrior servant for a 'noble'.
Moodi	Muslim religious leader.
Nyaxamala	Artisan.
Salumna	Individual man's field.
Te xoore	Collective household field.

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