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THE KEITA PROJECT: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSES AND PRACTICES IN NIGER

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Social Anthropology
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University of London

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an ethnography of an Integrated Rural Development Project which began its activities in 1984 and is aimed at 'fighting against desertification' in the Ader Doutchi Majiya Region of Niger. The Project is financed by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and, until 2000, was implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations. The thesis aims at contributing to our understanding of 'development': how it works; what configurations of power and forms of agency it produces; and how it is perceived by different categories of actors involved in it, including planners, project staff, and the men and women living in the 'intervention area'.

The thesis contains nine chapters. Chapter one introduces the thesis' aim, theoretical import and methodological approaches. Chapters two and three provide an introduction to the historical and socio-economic context of the Ader Doutchi Majiya. Chapter four unravels the discourses of development which made the Project and its strategies possible in the early 1980s. Chapter five looks at the concepts and practices of development of project staff, and Chapter six focuses on local people's perceptions and patterns of agency in relation to the Keita Project. Chapters seven and eight compare the discourses and practices of planners, project staff, and local people, with reference to two axes of project 'intervention': gender (Chapter seven) and participation (Chapter eight). Chapter nine concludes the thesis.

The thesis contributes to theory in the anthropology of development, bringing together actor-oriented and structural explanations into one analytical framework and arguing that there are limits to the productive pursuit of either on its own. It contributes to anthropological studies of change in West African societies; and it adds new insights to the 'ethnography of aid', making available some 'lessons learned' from the Keita Project to a potentially interdisciplinary audience.

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Acronyms

ADM	Ader Doutchi Majiya
AFN	Association des Femmes du Niger
AIN	Association Islamique du Niger
AOF	Afrique Occidentale Française
CES/DRS	Conservation des Eaux des Sols/Défense et Restauration des Sols
CILSS	Comité Inter-Etats de Lutte contre la Sécheresse au Sahel
CSRD	Conseil Sous-Régional de Développement
DFD	Division Femmes-Développement
DPFSE	Division Promotion Féminine et Socio-Economique
FAC	Fonds d'Aide et Coopération
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization (UN)
FCFA	Franc de la Communauté Financière Africaine
FFK	Foyer Féminin de Keita
FIDES	Fonds d'Investissement pour le Développement Economique et Social
GAD	Gender and Development
GICO	Gruppo Internazionale di Consulenza
GR	Génie Rural
IRDP	Integrated Rural Development Project
MAE-DGCS	Ministero degli Affari Esteri – Direzione Generale per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAM	Programme d'Alimentation Mondiale (UN)
PDR/ADM	Projet de Développement Rural de l'Ader Doutchi Majiya
PPN	Parti Progressiste Nigerien
PRA	participatory rural appraisal
RDA	Rassemblement Démocratique Africain
RDFN	Rassemblement Démocratique des Femmes du Niger
SD	Société de Développement
UBT	Unité de Bétail Tropicaux
UN	United Nations
UNC	Union Nationale des Coopératives (Niger)
UNCC	Union Nigérienne de Crédit et Coopération
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
USRC	Union Sous-Régionale des Coopératives (Niger)
UTE	unité territoriale élémentaire
WFP	World Food Programme (UN)
WID	Women in Development

Comments on the text

In the text, I refer to the Integrated Rural Development Project of the Ader Doutchi Majiya (PDR/ADM) either as PDR/ADM, or as 'Keita Project', or simply as 'the Project.' 'Keita Project' is the expression most frequently used by various groups involved in it to refer to the Integrated Rural Development Project of the Ader Doutchi Majiya, and this is why I have used it in the thesis title.

The adjective for Niger – Nigerien – is used to distinguish the people, economy, society, and political system of Niger from those of Nigeria.

The term 'Bouzou' to refer to the descendants of Tuareg captives can carry a derogatory connotation (cf. Tidjani-Alou 2001). However, because it is commonly used to refer to this group in the literature and in the Ader Doutchi Majiya, and in the absence of another term to refer to ex Tuareg captives and slaves, I have used it throughout without implying any negative connotation.

The translation of all the quotes from French and Italian documents and interviews is my own.

All proper names of persons mentioned in this thesis are pseudonyms.

The bibliography is arranged in three sections: the first includes published books and articles, the second official reports, and the third unpublished documents.

I have translated the text of the maps in Appendix 1. I have taken all the pictures in Appendix 4.

Currency conversion rates:

1 FCFA = 0.0015 $ USA
1 FCFA = 0.001 £ UK

1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis is an ethnography of an Integrated Rural Development Project (IRDP) which began its activities in 1984 and is aimed at 'fighting against desertification' in the Ader Doutchi Majiya Region of Niger. The Keita Project, whose official name is Rural Development Project of the Ader Doutchi Majiya (*Projet de Developpement Rural de l'Ader Doutchi Majiya*), or PDR/ADM, is a complex formation involving multiple institutions and categories of actors disposed to make sense of the Project in different ways (cf. Long 1997:2). Not only do these sets of actors perceive project activities differently, but they follow different patterns of agency *vis à vis* project 'intervention'. For the purposes of an 'ethnography of aid' (Crewe and Harrison 1998), 'intervention' cannot be seen simply as 'the implementation of a plan for action, [but] it should be visualised as an ongoing transformational process in which different actor interests and structures are located' (Long 1992:9). The task attempted here is to 'unfold' this complex construct and look at the perceptions and practices of different groups, trying to explain what 'development' involved for each of them, and what configurations of power became evident in the course of the Project. The aim of the thesis is to contribute, from an anthropological perspective, to our understanding of the phenomenon of 'development' and of the meanings it acquires for different groups and individuals, including planners, consultants, project management and staff, and men and women living in the 'intervention area'.

In this chapter I first provide some general information about the Project, its origins and the types of activities it carried out throughout almost 20 years. Then, I problematise the object of study, showing that its complexity raises new challenges to conventional ethnographic research focused on a single site of intensive investigation and, often, on a single society. In the third section of this chapter, I critically discuss existing theoretical approaches to the study of development, and in the fourth and fifth sections I lay out the analytical framework and conceptual tools adopted in the thesis. In the last two sections I describe the methodology I have followed to carry out my research, and provide an outline of the thesis organisation and contents.

1.1 The Keita Project

The end of the 1960s, 1973-1974 and 1984-1985 were years of drought in the Ader Doutchi Majiya and in Niger as a whole. In December 1982, a joint identification mission in which participated the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), an Italian team, and the CILSS (*Comité Inter-états de Lutte contre la Séchéresse dans le Sahel*), outlined the problems related to desertification, soil erosion, and drought afflicting the Keita District in the Department of Tahoua. A second mission was sent to the same area by the Cooperation section of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in March/April 1983, resulting in the formulation of an 'Operational Plan for the Integrated Rural Development Project of Keita' (GICO 1998:12). This document contained the foundations for the establishment of the PDR/ADM.

On 6 December 1983, the Governments of Italy and of Niger signed an agreement which assigned the execution of the Project to FAO. The World Food Programme of the United Nations (WFP) would provide food-for-work rations for local labour working for the Project. By 1998, the Keita Project was still financially the most important project of all Italian interventions in the Sahel, and of all FAO and WFP interventions in Niger[1] (GICO 1998:36-37).

The PDR/ADM started its activities in May 1984 under the name of 'PIK' (*Projet Integré Keita*). During the First Phase (May 1984-June 1991), the project covered only the District of Keita (approximately 3,200 km with a population of 156,000 inhabitants at project inception). In the Second Phase (July 1991-June 1996), the interventions were extended to the adjacent Districts of Bouza and Abalak, and the project intervention area reached its present extension of 13,000 km2, with about 330,000 inhabitants (cf. map I). In the Third Phase (July 1996–June 1999) a further extension towards the southern Majiya Valley had been contemplated, but not implemented.

[1] While the Keita Project was the 'most expensive' project financed by Italy in the whole of the Sahel, and the project absorbing most food rations financed by the WFP in Niger, by 1998 the FAO was implementing projects in Niger for Italy, the United Nations Development Programme, and the Belgian Cooperation. The total value of these operations amounted to approximately US $ 67,5 million, 81% of which were the PDR/ADM's 'stake'.

In the first three phases, project management was shared between a National Director (*Coordinateur National*) and an Italian Primary Technical Coordinator (*Conseiller Technique Principal*, CTP). At the end of the Third Phase, management was unified in the sole figure of a Nigerien *Coordinateur National.* The project institution is divided into 'Divisions', whose number and denomination changed over the years. 'Divisions' are organisational units specialised in different fields (e.g. agronomy, administration, women and development), responsible for programming and conducting sectoral activities in the Project's intervention area. Today, there are seven project divisions[2] (cf. table 1). In the course of the Third Phase, relations between the Italian Government and the FAO changed, leading to the end of the FAO's participation in the PDR/ADM. Today, the PDR/ADM is a bilateral project (Italy-Niger), and the World Food Programme is still providing food-for-work rations.

The funds provided by the Italian Government for each phase of the Project amount, respectively, to US $ 36.3 million; 18.7 million; and 8.5 million for the first two years of the third phase, i.e. a total of about US $ 63.5 million up to the end of 1999. The World Food Programme contributed 12 million individual food rations, whose value is estimated to correspond to about US $ 17 million (Smart 2000:2).

The PDR/ADM is a project for 'fighting against desertification'. Although 'environmental rehabilitation' always remained its primary aim, the PDR/ADM carried out a whole range of different types of activities. In general, PDR/ADM activities can be divided into two main categories: the first group is specifically aimed at the physical rehabilitation of the territory, the second, at the promotion of social welfare and economic growth. Together, all operations are performed with the purpose of attaining 'economic independence and food self-sufficiency and strengthen[ing] local institutions' (FAO 1995:6).

The peculiarity and popularity of the PDR/ADM derive from the nature of its territorial approach. The PDR/ADM methodology to fight against desertification is based upon the concept of *Unité Territoriale Elémentaire* (UTE or BTU, Basic Territorial Unit), devised by its first Technical Coordinator, Dr. Carotti. The intervention area is subdivided into UTEs, corresponding to sub-catchment systems

[2] In fact, an eighth 'Communications Division' was formally established after the end of my fieldwork,

with an area of some 10 km2 (cf. figure 1). It is possible to distinguish a first group of interventions in the field of soil and water conservation (*conservation des eaux et des sols)* aimed at protecting the environment against erosion and at rehabilitating degraded lands for farming and herding purposes. These include:

- Sylvo-pastoral and sylvo-agricultural anti-erosion bunds *(banquettes sylvo-pastorales et sylvo-agricoles)* aimed at rehabilitating *(aménagement)* plateaux and glacis through subsoiling *(soussolage)*, construction of anti-erosion bunds, and planting trees along these;
- Reforestation trenches (*tranchées de reboisement)* on slopes (*versants*) and hill-sides: tree planting on rocky slopes;
- Windbreaks (*brise-vents*): tree planting in rows in the valleys;
- Dense tree planting along the sides of water-courses (*koris*);
- Dense planting of trees and rows of dry millet-stalks (*fixation des dune* or *clayonnage*).

Other activities, all in the field of soils and water conservation, are specifically aimed at controlling the hydraulic regime, and include:

- Check dams in gabion weirs *(seuil en gabions)* on small scale catchment systems, with an area of some 10 hectares, usually serving as cross-structures upstream detention dams (*barrages d'écrêtage*), and aimed at decreasing the erosive force and runoff carried by the rains;
- Detention dams (*barrages d'écrêtage*) on large catchment systems (with an area of 1-15 km2), which temporarily store the runoff, and release it gradually through a spillway (*buse*) and outlet system (*deversoir*);
- Water-spreading dams (*seuils d'épandage)* in gabion weirs and earthfill embankments, used to build up the streambed causing floodplain inundation in areas where runoff overflow is an important factor in groundwater recharge and irrigation practices;
- Earth dams *(digues)* with outlet system in gabions in the valleys, for the reconstitution of pre-existing lakes (*mares*), degraded by the progressive accumulation of sediments and by erosion.

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which is not included in the organisation chart reproduced in table 1.

The PDR/ADM also conducts different types of activities in the field of social development. These include farming, herding, and fishery extension; hygiene and sanitation; micro-credit; rural radio; and activities for the 'promotion of the role of women.'[3]

1.2 Problematising the Object of Study

The description of the Project provided above is the kind of story one would find in official project documents. While it may be useful as a schematic introduction to project history and aims, the apparently 'objective' and 'technical' account it offers inevitably de-politicises project 'intervention' (cf. Ferguson 1995) and plays the 'God's eye' trick by concealing the 'situatedness' of its own perspective (Haraway 1988). This section problematises the object of study, showing that the Project opened a multi-vocal (Grillo and Stirrat 1997) and multi-sited (Marcus 1995; 1999) space, within which different categories of actors occupied different strategic positions and attributed different meanings to project activities. Here, I deal with the difficulties that arise when trying to conceptualise and write about such a 'space'.

The different categories of actors involved in the Keita Project include the planners in the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Niger's government officials; FAO professionals responsible for project 'implementation'; project management and staff (national and international); short-term consultants (national and international); and the men and women of different societies and statuses living in the area covered by project 'intervention'. These actors belong to institutions situated in Rome, Niamey, and in the Ader Doutchi Majiya region. Some actors are highly mobile and active across different sites (e.g. the consultants, some members of project staff); others experience only those facets of the Project which reach them in their villages. Inevitably, the Keita Project is perceived and understood differently by different categories of actors.

The 'boundaries' of the Project stretch out across various countries and institutions, and the strategies unfolded within spaces opened by project 'intervention' vary substantially as the focus of the analysis is shifted across the various settings which

[3] See table 2 for a summary of Project results by the end of the Third Phase.

constitute it. The notions used by different sets of actors to make sense of project 'intervention' are diverse and account for competing discourses about the Project, which are hierarchically stratified (cf. Moore 1994:100). Some discourses produce 'official' knowledge about the Project, others are confined to the work-sites (*chantiers*) on the rocky hills of the Ader. Different categories of actors carry out distinct 'projects in the Project' and unfold different strategies to achieve their respective goals (cf. Bierschenk 1988; Long 1992). The establishment of the Keita Project constituted a new, supra-national field which intertwined with other 'local' fields in complex ways. It is a peculiarity of this field that it does not occupy a bounded geographical, social, cultural, or linguistic space, and therefore the actors who occupy positions within it belong, simultaneously, to other fields which, in many cases, do not overlap.

A number of recent anthropological contributions have drawn the discipline's attention to complex social formations which, like the Keita Project, do not constitute geographically, socially, or culturally bounded and/or uniform objects of study (Galjart 1981; Hannerz 1987; Appadurai 1991; Hannerz 1991; Fardon 1995; Marcus 1995; Kearney 1996; Gupta and Ferguson 1997a; 1997b; Martin 1997; Shore and Wright 1997; Keeley and Scoones 1999; Marcus 1999; Arce and Long 1999). In doing so, they have exposed the limits of conventional ethnographic tools to deal with these spaces. These contributions have emphasised, on the one hand, the need to apply anthropological research to new structural formations developed, historically, from dynamics characteristic of a 'globalising world'; and, on the other, they have critically highlighted the ways in which ethnography contributes to essentialising identities and spatialisations (cf. Fardon 1995:5). Trying to deal with the issues raised by both of these arguments (i.e. the suggestion that a world made up of distinct societies is moving through a phase of transition, and the suggestion that the world was never accurately described as a mosaic of distinct societies), several authors have developed new analytical concepts.

Claiming that 'in the space of modernity, modern and traditional communities were distinct and spatially separated [but] in a globalised world, they interpenetrate and, in doing so, dissolve the distinctions between them' (Kearney 1996:117), Kearney uses the notion of 'hyperspace', which he borrows from Jameson (1984), a socially constructed space of relations, not anchored permanently in a specific locale, and

inhabited mainly by transnational communities of strangers (Kearney 1996:118). International airports, shopping malls, food chains and transnational corporate agriculture, are fields that could be characterised as 'hyperspaces'. This notion serves Kearney's purpose to relocate the category 'peasant' from a social type coterminous with 'rural', 'local', 'traditional', to one which reproduces itself within complex economic and social relationships and global networks. Also looking at the workings of transnational 'food networks', Marsden and Arce ask 'how do international economic processes and policies become embedded in local production systems, and what degree of "room for manoeuvre" do local actors have?' (1995:1263)

Along similar lines, Appadurai claims that there are 'facts about the world of the twentieth century that any ethnography must confront. [...] Groups are no longer tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious, or culturally homogenous' (1991:191). To deal with these new landscapes of group identity, he employs the concept of 'global ethnoscapes'. Other attempts to identify new analytical tools to come to terms with social actors not comfortably embedded in a single social/spatial reference system, but confronted with diverse social constructs and institutions, have used notions such as 'global ecumene' (Hannerz 1991) and 'creolization' (Hannerz 1987). These attempts suggest that in certain anthropological circles there is 'a concern about the lack of fit between the problems raised by a mobile, changing, globalising world, on the one hand, and the resources provided by a method originally developed for studying supposedly small scale societies, on the other' (cf. Gupta and Ferguson 1997).

Other authors have focused their attention on phenomena which, by their very nature, are not anchored to one society or one culture, but instead cut across different groups and analytical levels. Examples of these approaches are anthropological studies of policy: '[...] by focusing on policy, the field of study changes. It is no longer a question of studying a local community or 'a people', [but rather of] exploring how these processes work in different sites: local, national, global' (Shore and Wright 1997:14; cf. Keeley and Scoones 1999); or of science:

> The contexts in which [...] fieldwork on science is being done are not like we imagined the fieldsites of our forebears to be: these field 'sites' are not primarily spatial. Or rather, they include many different spaces that are discontinuous from each other. For this reason, we need new images to guide our thinking about how to define an appropriate context to produce understanding. (Martin 1997:146)

A set of new analytical images, supposedly better suited to deal with what may be called 'unorthodox' objects of study for anthropology, is being developed. It includes notions such as 'citadels, rhizomes, string figures' (Martin 1997); 'networks, reticula, rhizomes' (Kearney 1996: 120-127); 'hybrids, cyborgs, mutants' (Arce and Long 1999:17); 'counterworks' (Fardon 1995); 'counter-development' (Galjart 1981); and, already mentioned, 'hyperspace' (Kearney 1996); 'global ethnoscapes' (Appadurai); 'creolization' (Hannerz 1987); and 'global ecumene' (Hannerz 1991).

Along with the identification of new analytical concepts and critical reconsiderations of the epistemological space occupied by 'the field' and 'fieldwork' in anthropological research (cf. Gupta and Ferguson 1997a), new research approaches and methods have been called for. In order to explore processes that do not occur in a single field-site, Marcus has suggested anthropologists adopted 'multi-sited ethnography', a mode of research which

> claims that any ethnography of a cultural formation in the world system is also an ethnography of the system, and therefore cannot be understood only in terms of the conventional *mise-en-scène* of ethnographic research, assuming indeed it is the cultural formation, produced in several different locales, rather than the conditions of a particular set of subjects that is the object of the study. (Marcus 1995:99)

The fact of conducting research across different locales and of interacting with subjects of different status produces, 'a distinctly different sense of "doing research"' (Marcus 1995:113), one in which the researcher needs to periodically recalibrate his/her positioning *vis à vis* the subjects of his/her analysis. This constant renegotiation of one's identity and interests as a researcher generates a greater awareness of the anthropologist's political commitments (cf. Gupta and Ferguson 1997b:24), reflected in ethnographic writing: 'multi-sited fieldwork is thus always conducted with a keen awareness of being within the landscape, and as the landscape changes across sites, the identity of the ethnographer requires renegotiation' (Marcus 1995:112). I pointed out above that different categories of actors (extension workers, consultants, farmers, etc.) in the Keita Project carry out their own 'projects in the Project' developing various strategies to reach their respective goals. The self-reflexivity implied by a multi-sited approach entails that the researcher be seen as just another situated actor, with his/her own distinct 'project in the Project', be it a Ph.D. thesis at the University of London, or

some kind of 'circumstantial activism' within his/her research field (Marcus 1995:113; Marcus 1999:17).

Self-reflexivity with regard to the actual positioning of the researcher throughout fieldwork finds its counterpart in an awareness of the ways in which one's writings fit into the wider arena of multi-vocal representations concerning the object of research. Because '[t]here is virtually no space or scene of contemporary fieldwork that has not already been thoroughly mediated by other projects of representation' (Marcus 1999:23), part of one's research consists in 'disentangling dense webs of already existing representations, some of which are likely to have been produced by the subjects themselves' (Marcus 1999:23). Hence, one's writings, in this case an anthropological study of the Keita Project, exist in parallel with a vast array of other situated texts: '[e]thnography thus becomes a kind of writing machine among others'. (Marcus 1999:23)

I have argued above that anthropologists confronted with objects of research characterised by 'peculiar' spatial boundaries and social constituencies have developed their reflections in at least three directions. Firstly, they have tried to devise new analytical concepts fitted to deal with new cultural formations; secondly, they have called for self-reflexivity throughout the practice of fieldwork and for an active monitoring of the practices of renegotiating one's ethnographic persona; and thirdly they have emphasised the political nature of ethnographic writing within competing projects of representation.

The Keita Project has to be observed keeping all these provisos in mind. It is an international development project which created a new field of interaction between Italian and Nigerien Ministries, FAO and WFP offices, Italian and Nigerien agronomists, economists, sociologists, extensionists, and men and women of the Ader Doutchi Majiya. Trying to make sense of how different categories of actors situated themselves within this field, I found myself negotiating my own project and identity as a researcher, with people of strikingly different status. And before writing up my own findings and interpretations, I had to unravel a plethora of 'official documents', media reports, and 'local' representations, which were other situated perspectives about the Project.

While many of the authors mentioned in this section would probably not see themselves as primarily concerned with 'structure', I think that their work is, to some extent, an attempt to find new structural concepts to deal with new structures, or with old structures in new ways (cf. Booth 1994 :20). It is not enough to contrast 'different' identities or 'worldviews' (what might be called a 'strict' actor-oriented perspective), without trying to understand the wider field of relations in which individuals or groups exist in and through difference (cf. Bourdieu 1998:31). Here, this is the field opened by the Keita Project's 'rural development intervention', and it has properties which influence the behaviour of the actors negotiating within it. The fact that the Project does not occupy a bounded geographical, social, cultural or linguistic space allows for particular configurations of power.

It is also not enough to simply contrast 'global development' with 'local' realities: not only does it dismiss the moral assumptions 'hidden' in the global-local opposition, but it also conceals the ways in which we can see the local and the global in one another (Fardon 1995). In order to use analytical tools in meaningful ways, it is important to find a way to conceptualise the structural characteristics of this object of research, because they partly account for the patterns of agency available (or not available) to different categories of actors. In the following section I discuss the function of the notions of structure, discourse, and agency in the study of development projects.

1.3 Identifying Analytical Frameworks: Actor-oriented and Structural-discursive Approaches Reconsidered

It has been remarked that contributions to development studies are characterised by a deplorable tendency

> to formulate problems either from the point of view of how peasants react to development intervention without really analysing the nature of the wider encapsulating system, or from the point of view of how external forces determine local patterns of change without taking into account how the actions of peasants themselves or of other local groups may shape these processes. (Long 1989:4; cf. Booth 1994:xiv)

Agreeing with Booth that 'while action-based and structural explanations are permissible, there are limits to the productive pursuit of either on its own' (Booth 1994:27; cf. Arce and Long 1999:24), here I shall attempt to bridge this gap and show

that dismissing one of these two dimensions is likely to lead to misleading interpretations[4]. The structural explanations I shall look at here are the ones which, taking a discursive approach, emphasise the structural properties of development discourses, of which the work of Ferguson (1996) is a case in point. Before I move on to a discussion of the problems inherent in each of these approaches, I will briefly describe their respective arguments and their contributions to development studies.

An actor-oriented perspective, as exemplified in the work of Norman Long and colleagues in Wageningen, 'entails recognising the "multiple realities" and diverse social practices of various actors, and requires working out methodologically how to get to grips with these different and often incompatible social worlds' (Long 1992:5). This perspective leads to the development of the analytical notion of 'interface', which involves 'the interplay of different "worlds of knowledge" [...] such as those of the farmer, extensionist, and agricultural scientist' (Long 1989:222), and its methodological counterpart, 'interface studies', which carries with it a set of *ad hoc* research techniques (see Long 1989:247 and ff.)

A guiding analytical concept in Long's actor-oriented approach is the notion of agency (cf. Long and Van der Ploeg 1994:82). Following Giddens (1984), agency is seen as dependent on the capability of the individual to 'make a difference' to a pre-existing state of affairs or events. 'This implies that all actors (agents) exercise some kind of "power", even those in highly subordinated positions' (Long 1989:223). Here, agency is inseparable from the related notions of projectuality, strategy and negotiation. The ethnographic contributions of actor-oriented perspectives highlight local actors' strategies to develop their own projects within the 'room for manoeuvre' (cf. Long 1992:36) available in specific situations within the context of development interventions. The capacity of local actors to unfold what may be called 'projects in the Project' is described as a way to exercise power: 'power [...] is intrinsic to the elaboration, adaptation and reproduction of projects, and is a crucial element in strategic action' (Long and Van der Ploeg 1994:74).

This perspective contradicts interpretations which overemphasise the constraining potential of development interventions (structures, institutions, and

[4] For a discussion of the reasons why it has been difficult to integrate structural and actor-oriented

discourses) *vis à vis* local agency. It entails a redefinition of the notion of 'intervention' to imply 'a socially constructed and negotiated process, not simply the execution of an already specified plan of action with expected outcomes [...], not simply a top-down process' (Long 1989:241; cf. Long and Villarreal 1989:103; Long 1992:9). Long and colleagues are not alone in developing this line of thinking (cf. Crehan and von Oppen 1988; Olivier de Sardan 1988). Along very similar lines, Bierschenk argues that

> project implementation does not mean carrying out an already planned programme but is a constant process of negotiation. One must begin with an analysis of the project's participants and other interest groups, the goals and reasons for their negotiations, resources they have at hand – in short of their own respective projects. (1988:146)

Following this argument, Elwert and Bierschenk claim that the way forward in the study of development projects is to analyse the motivations, interests and ensuing strategies of the subjects involved in it: 'the history and result of a project can be best understood through detailed analysis of the (hidden) struggles between the different interest groups involved (...). The analysis of development projects thus presupposes an analysis of strategic groups involved in their implementation' (Bierschenk and Elwert 1988:102). However, their focus on actors' 'interests' and the weight they cast on intentionality and power struggles between negotiating parties generated reactions from scholars writing from different analytical perspectives. Thus, against these views, Ferguson argues that:

> seeing a "development" project as the simple projection of the "interest" of a subject (the World Bank, Canada, Capital, Imperialism) ignores the non- and counter-intentionality of structural production [...]. One must entertain the possibility that the "development" apparatus in Lesotho may do what it does, not at the bidding of some knowing and powerful subject who is making it all happen, but behind the backs or against the wills of even the most powerful actors. (Ferguson 1996:18)

Ferguson argues that focusing on the strategies of individuals or groups as if these were responsible for the course taken by events dismisses the fact that actors exist within wider historical and social forms of rationality which have structural properties: 'if the process through which structural production takes place can be thought of as a machine, it must be said that the planners' conceptions are not the blueprint for the machine; they are parts of the machine' (Ferguson 1996:276). Following Foucault, instead of thinking of 'development' as the outcome of struggles and negotiations between actors controlling different stakes of power, he perceives actors as embedded in

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perspectives, see Long 1992:18 and ff.

particular forms of knowledge which imply certain power relations and strategies of struggle (cf. Foucault 1995:27).

Against those studies which take a development project to be explained 'when all the interests behind it have been sorted out and made specific' (Ferguson 1996:16), Ferguson sees overarching 'discourses of development' as 'structures of knowledge' which (pre)determine the ways in which development projects are 'allowed' to function and development practitioners are 'allowed' to act in specific historical contexts. However, his analysis goes further than looking at the work of 'power/knowledge' in the development apparatus, to enquire into the specific effects of development, explicitly following Foucault's approach in his analysis of the prison. He claims that, just as prisons fail to reform the inmates, so development fails to reduce poverty. Such apparent failure in achieving its explicit objective, however, corresponds to a success in the real function of development, namely expanding state power while at the same time depoliticising its own (pre-eminently political) task:

> "Development" institutions generate their own forms of discourse, and this discourse simultaneously constructs Lesotho as a particular kind of object of knowledge, and creates a structure of knowledge around that object. Interventions are then organised on the basis of this structure of knowledge, which, while "failing" on their own terms, nonetheless have regular effects, which include the expansion and entrenchment of bureaucratic state power. (Ferguson 1996:xiv)

We are told that the effects produced by 'development' are the outcome of 'unacknowledged structures' (Ferguson 1996:20), and the 'constellations of control' they give rise to are 'all the more effective for being "subjectless"' (1996:19). However, these assertions are repeatedly followed by rather unconvincing disclaimers: '[...] this is not to say that such institutions do not represent an exercise of power; only that power is not to be embodied in the person of a "powerful" subject' (1996:18), and: 'unquestionably, there are a number of different interested parties whose interests can be identified and made explicit' (1996:16). By trying to maintain a strictly structural-discursive approach, Ferguson finds himself in the untenable position of suggesting that individuals or groups do not actively exercise power in ways which influence the course taken by events, a position which is not supported by his own brilliant ethnography of the Thaba Tseka Development Project (see particularly Chapter 6).

Other writers who have applied a Foucaultian approach to the study of development have managed to do so without downplaying the effects produced by hierarchy (local, national, and global) within the spaces opened in the name of 'development'. Hence, Escobar talks of 'the production of discourse under conditions of unequal power', which entails 'specific constructions of the colonial/Third World subject in/through discourse in ways that allow the exercise of power over it' (1995:9). Indeed, in his analysis of development as a 'historically produced discourse' (1995:6), one sees powerful subjects having a greater impact upon events (e.g. President Truman's Point Four Program, p.36), and marginal subjects being influenced by the decisions of others: 'almost by fiat, two thirds of the world's people were transformed into poor subjects in 1948 when the World Bank defined as poor those countries with an annual per capita income below $100' (1995:23). However, Escobar fails to theorise the relation between discourse and agency leaving unclear the relative importance he accords to each of these notions.

I believe that the problem is not to establish which one of the two perspectives briefly discussed above (actor-oriented and discourse/structural) is right and which is wrong. Authors writing from each one of them have undeniably made relevant contributions to our understanding of the workings of development. Their difference lies primarily (but not only) in a question of emphasis. For instance, in a study of the slave trade in the 15th–17th centuries, one could try to unravel the historical conditions which made discourses of slavery and their related practices possible at a specific time and in specific places, thereby highlighting the ways in which actors involved in the 'slavery apparatus' assumed roles and behaviours 'suggested' to, or 'imposed' on, them by the regime of rationality they partook of; or one could emphasise the exploitative nature of the relation between slaves and masters, and the subjective nature of power and resistance. Problems arise when trying to employ one of these theoretical models on its own, because, as I shall argue in the following section, each of them sheds light on different aspects of the phenomenon under study; in other terms, they are better used in a complementary way. With reference to the analysis of development projects, in the remaining part of this section I will schematically review the faults of either model on its own, and in the following section I will attempt to integrate actor-oriented and structural approaches into a single approach to the study of development projects.

On the one hand, too much emphasis on external structures and discourses fails to give a cogent account of human agency (cf. Giddens 1987:98). As Grillo has put it, 'a discursive perspective [...] embraces a totalising conception of how society constitutes its members' (1997:12). A vast number of contributions from different perspectives have shown that so-called 'project beneficiaries', or marginalised groups in general, resort to a multiplicity of strategies and forms of negotiation or resistance in order to carry out their own 'projects in the Project' (Long 1989; Grillo and Stirrat 1997; Arce, Villarreal and de Vries 1994; Bierschenk, Chauveau and Olivier de Sardan 2000; Torres 1997; Arce and Long 1999).

If a somewhat greater weight has been given to demonstrating what might be called 'room for manoeuvre at the bottom', several authors have highlighted the ways in which people 'at the top' are able to make a difference to policy events (Grindle and Thomas 1991; Haas 1992; Keeley and Scoones 1999). Amongst those supporting this view, de Vries has the merit of raising the issue of responsibility, which tends to be obfuscated in discursive approaches:

> there is (...) something wrong in assigning responsibility to some impersonal 'development apparatus'. Blaming some abstract 'anti-politics machine' for the marginalization of the settlers absolves a number of actors who might, rather consciously indeed, have been in favour of such an outcome, and others who did not care very much about its consequences. (de Vries 1992:93)

A second order of problems raised by discursive approaches, highlighted by McNay in her critique of Foucault's writings and pertinent to discursive approaches to development, consists in the insufficient distinction they operate between 'practices that are merely "suggested" to the individual and practices that are more or less "imposed" in so far as they are heavily laden with cultural sanctions and taboos' (McNay 1992:75). How does one 'measure' the relative hold of development discourses upon the beliefs and choices of individual and collective actors? What are the probabilities that development projects, 'while "failing" on their own terms, nonetheless [will have] regular effects, which [will] include the expansion and entrenchment of bureaucratic state power' (Ferguson 1996:xiv)? There are at least some examples of actors who have challenged reflexively the activities of development institutions and have suggested alternatives which would not lead toward the expansion of state power (e.g. Galjart 1981; Escobar 1995). Be it only for their contributions, the effects produced by 'development' cannot be seen as the outcome of 'unacknowledged structures' (Ferguson 1996:20). These structures *are* acknowledged (as proved, ironically, by Ferguson's own

work), albeit by an elite minority, and to some extent resisted in the form of writing and political activism[5].

Finally, another problem with structural explanations of development is that they tend to attribute excessive importance to the potential influence of some *external* structures (such as development projects) upon the lives of actors living in the Project's 'intervention areas'. This problem, which I refer to as 'development-centric bias', dismisses the possibility that, from the point of view of the 'receiving society', the project may be just one (external) institution amongst others (both external and autochthonous), primarily relevant only insofar as it makes available new sources of revenue (cf. Bierschenk, Chauveau, Olivier de Sardan 2000:7). Hence, a more realistic analysis should recognise that

> the fate of individual development actions can best be understood in a historical perspective. This perspective brings to the surface modes of transformation which existed well before the development projects and which will probably continue to exist after they have done their task, because the projects themselves are in most cases appropriated and transformed by these historical dynamics. (Bierschenk and Elwert 1988:110)

Due to the geographic and cultural distance between the sources of development 'structures of knowledge' (e.g. international and national development institutions) and the sites where projects are installed and implemented, these 'structures of knowledge' are syncretically integrated into different structures, thus undergoing a process of 'localisation' (Long 1996:50), which is rarely taken into account by discursive and/or structural approaches.

Focusing only on 'local room for manoeuvre' is equally problematic. First, it underestimates the constraints upon 'local' action that emerge at international and national levels, when, for example, funds are allocated for particular types of intervention in specific regions (cf. Booth 1994:17). The 'room' of 'local room for manoeuvre' depends to a great extent upon the planners' agenda, and the Project's pre-defined objectives and working methods. As shown by my own evidence in Chapter 8

[5] This is different from saying, with Giddens, that (unacknowledged) structures have both constraining and enabling properties (1984:25), but instead it converges with Mouzelis' observation that 'participants are capable and willing to take a discriminatory stance *vis-à-vis* institutional and figurational wholes in order consciously to generate transformational or conservational projects. Bourdieu and Giddens' key concepts hinder the explanation of situations where actors try, in a quite deliberate and conscious manner, to use rules and resources (in Giddens' case) or their positions and dispositions (in Bourdieu's) not as means but as topics' (1995:125).

of this thesis, the above mentioned process of 'localisation' does not mean that project 'recipients' are able to change the premises upon which the 'intervention' was originally set, but only that some of them (usually elites) are at best able to manipulate activities and interpretations authorised 'from the top'.

Even in so-called 'participatory' and 'empowering' models of development, the modes of participation, as well as, paradoxically, the outcomes of participation, are often already determined by the same actors who decide that 'local participation' is necessary: '[p]rojects clearly influence the way in which people construct their "needs". Not all the information recorded in PRAs will register as legitimate "needs" and so influence technology preferences or programme decisions' (Mosse 2001:29).

However, it is not only that, within the field of project intervention, the agency of some actors (typically project 'beneficiaries') is more limited than that of other actors (e.g. the planners), because it is encapsulated in an international structure to which the planners have easier access. Rather, it is also that, on a different analytical level, becoming the target population of a development project (a status which is usually not willingly chosen by the interested actors, but 'bestowed' upon them by external institutions) incorporates the 'beneficiaries' in a new system which tells them 'who' they are and what their 'needs' are. It is in this sense that Cooke and Kothari point out that '"empowering" participants to take part in the modern sector of developing societies is tantamount, in Foucaultian terms, to subjection' (2001:13).

In this section, I have provided some examples of approaches emphasising structural properties and of those defending 'actor-oriented' perspectives. I have then highlighted, with reference to an anthropology of development, the faults likely to be generated by each approach on its own. In the following section I will discuss how and why both structural-discursive and actor-oriented approaches should be adopted to look at the workings of development projects.

1.4 Relations between Discourse and Hierarchy: Integrating Actor-oriented and Structural-discursive Perspectives

The development apparatus is characterised by structural properties. It reflects a dominant discourse of development which entails particular forms of rationality with

related regimes of practices; it implies a particular 'structure of knowledge' (Ferguson 1996) which defines subjectivities and implies certain configurations of power. This does not mean that there are no different or external perspectives, but only that these other 'discourses' are marginal to dominant views and practices of development. A first step in integrating actor-oriented and structural-discursive perspectives, consists in recognising that there is substantial evidence that discourses are not independent from hierarchy configurations which imply subjectivity and inter-subjectivity. Before addressing the modes and conditions of appropriation of discourses, the notion of 'discourse' has to be 'unpacked'.

Leaving aside, for the moment, strictly linguistic uses of 'discourse' (cf. Apthorpe and Gasper 1996), I shall refer to the meanings and uses of discourse derived from the work of Foucault, adopting the very general definition provided by Grillo: 'A discourse (e.g. of development) identifies appropriate and legitimate ways of practising development as well as speaking and thinking about it' (Grillo 1997:12)[6].

In anthropological writings using the analytical notion of 'discourse', some confusion is generated by the above mentioned lack of specification of whether it implies practices which are 'imposed' or 'merely suggested' to socialised actors. This confusion is all the more legitimate, given that Foucault himself uses this notion with different meanings at different points. It is possible to distinguish between two primary meanings. The first one is implicit in the following quote:

> Discourse is constituted by the difference between what one could say correctly at one period (under the rules of grammar and logic) and what is actually said. The discursive field is, at a specific moment, the law of this difference. (Foucault 1978:18)

This first definition seems to work best on grand-scale historical reconstructions, and implies that 'practices don't exist without a certain regime of rationality' (Foucault 1991a:79); that this regime of rationality is socially and historically rooted; and that it functions, in Ferguson's words, as a 'structure of knowledge' allowing certain events and patterns of agency, and rendering others un-thinkable, un-sayable, and un-doable. Hence, for example, we live at a time when the World Bank can say correctly (under the rules of grammar and logic) that a certain amount of funds has been allocated for

[6] Unless otherwise stated, it is with this meaning that the notion of 'discourse' will be used throughout this thesis.

'development programmes' in the Africa region, but it could not be equally said correctly (under the rules of grammar and logic) that an expedition for capturing thousands of 'slaves' is being sent to Africa. Viceversa, at a different time in history the latter sentence might have been plausible and the former un-thinkable. The philosophical issue at stake here, which for the purpose of this introduction I am not going to address, is how, if actors are fully cultural and social beings, could they do anything which is not already present, suggested, or imposed on them by their culture, society and social group (cf. Ortner 1984:155; McNay 1992:61). Here, discourses seem to be structures external to individual or collective actors and are, to a large extent, unacknowledged by social actors. Actors may use them, but do not control or produce them: 'power produces; it produces reality, it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production' (Foucault in Rabinow 1984:204).

However, in his later work on Governmentality, Foucault's thinking allows more space to agency and inter-subjectivity in the deployment and control of discourses:

> What individuals, what groups or classes have access to a particular kind of discourse? How is the relationship institutionalised between the discourse, speakers and its destined audience? How is the relationship of the discourse to its author indicated and defined? How is struggle for the control of discourses conducted between classes, nations, linguistic, cultural or ethnic collectivities? (Foucault 1978:15)

and:

> Discoursing subjects form a part of the discursive field. They have their place within it (and their possibilities of displacements) and their function (and their possibilities of functional mutation). (Foucault 1978:13)

I take these questions to indicate an awareness of hierarchically stratified subjectivities handling, appropriating, controlling, creating, and reacting to discourses, even though Foucault does not tell us how he reconciles these views with his work on the prison and his earlier studies (cf. McNay 1992:49).

I do not think that it is necessary to choose between the two meanings of discourse discussed above, but it is useful to specify which meaning one adopts for the purpose of a specific analysis. The historical and social conditions of possibility of 'development' may be researched with the first meaning in mind; with Escobar, 'to speak of development as a historical construct requires an analysis of the mechanisms through which it becomes an active, real force. These mechanisms are structured by

forms of knowledge and power and can be studied in terms of processes of institutionalisation and professionalisation' (1995:44). Chapter 4 of this thesis reconstructs the ways in which certain forms of rationality, reflected in narratives about 'desertification in the Sahel', paved the way to a process of institution building and to a set of practices of which the Keita Project is a case in point.

In the remaining part of this section I will focus on the second meaning of 'discourse', a meaning which allows for the active manoeuvring of (competing) discourses on the part of different categories of actors. The question addressed here is: how does this manoeuvring, bargaining and negotiating process take place? The answer requires taking on board the peculiar characteristics of the object of study (an international development project) discussed in section 1.2.

'Discourses' in this sense have been used by several authors. I have already mentioned Escobar's focus on 'the production of discourse under conditions of unequal power' (Escobar 1995:9). With this formula, Escobar aims to direct the readers' attention to the non reciprocal ways in which knowledge about the 'Third World' is produced, a knowledge which allows for the establishment of exploitative relations in which 'experts produced a regime of truth and norms' (1995:46) and 'many in the Third World began to think of themselves as inferior, underdeveloped and ignorant' (1995:52). Along similar lines, criticising Foucault's use of the notion of discourse, Mouzelis asks 'what, for example, are the connections between [the discourses of] national, regional, local elites and those of peasants? In other words, how are discourses hierarchically organised in social space?' (1995:56)

Shore and Wright, looking at discourses of policy, try to identify the types of resources which political actors bring to bear on policy processes to make their discourses prevail. 'Although some discourses are deeply embedded in institutional policy and practice', they argue that contributions to their volume 'reveal how they are constantly contested and sometimes fractured' (1997:20). 'A key concern is "who has the power to define": dominant discourses work by setting up the terms of reference and by disallowing and marginalizing alternatives' (Shore and Wright 1997:18). Central to this issue is Henrietta Moore's observation that contestations and negotiations over discourses are rarely interpretative contests between equals : 'it is not just that there are

competing discourses about rights and needs, but also that such discourses are stratified [along axes of inequality]' (Moore 1994:100). Socially-established differences between categories of people influence the relative 'leverage' that differently situated actors can exert when negotiating over the interpretation of identities, needs and rights.

There can be little doubt that, in the field of development, discourses are stratified and that the point of view of the dominant (what Bourdieu would call 'doxa', cf. Bourdieu 1998:75) presents itself as a universal point of view and has effects of a much greater scale than those of other discourses. One of the clearest examples of this is Fairhead and Leach's examination of the contrast between the formulation of problems in development environmental policy and the perspective of villagers 'whose views have been subjugated and everyday activities criminalized, within this formulation' (Fairhead and Leach 1997:35). The authors contrast official readings of environmental change, supporting the argument of a 'savannization' of tropical forest supposedly due to, *inter alia*, destructive human practices, with the villagers' view that their land use has maintained or enhanced woody vegetation cover. Although oral recollections concerning vegetation use, comparative analysis of air photographs from 1952, and satellite data confirm that the area in question is actually a 'post-savannah', not a 'post-forest' zone, the convergence of multiple factors reinforces the narrative of official development sources. This narrative is operationalised into development projects and environmental policies which have far reaching consequences for the lives of the Kissidougou villagers observed by Fairhead and Leach. 'Today, villagers' own ecological knowledge and experience have been unable successfully to challenge the landscape readings driving policy. This is partly because of the power relations at the farmers' interface with environmental agencies and urban intellectuals' (Fairhead and Leach 1997:35; cf Swift 1996).

The field of development intervention is characterised by sharp power inequalities, with important consequences for whose discourses prevail. Mouzelis' analytical distinction between macro, meso and micro actors may prove a useful point of entry to explain the hierarchic interplay of the different categories of actors involved in a project: 'actors at the top of hierarchically organised wholes play games the consequences of which tend to be macro (i.e. they stretch widely in time and space). The opposite is true for those at the bottom of social hierarchies' (Mouzelis 1995:157).

With reference to the case discussed above, environmental policy makers play games the consequences of which can be seen as 'macro', while Kissidougou's villagers are unable to make their interpretation prevail.

I have argued in this section that, at any particular time, the structure of the field of project 'intervention' is disproportionately influenced by the agency and rationality of 'macro' actors. Using a more 'subjective' reading of 'discourse' (the 'second meaning' mentioned above) allows an analysis of the ways in which, in Mouzelis' terms, 'macro actors' are able to impose their discourses and interpretations, with consequences that are far reaching and influence the lives and activities of 'meso' or 'micro' actors. This does not mean that 'micro actors' are powerless. In order to explain the conditions which make possible widely documented forms of 'local room for manoeuvre' and/or resistance, the 'peculiar' spatial-social structure of the field of project intervention must be taken into account as *explanans*.

As noted above, the field of project intervention includes many different spaces that are discontinuous from each other. The socio-cultural and spatial *distance* between these spaces increases the room for manoeuvre available to actors situated within any one constituting space, and the chances of independent strategising for the unfolding of separate 'projects in the Project'. In the following section I will clarify this statement with reference to the workings of 'distance' in the development field, illustrated though examples taken from my own evidence and other anthropological studies of development.

1.5 Reconceptualising the Object of Study: Distance and Distanciation in Development.

The hyperspace (Kearney 1996) created by the Keita Project's intervention encroaches upon the semi-autonomous social fields which constitute it (Moore 1973). These fields are geographically and socio-culturally distant from each other. The men and women of the Ader Doutchi Majiya, the planners, the Italian and Nigerien consultants, and the members of project staff, 'belong' simultaneously to the field of project intervention and to fields that are more circumscribed, such as Keita's village politics and UN and Italian bureaucratic contexts. Development discourses and 'rules of the game', which are determined to a large extent by 'macro' actors, are only one of a number of factors

that affect the decisions people make. But actors also respond to pressures from smaller fields, which are, in turn, internally stratified. Hence, actors are strategising across different hierarchical wholes at the same time, and 'macro' referents may differ across these wholes.

This way of conceptualising the object of research draws attention to the connections between the field of project intervention and the semi-autonomous fields which constitute it. The research problems raised here are: how do actors belonging to culturally, socially and geographically 'distant' contexts understand the 'project intervention' to which they all – with different roles - partake? How do they operationalise their understanding of what 'development' can do for them? What forms of inter-subjectivity arise between actors? These are interpretative questions, which take spatial and socio-cultural distance as a starting point.

The conditions for understanding across historical and cultural 'distance' have been theorised by Hans-Georg Gadamer in his philosophy of hermeneutics. Gadamer originally developed his hermeneutic theory as an attempt to answer the question of how understanding is possible across historical distance (cf. Bernasconi 1995:178; Gadamer 1975). He addresses the distance which characterises alterity in his analysis of the I-Thou relation. 'Conventionally, hermeneutics has represented alterity as a problem to be overcome' (Bernasconi 1995:179). However, Gadamer has challenged this approach by resorting to the notion of the Socratic dialogue, which implies an 'openness' to the other[7]. Dialogue does not stem from assertiveness and self-certainty, but from questioning one's own assumptions and trying to comprehend the other's message from the other's perspective. This requires a 'distanciation' (*Verfremdung*) from one's own prejudices and a willingness to put one's beliefs 'at risk': 'Openness to the other, then, includes the acknowledgement that I must accept some things that are against myself, even though there is no one else who asks this of me' (Gadamer 1975:324). The emphasis is on the intersubjective, rather than the subjective, dimension (cf. Scheibler 2000:61). In his later work, Gadamer suggests that this model applies to understanding across cultural distance:

[7] '[t]o understand what a person says is, as we saw, to agree about the object, not to get inside another person and relive his experiences' (Gadamer 1975:345).

> To understand someone else is to see the justice, the truth of their position. And this is what transforms us. And if we then have to become part of a new worldcivilisation [sic], if this is our task, then we shall need a philosophy which is similar to my hermeneutics, a philosophy which teaches us to see the justification for the other's point of view and which thus makes us doubt our own. (1986:152)

Distance across time or culture is not seen as an insurmountable hermeneutic barrier, but as the precondition for distanciation from one's historical or cultural prejudices, because it is through the experience of distance that we become aware of our 'historicality' (Gadamer 1975:324) and 'culturality'.

The difficulty arises when trying to apply Gadamer's dialogic model to relations characterised by unequal power and diverging interests. In these circumstances the possibility of understanding may be refused and mutual 'openness' may be absent, because parties are brought together by socio-political concerns other than 'seeing the justification for the other's point of view'. Relations found in the world of development belong to this category. Here, as we have seen in previous sections, discourses are hierarchically stratified and the conditions of mutual openness and status equality necessary for the establishment of reciprocal understanding do not occur. As has been argued by Edelmann (1984), this is all the more paradoxical in the case of 'the political language of the helping professions', because, while appearing to give help to the poor, they portray a power relationship as a helping one:

> One of the consistent characteristics of the "helping" institutions is their care to limit forms of help that would make clients autonomous: money for the poor; liberating education and freedom for children of the poor or for "criminals"; physical and intellectual autonomy. The limit is enforced in practice while denied in rhetoric. (Edelman 1984:58)

While it can be argued reasonably that Gadamer's conceptions of dialogue, in general, tend to underestimate alterity and power inequality (cf. Bernasconi 1995), he does not entirely dismiss these cases. Gadamer mentions as another, flawed, mode of experience of the 'Thou', the mode in which one claims to understand the other even better than the other understands himself/herself, only with the purpose of dominating the other: 'This can have very varied degrees of tension, to the point of the complete domination of one person by the other' (Gadamer 1975:323)[8]. It is noteworthy that he illustrates this with the example of the helping professions:

[8] Bernasconi does in fact acknowledge this passage (1995:179), but seems to attribute less weight to it in Gadamer's thought than I would be prepared to do.

> The dialectic of charitable or welfare work in particular operates in this way, penetrating all relationships between men as a reflective form of the effort to dominate. The claim to understand the other person in advance performs the function of keeping the claim of the other person at a distance. (Gadamer 1975:323).

These instances of 'false dialectical appearance' (Gadamer 1975:323) explain 'the production of discourse under conditions of unequal power' (Escobar 1995:9) which, as we have seen, characterises the field of development intervention. Here, in the majority of cases, the other is seen 'as a tool' (Gadamer 1975:323), and knowledge of the other is sought in an instrumental way, to facilitate the unfolding of one's 'projects in the Project'. This is true for different categories of actors. The 'developers' seek knowledge of 'the poor' to legitimise 'intervention', and the 'target population' tries to manipulate 'development' actors and rationales in order to maximise its access to services and resources (material, social or cultural) made available by 'development interventions'. The geographic, social, and cultural distance which characterises relations between different actors in the development field facilitates what may be called 'room for manoeuvre' at the top and at the bottom, diminishing the accountability between actors. It is the effects of the project on closer domains of each actor's experience which usually account for the patterns of agency that are followed.

Below I illustrate this with some examples taken from my own evidence and other ethnographies of development. These case studies exemplify three main situations. First, they show that local patterns of agency in development are more responsive to local pressures and concerns than to the rationales of the overarching development field (room for manoeuvre at the bottom). Secondly, development planners and bureaucrats are also shown to base their decision-making not upon a concern with local priorities and expressed 'needs', but rather with other factors closer to their everyday life and work constraints (room for manoeuvre at the top). Finally, I will discuss the function of two specialised institutions, 'development brokerage' and 'sensitisation', which have the function of manipulating the other into doing something for one's own purposes. In both cases, the other is a tool for the unfolding of one's strategies, and understanding the other in a certain way is instrumental to one's (unspoken) ends.

In her study of development projects in an Indian village in Ecuador (Lentz 1988), Carola Lentz discusses the 'partial acceptance or redefinition of external offers'

(1988:200) in Shamanga, a small Indian community in the parish of Cajamba in Chimborazo province. In Shamanga, most village households had insufficient access to land, and relied on urban migration as a primary source of income. When Shamanga's five-year elected village committee (*cabildo*) was able to initiate a cattle-breeding project in cooperation with FODERUMA,[9] numerous households expressed an interest in obtaining credit from FODERUMA for the purchase of piglets for fattening (pig-breeding based on kitchen refuse being open even to families without much land). However, the state advisers insisted that any possible credit be used for the purchase of cattle (cf. Lentz 1988:213). FODERUMA advisers here were able to impose their original plans without trying to understand the position of Shamanga's villagers. As a consequence, only one third of the village families finally took a loan with FODERUMA, which some used for other purposes. However, those households for whom migration was the most important form of income and for whom the village had little importance as a site of production, were indifferent or opposed to the project, and, at the following elections for a new *cabildo,* the councillors responsible for the project were replaced by new members 'whom most of the villagers quite openly dismissed as "incompetent" and who did not pursue the matter further' (Lentz 1988:213). The same strategies had already been adopted in similar circumstances in the past. 'The election of an incompetent community council can thus be seen from this perspective as a strategy to prevent a group of families in the village "developing" at the cost of those who concentrate their income strategies more strongly in the urban area' (Lentz 1988:214). While FODERUMA agents were able to quite rigidly determine the objectives of the project, dismissing the expressed wishes of Shamanga villagers, local 'room for manoeuvre' was evident in the election of an incompetent elite, which represented a form of 'sabotage' of the plans of 'macro' actors.

In Chapter 7 of this thesis, I look at the case of the *Foyer Féminin de Keita*, an institution made available by the Project to improve the conditions of Keita's women. At first, it may seem that local strategies to gain some benefits from the *Foyer* should seek the support of project staff. However, at the elections of a new committee for the *Foyer*, local elite actors who had been responsible for the failure of Foyer initiatives a few years earlier, were re-elected by Keita women instead of lower status candidates, undeniably better suited for the task and supported by the Project. Keita women were

[9] *Fondo de Desarrollo del Sector Rural Marginal,* a subdivision of the Central Bank founded to improve

'investing' in their relation with *local* elites, a relation from which they gained benefits in domains *other* than that of project activities. At the local level, the field of Project intervention intertwines with other fields of action, giving rise to strategies which cannot be explained only in the light of forces at play in the project field. Also in this case, the local strategy of electing elites was at the same time a more effective way to use project operations from a local perspective, and a refusal of project rationales and criteria of efficiency.

A more complex example is provided by Arce and Long's ethnography of peasant-bureaucrat relations in Western Mexico (1993). Their study looks at the consequences of the application of the Mexican Food Program (SAM, *Sistema Alimentario Mexicano*) in the peasant community (*ejido*) of La Lobera in San Cristobal de la Barranca. It focuses on the figure of Roberto, a *tècnico* (technical agronomist) working for the Ministry of Agriculture and Hydraulic Resources (SAHR). The central aim of SAM in districts like La Lobera was the increase of rain-fed maize production. However, both richer and poorer peasants resisted the 'modernisation' implied by the SAM development programme, partly due to their mistrust of the Government, partly to different perceptions of agriculture and agricultural development between development agency personnel and producers. Bureaucrats at the SAHR district office failed to recognise the diversified nature of the local economy and system of production (1993:189-192), and entertained a stereotypical image of La Lobera as a geographically isolated 'rough place' (1993:183) associated with illegal activities and suspicious of outsiders. The peasants' belief that the government works against them and does not understand their problems functioned as an ideological barrier to developing relationships of trust (*confianza*) with government personnel. Hence, both 'openness' and 'dialogue' are absent in the relation between peasants and bureaucrats. However, the geographic 'isolation' of San Cristobal acted in favour of producers, who could sometimes divert programme resources to finance their own economic ventures, while limiting administrative interferences in their lifestyle and production system:

> [...] producers are basically oriented toward keeping control over the organization of their households and local enterprises, while at the same time attempting, where possible, to profit from whatever outside resources may come their way. [...] Thus, despite their geographical and institutional 'marginality' and their poverty *vis à vis* other social strata or sectors, they

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living conditions for the poorest strata of the rural population (Lentz 1988:201).

nevertheless know how to live with their 'isolation' and extract some benefits from it. (Arce and Long 1993:194)

Nevertheless, in the course of a meeting with La Lobera producers, Roberto managed to win the *confianza* of a peasant leader, and to have a petition for a bailing machine signed by the producers, which he presented to the head of his unit. In turn, Roberto promised the producers' leader that he would try to further the leader's plan to develop fruit tree production in La Lobera. The head of the unit pointed out, however, that 'the policy of the ministry was not to support livestock activities, but the production of maize' (1993:200), and eventually Roberto and the head entered into an open confrontation. Some weeks later Roberto was transferred to another unit.

Long and Arce argue that the case reveals 'the enormous gaps in communication and the power differentials in Mexico between peasants and state development agencies' (1993:206). Also in this case bureaucratic authorities (the head of the unit) are able to impose a particular interpretation of agricultural development (irrespective of its actual accuracy and profitability to the producers) within the field of project intervention. However, due to their distance from the centres of bureaucratic control, La Lobera producers maintain considerable freedom to continue pursuing their economic strategies almost undisturbed. At a certain moment, Roberto could establish some *confianza* with the leader of the producers, but the episode had no following. Roberto opted to disregard ministerial policies and carried out his own 'project in the Project', which failed. The system worked so as to make him unaccountable, first toward the ministry (he disregarded the ministry's policy), and then toward the producers (he was transferred to another site).

A similar situation is described in Chapter 8 of this thesis, when Italian planners at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs decided to apply new approaches in international development to the Keita Project, and sent a series of 'missions' to evaluate the conditions for the implementation of these changes. Taking into account the resistance of the 'target population' to the intended changes, the consultants' report suggested that the new approaches be introduced in a less pervasive and more gradual way. Disappointed by the results of the mission, the planners sent a second mission which produced recommendations in line with the new approaches, taking no heed of the first mission's report. Consultants were de-responsibilised and project activities were

determined by adherence to international discourses rather than by the situation of the 'intervention' area.

My last examples focus on the role of 'development brokers' (Bierschenk, Chaveau and Olivier de Sardan 2000; cf. Bierschenk and Elwert 1988:104) and on the notion of 'sensitisation'. Development brokers are engaged in a farce, through which they use their understanding of the development logic to make development work for their own priorities, which may not be the same priorities identified by the 'developers'. Through 'sensitisation', which is discussed in greater depth in Chapter 5 of this thesis with reference to its function in the Keita Project, rather than responding to the genuine demand of the 'target population', development creates a demand for the type of services it has to offer. These two phenomena are related, because the villagers learn the logic of development as they are being 'sensitised', and use the language and criteria learned this way in forms of brokerage aimed at achieving their own priorities (or, more frequently, the priorities of a powerful local elite). These practices set up a secretly acknowledged mutual deception, which makes available what, in this case, both parties want: a project (cf. Neubert 2000).

Brokers in development (*courtiers en développement*) function as intermediaries between the 'developers' and the 'target populations'. Amongst their distinctive traits, brokers (who in most cases are originally representatives of the –potential- 'target population') are characterised by a command of development discourses (Bierschenk, Chaveau, Olivier de Sardan 2000:22); and they ought to have travelled acquiring experience abroad and contacts with development projects (2000:25). The broker must be able to speak 'the development language' and he is located exactly at the 'interface' between 'developers' and 'beneficiaries' (2000:26); he has the confidence of each of these categories of actors because he is assumed to be in close contact with the other category: 'it is because the dominant actors of the englobing society believe that peasants mandate him that he is listened by power and, respectively, peasants mandate him because they believe that power listens to him' (2000:18, my translation from French).

Mongbo brilliantly exemplifies the role of development brokers in his ethnography of the village of Gliten in Benin. Gliten is conducting 'a real hunt for

NGOs' (2000:235), 'primarily with a view to obtaining WFP food-for-work rations (*vivres PAM*)'(2000:221). Praising the operations of the brokers who have managed to bring the representatives of an NGO to the village, the President of the village federation (of development groups – *groupements*) says

> If you have a hunt dog and it is a real hunt dog, you bring him to hunt and you reach the borders of a forest where you do not dare to penetrate because it is *entirely unknown to you*. Well, you remain there, your dog will go into the forest and will bring you some game. We greet and thank these young *akowé* sitting at the back who have brought us this game... (2000:234, my italics)

The metaphor of the hunt dog and the game reverses some of the cases discussed above, showing how 'local room for manoeuvre' can operate not only in contrast to projects, but also to attract the potential benefits a project has to offer to a local community. Here, the broker 'bridges' the (potential) intervention area and the sources of development, contributing to 'joining' together the sites which will end up constituting the multi-sited field of project intervention. Cultural and geographic distance justifies the need for the figure of the development broker, capable of speaking the 'development language' and dealing with a field 'entirely unknown' to villagers.

The term 'sensitisation' (*sensibilisation*) is commonly used in the development jargon of Francophone Africa, to refer to a set of activities carried out by development practitioners to 'help' the target population 'become aware' of their problems and the solutions to these problems. In his ethnography of the Timidria association in Niger, Tidjani-Alou argues that the term *sensibilisation* 'suggests that the constituted group is not always aware of its needs. It is the [development] association which defines [the needs for the population] and which shows them their meaning' (2000:288).

Writing about the same phenomenon, Bierschenk notes that 'with sensibilisation [sic] meetings it is a matter of convincing a small group [...] that a certain measure decided by the project is worth carrying out and of mobilising the target group for the tasks that were intended for them in this setting' (1988:155). Here too, if the discourses produced by development institutions and the system of knowledge of the 'target population' were not geographically, culturally, and linguistically so distant, the 'developers' would not require a specialised function to create a need framed according to their own forms of rationality, and villages would not need brokers to take advantage of the 'development revenue'.

The cases discussed above show that the cultural and spatial distance which characterises relations in the development field allows 'room for manoeuvre' at the bottom and at the top. The former is evident in the manipulation of Project aims by the part of so-called beneficiaries to achieve results which are relevant to their life and production strategies (and which it is *their* 'project' to achieve), but which the 'developers' refuse to incorporate in their plans. This refusal, which may at first appear paradoxical, has been analysed by Clay and Schaffer (1984) who argued that, against 'common-sense models of policy' (1984:12), the 'real priorities' of planners (such as getting funds disbursed on time) are explained by factors closer to their everyday life and work constraints, than the actual 'priorities' of the 'target population'. This is what Clay and Schaffer refer to as 'the bureaucratic irony': 'the development of policy cannot be understood or assisted if we neglect the bureaucratic irony (avoiding risk, surviving but still getting something done, e.g. spending funds)' (1984:10). One of the reasons why development planners can take little account of the 'real needs' of the target population is that the system works in a way by which individual or collective actors accountable for the implementation of plans are external to the intervention area, in most cases based in distant sites and/or highly mobile (cf. Shore and Wright 1997:11).

Distance here is actively maintained. It functions not so as to distanciate one from one's prejudices and open up to the other's perspective, but to maximise one's room for manoeuvre *in spite of* the other's perspectives. This pattern of agency is partly made possible by the multi-sited structure of the development field. Mutual understanding is not impossible. In fact, the success of the Keita Project in its first 15 years of intervention is explained by a commonality of intents among the actors involved in it. Development projects open spaces for the unfolding of 'projects in the Project', and different categories of actors 'use' (development) projects for their respective strategies. These strategies must be understood in the light of the connection between the explicit objectives that dominate the 'field of project intervention', and the idiosyncratic objectives of actors who simultaneously occupy positions in the 'project intervention field' and in more circumscribed fields closer to their life experiences. An actor involved in a development project, be he/she the project manager or a Keita woman working on project worksites for food-for-work, is confronted by the question of how the project can contribute or help him/her to realise his/her aspirations. These

aspirations must be understood in the light of the different fields to which the actor belongs at a particular time (e.g. the field of marriage strategies, of land transactions, of career strategies, of technological and scientific achievements).

Keita's 'success' is usually presented as an exception to the rule of development failures. What is perhaps even more exceptional is that, in the first three phases, the idiosyncratic projects of different actors involved in the Keita Project did not run against each other. Keita accommodated and contributed to the realisation of the strategies of different categories of actors, and hence 'it worked' (Chapters 4,5,6). When the premises for its 'intervention' changed, the cooperation between the parties to the project began to fail (cf. Chapter 8). This thesis tries to document the story of the Keita Project, exploring the different perspectives of the actors involved. It illustrates the rise and the likely beginning of the fall of the Keita Project. Waiting for time to write the epilogue of this story, the thesis' conclusion only advances some hypotheses for further reflection on what Keita has to teach about the workings of rural development projects.

1.6 Methodology and Fieldwork Organisation

The broader framework of my research methodology is multi-sited ethnography. I have conducted research in Italy and Niger. The greatest part of my fieldwork took place in the intervention area of the PDR/ADM. Here, I spent approximately 16 months, broken up as follows: I resided for about 12 months in the town of Keita, where the project has its headquarters; and about 4 months in the village of Tinkirana Tounga, which has received, since the beginning of PDR/ADM activities, a range of different types of project 'interventions'.

Keita, district capital at the time of my research, is a medium size town of about 6,000 souls, where the Project has established its headquarters. Keita hosts the district's administrative offices (*sous-préfecture*) and the court of the highest ranking 'traditional authority' (*autorité coûtoumière*) at the Canton level, the Sarki or *Chef du Canton*.

In Keita I conducted standard participant observation within the PDR/ADM offices, with project management, division chiefs, and extensionists, and among the people of the town of Keita. In addition to participant observation in the Project, I conducted semi-structured interviews with project management (2 interviews), with

Division Chiefs and Assistants (14 interviews), and with women extensionists (10 interviews and one group encounter). The interviews allowed me to compare the individual views of almost all members of staff working in the headquarters offices, and to gain a more systematic understanding of what project staff thought about 'development', 'intervention', and the 'target population'. However the interviews were only one tool in the constant informal chats and exchange of ideas about various issues and happenings which characterised the considerable amount of time I spent in the company of project staff members. I had many occasions to talk about the project with members of another category of staff, comprising about 60 people, and including electricians, mechanics, machine and tractor drivers, meeting them in the field (and sometimes asking for lifts to certain villages), following the engineering consultant during his meetings with them and joining the dinners they sometimes organised.

After the first month of fieldwork, during which I familiarised myself with Keita and the project staff, on week-days I often followed project staff 'expeditions' to villages where different types of activities were being implemented. On these and other occasions, I carried out situational analysis (Van Velsen 1967), taking notes and recording extended case studies of project staff meetings and interactions with villagers, observing the activities going on in various types of project work-sites (dam building, reforestation trenches, anti-erosion bunds, etc.), and following the activities of local men's or women's income generating groups 'supported' by PDR/ADM extension. Throughout more than two years of research and consultancy work at the Keita Project, I have followed activities in more than 70 villages in the project intervention area. However, for the purposes of this thesis, I have recorded detailed case studies in 20 villages (Chadawanka; Garadawa; Gounzou; Kourega; Kossongo; Koutki; Ibohamane; Insafari; Laba; Loudou Grab Grab; Loudou Ibagatan; Mansala Kel Gress; Mansala Sedentaire; Ouroub; Seyté; Tamaske; Tinkirana Ibarogan; Tinkirana Tounga; Toumboulana; Zangarata). Sometimes I remained in a village overnight or for a few days, to enquire into the local debates following the visit of project staff.

Tinkirana Tounga is a 'Bouzou' village (cf. Chapter 6) of about 500 people (Simonelli 1994:11), where almost all adult men practise seasonal urban migration to earn money needed to buy cereals to integrate local production. For more than four

months[10], in Tinkirana, I carried out participant observation of the life-style of local men and women, spending time with actors of different genders and ages, following village events, with a focus on household livelihood strategies and interactions with the Project. I also looked at those categories of actors who did not, apparently, interact with the Project, or who were kept from doing so (e.g. a few secluded women).

In the villages of Tinkirana Tounga and Seyté I conducted separate interviews with adult men and women of 8 separate households in each village, aiming at achieving a better understanding of intra-household resource allocation and livelihood strategies (Bernstein, Crow and Johnson 1992; Haddad, Hoddinott and Alderman 1997). I was able to compare my findings with two extensive surveys of 85 families carried out by the Monitoring and Evaluation Division of the Project in 1994 and 1998. During the second 1998 survey I followed the interviewers and witness their interviews with local people. With reference to the economic sphere of women and women's activities, I could compare my findings with the studies of Lucia Cremona (1985) and Bayard (1995). These studies are part of a number of studies and surveys carried out by various consultancies at the Keita Project (see in particular Paoletti and Taliani 1984; Simonelli 1994; Cremona 1995; 1996; Bayard 1995; Bayard, Paoletti and Traoré 1997). Most of these sources provide quantitative data and statistics which were needed by the Project to compare the situation *ex ante* and *ex post* its interventions, and which I occasionally refer to, to give the reader a sense of the dimensions of certain phenomena.

I spent about three weeks in Niamey, carrying out archival research and doing ethnography in the PDR/ADM Niamey-based office, in the FAO office, and in the Italian Honorary Consulate. I spent about two months in Italy, doing archival research and conducting semi-structured interviews[11] in the FAO and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome.

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[10] The 4 months were broken up into three periods of 1 to 1.5 months each, which allowed me to compare local activities during the rainy season, when male migrants return to carry out agricultural work, with life in the slack season (November – May). During the first of the three periods spent in Tinkirana, I carried out a general ethnographic study of the village. During my first stay in Tinkirana I did not speak the language well and I benefited from the invaluable help of Mohamed Bachar, a Tuareg geographer at the time doing research for his dissertation at the University of Niamey.

[11] These interviews were rather informal open ended discussions about the Project, guided by a set of questions I had prepared in advance, which allowed some members of staff of institutions involved in the PDR/ADM to confidentially explain me their own reconstructions and interpretations of events relevant to the Project's history.

Doing multi-sited ethnography has meant that I quite literally followed a plot (cf. Marcus 1995:109), the plot of the PDR/ADM's 'intervention', in the different locales where it was unfolding and where it acquired different meanings. This plot was being narrated and operationalised in different languages. I learned Hausa by following an introductory course at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) during my M.Phil., and in the field I learned the local dialect, closer to the 'Sakkwatanci' variant of Hausa (Caron 1991). In the course of fieldwork, I have alternatively used Hausa, French, Italian, or English. Tuareg and Bouzou people (native Tamasheq speakers), as well as Fulani (or Peul) herders in the Ader Doutchi Majiya are all fluent in Hausa as a second language, so speaking Hausa gave me access to almost all social constituencies present in the area.

In order to make sense of the 'macro' narratives justifying the PDR/ADM's establishment and the nature of its activities, I applied discourse analysis to the extensive documentation available on the Project, including consultants' reports and programmatic documents of Niger, Italy, or the FAO, produced at different moments of the Project's life (Roe 1994; Apthorpe and Gasper 1996; Grillo and Stirrat 1997).

Toward the end of my fieldwork, I worked as an independent consultant for the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for four separate periods of one month. My employer was always aware of the topic of my Ph.D. and I discussed the possibility of working as a consultant with my informants, who encouraged me to do so. Everything started from my own informal discussions about local perspectives of PDR/ADM activities with visiting officers of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and with the Italian Programme Manager of the Project. They expressed interest in my findings, and contacted me, after their return to Italy, asking me to write a report on the impact of project activities on women's status. After this first consultancy, I was asked to participate in other joint consultancies for the formulation of the PDR/ADM's Fourth Phase.

My experience as a consultant provided me with significant opportunities to gain insights into, and information about, the process of policy making and implementation from the vantage point of those who work within a project, from a particular situated perspective (cf. Grindle and Thomas 1991:xii; Allen, Porter and Thompson 1991:xvi).

Participant observation in the field of project intervention broadened my understanding of the strategies of different categories of actors, and of the different conceptualisations and operationalisations of different actors with regards to the project. I participated in different types of meetings where certain 'facts' (such as changes in the composition of the WFP food ration) were interpreted according to different perspectives, resulting in different patterns of agency by different actor categories. Some meetings were conducted 'at the interface' between different stakeholders, and their respective bargaining and negotiation strategies exposed their respective views and interests.

Working as a consultant also gave me a stronger sense of my own positioning within the field of PDR/ADM intervention. Through the assumption of a new role, which did not substitute my researcher role, but was added to it, it became even more evident that as a researcher I was 'merely a different institutional interest, and a thoroughly elite one at that' (Marcus 1999:17). The field I was studying had been, and was being, mediated by other projects of representation: there are countless accounts of the PDR/ADM's 'intervention', official documents in different media produced by Italy, Niger, the FAO, the WFP, as well as project staff interpretations and local voices.

I cannot claim 'objectivity' nor pretend neutrality with regards to the story of the Keita Project. In this introduction I have laid out my theoretical perspective and described my positioning and research methodologies in the field; in Chapter 8, my own activities are documented, with those of other actors, in an extended case study of the negotiations which characterised the adaptation of new approaches to the Project's working methods. By situating my own perspective, I hope the reader will make better sense of the broader consequences of the story told in these pages for our understanding of 'development.' There are some aspects of my identity which have interfered with my informants' approach toward me. Being white and Italian, I was often perceived as a project staff member by people in the 'intervention area', and I had to explain my role and the purposes of my presence when I visited new villages. Although Niger is a Moslem country, being a woman did not represent an obstacle in my interactions with men. Instead, my relatively young age seemed to generate diffidence among people older than myself, both Nigerien and Italian, and it generally took me some time to gain the confidence of elders and senior development workers.

1.7 Thesis Organisation

The thesis contains nine Chapters. After this introduction, Chapter 2 covers the historical background of the Ader Doutchi Majiya. It highlights the historical process which led to a form of interethnic and complementary hierarchy between Tuareg herders and Hausa farmers, and describes the configurations of power which resulted from these historical events. Chapter 3 presents the ethnographic background of the societies living in the project intervention area, with a particular focus on aspects relevant to project intervention.

Each of the three following chapters illustrates a different perspective and pattern of agency *vis à vis* the Keita Project. Chapter 4 unravels narratives of 'desertification' and 'lost equilibrium' between people and the environment, which characterise 'macro' development discourses about the Project. It analyses the intervention strategies devised to 'fight against the advancing desert', focusing on the First Italian Initiative to Fight Against Desertification in the Sahel, which set the premises for the establishment of the PDR/ADM. Chapter 5 is an ethnography of the Project and the members of staff within it. It enquires into the perceptions of 'development' entertained by project staff and explores how the 'desertification narrative' presented in Chapter 4 was appropriated and readapted by the actors responsible for 'doing development'. Chapter 6 focuses on local people's perspectives and practical involvement in project intervention. It highlights the interactions between four key factors to explain the meanings acquired by project 'intervention' at a local level: the sexual division of labour; intra-household resource allocation; the PDR/ADM's environmental impact on productive resources; and the distribution of food-for-work rations.

Chapters 7 and 8 cut across the three perspectives analysed separately in the previous chapters, looking at how these perspectives confronted each other with reference to two axes of project 'intervention': gender and participation. Chapter 7 describes critiques of the Project which came from a gender perspective, how they were integrated in the Project through the opening of a new Division for the Promotion of Women, and how activities carried out by this division intertwined with local 'projects in the Project'. Chapter 8 is an ethnography of change in development practice. By looking at how different categories of actors (planners, consultants, local authorities,

ADM men and women) confronted the problem of changing the Project's approach, it explores the different rationalities and interests of these actors with reference to project activities. Chapter 9 concludes the thesis with some reflections on 'lessons learned from the Keita Project', both from the perspective of an anthropology of development and with regards to development policy.

2. HISTORICAL REVIEW OF THE ADER DOUTCHI MAJIYA

2.1. Introduction

The Republic of Niger (cf. map I) is divided into seven departments which, in turn, are subdivided into 35 districts. It has a population of approximately 9 million with an annual growth rate of 3.2 percent (FAO 1995). The capital is Niamey. The majority of its soils fall within the Saharan desert and the sub-Saharan arid belt of the Sahel:

> 'The territory of the Republic of Niger lies between 11.37 and 11.23 north latitudes, which means the vast majority of its territory lies in the Saharan region, not in the Sahel. Its Sahelian territory, a tiny strip of land perhaps 150 miles (240 km) wide receiving between 10 inches and 30 inches (250 mm and 750 mm) of rainfall a year, gives Niger whatever human and economic interest it may have, and hence Niger is known as a Sahelian country' (Charlick 1991:2).

The Nigerien section of the Sahel is characterised, historically, as a zone of transition, between the Saharan desert to the north and the Sudanic savannah to the south. For analytical purposes, the Sahel has itself been subdivided into two main areas: the northern part, falling between the 150 and 350 mm isohyets, where the influence of nomadic herders prevails; and the southern subdivision, between the 350 mm and 550 mm isohyets, inhabited mostly by sedentary farmers (Bernus 1974:138). The boundary between these two areas is not fixed, but shifts conspicuously with changing levels of rainfall. As a consequence of the droughts of 1968-74 and 1984, the Sahel has become a major pole of attraction for international aid interventions. The PDR/ADM was launched in 1984, on the basis of a tripartite partnership established between the FAO, and the Governments of Niger and of Italy. Located in the southern half of the Department of Tahoua, the intervention area of the PDR/ADM coincides with the region of Niger known as 'Ader Doutchi Majiya' (cf. maps I and II).

The Ader Doutchi Majiya[12] (ADM) is 'the region comprised in a rough square, the four corners of which coincide with [the cities of] Tawa [sic], Gadamata, Madawa,

[12] The term 'Ader' is attested since the beginning of the 18th century (Echard 1975:17). According to the local oral tradition wants it derived from the words of the Sultan of Agadez, Mohammed Al Mubarek, to his son Agabba who was going to conquer and rule over the Ader: 'Agabba, Indabat-tagla tubuza waadar', 'Agabba, you shall take care of that foot'(Hamani 1975:104). 'Ader' means foot in Tamashek, and the sultan may have used this term just to mean 'part', or to indicate that the Ader region lay to the south of the Air. Urvoy (1936:257) argues that Agabba himself named the country Ader, upon a false step he did when entering the area. According to Francis Nicolas, Ader in Tamashek means 'land of crevasses (*ravins)*' (Nicolas 1950:1; 51). Doutchi in Hausa means 'stone, rock'. The expression 'Ader Doutchi', would then mean 'Ader of the mountains', and would be contapposed to 'Ader Gulbi', used to refer to the

and Birni'n Konni' (Echard 1964:6). According to Bonte, the ADM region 'derives its unity from a unique policy of economic development, hydro-agricultural intervention and concerted administrative action. It coincides neither with a natural region, nor with traditional or actual administrative sectors. It is only the existence of common problems and common development possibilities which has led to the creation of this new regional entity' (1976:1). Therefore, the ADM owes its first appearance as a geographic entity to the phenomenon of 'development'. Nevertheless, due to its geographical boundedness, the inhabitants of the ADM share a common history and common institutions, in part developed to face similar ecological conditions.

The largest agricultural societies settled in the Nigerien Sahel comprise the Kanouri in the East, the Songhay-Djerma in the West, and the Hausa in the centre; the two principal nomadic societies are the Tuareg and the Peul or Fulani (Bernus 1974:138; Bourgeot 1975:280). The ADM region is characterised by the coexistence of Tuareg and Hausa settlements, and villages originated from the detachment (at least partial) of ex-Tuareg captives from the relation of dependence which tied them to their former patrons. The Peul or Fulani constitute an important minority, which more than any other group has maintained a pastoral and nomadic lifestyle.

This chapter reconstructs the main historical events of the ADM. The long period between the 11th and the 16th century saw the arrival and settlement of successive waves of Hausa speaking migrants in the ADM. In a process which lasted four centuries, autochthonous groups and immigrants fused into a single Hausa speaking society, which, by the 17th century, had developed some internal stratification and was organised into chieftaincies (*sarauta*). The most powerful chieftaincy in the area was headed by the Kanta of Kabi. In the 17th century, Prince Agabba, son of the Sultan of Agadez in the Air Region, defeated the Kanta's armies and established direct Tuareg control in the Ader-Doutchi. Agabba came accompanied by the Lissawan confederation. The Lissawan today speak Hausa and are the recognised traditional authority in the Canton of Keita. This first group of Tuareg invaders substituted their direct control, exercised mainly through the levying of tributes, to the Kanta's indirect control over the Hausa chieftaincies, which otherwise remained in place with few exceptions. After a

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eastern area which connects the Ader to the Majiya (Nicolas 1950:1). According to Echard, the terms 'doutchi' and 'majiya' would have been introduced by the French colonial administration 'preoccupied with geographic nomenclature'(1975:17).

relatively peaceful 18th century, the 19th century was characterised by the arrival of the Tuareg Iullemden and Kel Gress in the ADM and their struggle for power over the area; by the expansion of the Sokoto Sultanate following the jihad led by Usman dan Fodyo; and by the minor jihad of Al Jilani, which originated in the Azawak and spread to the Ader. By the beginning of 20th century, the arrival of French missions put an end to the ongoing strife between Kel Gress and Iullemden, defeating them, respectively, in 1901 and 1917. In 1922 Niger became a French Colony (*Colonie du Niger*). French intervention significantly undermined the Tuareg influence over the ADM, through coercive repression and the abolition of slavery. The new colonial administration was characterised by an extractive economic policy, levying taxes also in years of drought and food deficit. After World War II, Niger acquired the status of *Territoire d'Outre Mer*, and France established a development fund (first FIDES, then FAC) which marked the beginning of Niger's 'development history'. In 1960, Niger acquired independence under the presidency of Diori Hamani, and the Hamani government published the first Ten Year Development Perspectives (1965-1974). One of the first Rural Development Projects financed by the *Fonds d'Aide et Coopération* (FAC) targeted the Ader Doutchi Majiya between 1964 and 1972. In 1974 Colonel Seiny Kountché seized power with a coup d'état and a few years later he established the 'Development Society', an institutionalised form of government in which distinctions between 'development', the state and the population are blurred. The Keita Project started its activities in the ADM in 1984 and, initially, its programme was influenced by the rationales and structures of the Development Society.

From this quick overview, it is possible to discern some important traits which characterised the history of the area known today as ADM: its nature as a boundary between northern (mainly pastoral, Tuareg) and southern (mainly agrarian, Hausa) societies and its consequent importance as an area of trade and exchange between the products of the north and of the south, testified by the existence of strategic market-cities, often specialising in particular goods. Agabba's invasion of the Ader Doutchi is recorded to have taken place in the course of one of the frequent trade expeditions of the prince of Agadez to today's Northern Nigeria.

Another important trait of the Ader Doutchi Majiya today, which finds its roots in the series of historical events described below, is the hierarchical nature of the

societies living in it, organised in a peculiar form of 'interethnic hierarchy' whereby the strata of the same hierarchy comprise groups belonging to different societies. Since the 19th century episodes of Islamic reformism, the ADM hosted a latent tension between the values of hierarchy and the Moslem belief in the equality of all men before God.

Finally, in this century, after the colonial episode, the ADM region derives its unity from being recognised as facing common environmental, social, and economic problems, and being targeted by similar 'development' interventions.

2.2 From the Early Migrations Until Kanta's Supremacy (11th – 17th Centuries)

The earliest known indigenous population of the Ader Doutchi Majiya was Hausa-speaking, and is referred to in the literature as 'Asna', 'Azna', or 'Anna'[13] (Hamani 1975; 1979; Echard 1975; Nicolas 1975). It was found in the region by the first wave of migrants, also Hausa-speaking, pushed south by the pressures of Tuareg groups to the North. The history of the first Azna settlements in the ADM is characterised by one essential trait, the north-south movement of populations under the pressure of other groups coming from the north, and obliging the previous occupiers to move southwards (cf. Echard 1964:11; Bonte 1967:41).

The first Berber groups to reach the Air[14], probably from what is nowadays Libya, did so under the pressure of the Arabs Beni Hilal in the 11th century (Hamani

[13] In the literature, this appellation is found either referring to 'the peoples settled [in southern Niger] before the establishment of Hausa dynasties' (Nicolas 1975:30), or to contrast the followers of the original autochtonous animist religion with Moslem believers (*musulmai)* (Nicolas 1975:59). This double meaning was recorded by early commentators: Sère de Rivières states that 'it is both an ethnic expression and a religious designation' (1965:47), and Urvoy notes that 'this term probably referred to the people of the Ader, and has been gradually extended to all pagans [*paiens*]' (1936:252). Today, people in the ADM are almost all Moslem, and never refer to themselves or others as Azna. In contrast with Echard's finding that, in the mid 1970s, 'Asna' meant 'people of the Ader' as opposed to other Hausawa or Tuareg (Echard 1975:11), my informants used the term very rarely and with a religious connotation to indicate animist belief (cf. Echard 1964:12). 'Asna' belief was considered incompatible with Islam and carried derogatory associations, even though 'in the majority of [Niger's] regions, a strict practice of Islam does not exclude participation in the cult of the *génies'* (Garçon 1998:13). Cf. Hamani: 'Today, everywhere in the ADM animism has been defeated by Islam. In Bagga, [a renown] Azna sanctuary, the last Sarkin Tsafi has converted to Islam [...]. However, the influence of the traditional religion is still strong in the countryside and, in the cities, the *kora* is still performed, for example in Tawa [sic]' (1975:51).

[14] According to H. Barth (quoted in Echard 1975:69), the terms Absen or Abzin would precede that of 'Air', used for the first time by Leon the African in the 11th century. 'Air' is a mountainous region to the south of the Sahara (Tenere) and to the east of the Tamesna (cf. map IV), falling between the 300 mm isohyet at its southern border, and the 50 mm isohyet at its northern border. According to Hamani, 'at a time difficult to establish, the entire [Air] region was inhabited by black populations, ancestors of the ones which occupy 'Central Niger' today, and maybe also the western part of [the Ader]' (1950:26). On

1975:31). At that time, according to Urvoy (1936:143), small groups of the Tuareg Igdalen and Iberkoreen were already scattered in the Air. They rapidly integrated into bigger Tuareg tribes escaping Arab pressure, and included the Lamta (Ilemteen) and, later, the Santal, Kel Gress, and Kel Ewey. All these groups claim to have originated from Aujila in today's Libya (for the Kel Gress, cf. F. Nicolas 1950:47), whereas the Lissawan (Illissawan), who reached the Ader at the time of Agabba's conquest (see below), give Albarka (Libya) as the point of departure of their migration (Hamani 1975:32).

In the early 12th century at the latest, the Tuareg southward movement triggered the displacement of Hausa-speaking groups settled in the Air and Azawagh regions[15] (see map II). These Abzinawa groups (people from Abzin or Air), also called 'Azna Mahalba'[16] (herding Azna) to distinguish them from the autochthonous Hausa speaking populations (called 'Aznan Ramu', see below), are likely to have been leading a semi-nomadic lifestyle for some time in the area between Azawagh and Ader until, under persistent Tuareg pressures, they reached the Ader Doutchi, which, due to its hilly topography, provided safe areas for shelter and defence from Tuareg attacks (Hamani 1975: 33).

In the ADM, the Azna Mahalba found the region inhabited by sparse Hausa-speaking groups, which are reported by the oral tradition to have lived in caves (from which their name, Aznan Ramu: Azna of the caves), naked or wearing leather clothing

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this subject, Francis Nicolas (1950:47) quotes Gouverneur Foureau's *Documents Scientifiques de la Mission Saharienne,* 1905, t. II, p.848 : 'Berbers did not always occupy the country of Aér [sic] or Abzen, but they have invaded it around the XIV century, establishing their domination over local Hausa populations, who had been the original owners of the soil'. (This version is supported by Ibn Khaldoun, Paris 1925, vol. II, p3; and by Urvoy 1934, vol. IV, p.154, both cited in Hamani 1975:88). The first Tuareg confederation to dominate the Air would have been that of the Sandal of Libya, followed by several other groups (Hamani 1975:88). The oral tradition reports that the Commander of the Believers of Constantinople, having been asked to do so by the Tuareg of Air, designated as the first Sultan of Air, the cherif El-Hajj el-Bacha from Fezzan (Nicolas 1950:50). This legend would sanction the claim to a Turkish origin of the Tuareg of Air. The Sultanate of Air established its capital in the city of Agadez.

[15] Echard omits the distinction between Azna Mahalba and Aznan Ramu, and seems to suggest that a single group of Azna moved south and settled in the Ader at the same time under Tuareg pressures. (1963 :12). Guy Nicolas, in a more general discussion of the origins of Hausa society, does not refer to the initial Tuareg 'push', but mentions a different division between hunters (*Maharba*) and farmers characterised as a 'millet civilisation', whose descendants would be referred to as 'masters of cultivation' (*sarakunan noma*) (Nicolas 1975:24-25). Here, I follow Hamani's version, as Hamani is the only one to have carried out in depth historical research specific to the Ader Doutchi Majiya.

[16] Due to their place of origin, the Azna Mahalba are also referred to as 'Abzinawa' (people of Abzin or Air) (cf. Hamani 1975:34; Hamani 1979:392; Echard 1964:12) , creating great confusion in the literature, as also the Tuareg resided in the Air. The Tuareg, however, are sometimes referred to as *Istambulawa*, as in their origin myths they claim descent from people coming from Istambul.

(Echard 1963:12; Hamani 1975:34). The Azna Mahalba reached the Ader Doutchi gradually, in small, uncoordinated groups of migrants. Each group had a distinctive name, reflecting its historical origins, or, more frequently, the area of the Ader where it settled at the end of its migration. According to Hamani (1975:34), the first wave of Azna Mahalba or Abzinawa groups to establish in the Ader Doutchi at different times since the 11th century, and following different routes were:

- The Gazurawa, who settled next to the Kalfu Valley;
- The Darayawa, settled on the northern branch of the Badeguisheri Valley, some kilometers to the south of the present-day village of Darey;
- The Gunamawa on the southern branch of the Badeguisheri Valley;
- The Kayasawa, next to the northern fringes of the Majiya Valley;
- The Magorawa and the Labatawa, along the Valley going from Laba to Tarwada.

Successively, and possibly between the 15th and the 16th century (cf. Hamani 1975:41), other migratory waves of Hausa speaking people reached the Ader Doutchi Majiya. Three main groups can be distinguished: those from the western Immanan region (*Immigrants de l'Ouest*); those from the east (mainly the Gobirawa coming from the nearby Gobir); and the Gazurawa, called 'Gazurawa of Gao' from their origin in the Songhai Empire, who settled in Gazaur in the Kalfu Valley, next to the above mentioned Gazurawa of the Air. Other Hausa-speaking groups having reached the ADM by the 18th century are the Maradawa, Kwannawa, Bitirawa, and Kambarawa (Hamani 1975:41-5).

Today, the Hausa population of the ADM consists of the descendants of the Aznan Ramu, the Azna groups who came from the Air (Abzinawa), the Gobirawa, the 'Immigrants from the East', and the various successive migratory waves from relatively nearby places.

By the mid 17th century, the bulk of Azna migrations, consisting of the Azna of Air, Gobirawa, and Azna of the East, had mixed with the original inhabitants of the Ader Doutchi and they had all adopted the common name of 'Azna', yet maintaining the distinction between Azna Mahalba (hunters) and Aznan Ramu (Azna of the caves).

According to Hamani

> the tradition relative to the indigenous inhabitants of the Ader suggests that they spoke the same language (Hausa) of the immigrants, considerably facilitating the first contacts which were, it is said, pacific; we find no mention of conquest or war against the indigenes; the latter, rather fearful, had sought refuge in their caves at the arrival of the Azna of Abzin. In the majority of cases, this is how the oral tradition reports the establishment of ties between Azna of Abzin and indigenes: the immigrants suspected that there might be other inhabitants in the region, but could not see them; in fact, they were hiding for some time, but finally they were discovered. They were naked and this is why they hide, they explained to the newcomers. The strangers then gave them clothes, made them come out of their caves, and together they founded new villages, sometimes living in different neighbourhoods. (1975:34-35)

Today, the social organisation and power relations in the ADM are the result of a complex interaction between Hausa and Tuareg components. However, it is noteworthy that the Aznan Ramu were essentially hunter-gatherers. Although they came from drier latitudes, agriculture was known to the Aznan Mahalba, who introduced it in the Ader, together with more sophisticated craftsmanship styles and with the habit of living in villages (cf. Hamani 1975:45-52). In these new types of settlement, the Aznan Ramu maintained a primary religious role over the earth and natural forces. Tradition attributed them with supernatural powers over the land's fertility and some animal species, and their status was that of '*yan kasa*': sons of the land (Hamani 1975:39).

Already at the beginning of the 16th century, the settlements created by the fusion between Aznan Ramu and the first (Abzinawa) migratory waves had overcome the basic village-level organisation, developing internal hierarchical distinctions between *telakawa* (commoners) and a political/religious aristocracy resulting from the lineages who had led the Azna Mahalba migrations to the Ader. Often, specific roles were maintained by the descendants of the Aznan Ramu in ceremonies related to natural cycles and fertility.

The most important local chieftaincies mentioned by the historical records were those of Darai, Magori, Mambe, and Follakam. All of these seemed to recognise the sovereignty of the Kanta[17] of Kabi in northern Nigeria, who had defeated the Songhai power and had become the greatest power in the area. Sarkin[18] Darai, attested to be the most powerful local chieftaincy (Urvoy 1936:253; Séré de Rivières 1965:162; Hamani

[17] '*Kanta*' is the title given to the king of the Kabi state.
[18] '*Sarki*' means king or prince in Hausa.

1975:64), received tributes from the minor chieftaincies of Gazaur, Kayasa, Gudube, Konni and Rafi; despite his local influence, Sarkin Darai was inferior to the Kanta, to whom he sent gifts in recognition of his formal submission.

The capital of Sarkin Darai was Birnin Darai, located a few kilometers south of the actual village of Darey (cf. map VI). In the capital, lived the prince (*Sarki*), his family with their captive slaves (a privilege of the royal family, as slavery is not reported as a very common phenomenon at that time), and the court (*fada*). The majority of the population consisted of farmers and craftsmen, who lived scattered on the plateau in villages surrounding Birnin[19] Darai.

Ader chieftaincies remained vassals of the Kabi until about 1674, when Agabba, the son of the Sultan of Agadez, Mohammed Al Mubarek, defeated the Kanta's armies, thereby terminating the Kabi's supremacy over Ader (Urvoy 1936:256; Hamani 1975: 91; Hamani 1979:393).

2.3 The Istambulawa[20] in the ADM (18th Century)

Although several explanations of Agabba's attack against Kabi have been recorded, they are all concordant in identifying an insult to Agabba's pride at the origin of the conflict. Hamani collected the following tradition in Ader villages:

> One day, prince Agabba, son of the Sultan of Agadez Mohammed al Mubarek went to Surame, the capital of Kabi, to sell horses. He was accompanied by some slaves. He went directly to the court, because he was a prince and consequently had to be hosted by the king. He was introduced to the Kanta, who was playing his favourite game, the *dara*. The king raised his head and stared at the prince, then continued his game commenting upon Agabba's very modest attire: *Ashe a na dan Sarki da taggo?* (Is it possible, the son of a King dressed in a *taggo*[21]). Agabba and his men were kept waiting for a long time, until Kanta gave them a place to stay and bought all his horses.[22] Agabba then returned to Air with his men, but could not forget the offensive remarks of the Kanta. Once he reached Agadez, he reported to his father about Kanta's insults, expressing his desire to take revenge. Al Mubarek answered [his son] that he himself [the Sultan] was not in a position to confront the Kanta. But the son insisted so much that he finally persuaded his father. (in Hamani 1975:92; cf. Urvoy 1936:256)

[19] '*Birni*' in Hausa means fortified city.
[20] The dynasty of Agadez, and its related dynasties of Illela and *Dogarawa* (Ader), refer to themselves through the appellation '*Istambulawa*', which refers to the supposed Turkish origin of the first Sultan of Air (cf. Urvoy 1936:161).
[21] Short male shirt without sleeves, worn by commoners and mainly for farming and other manual tasks.
[22] According to another version, narrated by Sarkin Adar Ummanin, descendant of Agabba, Agabba refused to sell the horses.

Whatever the reasons behind Agabba's clash with the Kanta, their consequences were important both for the Kabi and for the Ader. The former was weakened by repeated confrontations with the Zamfara and the Gobir throughout the 17th century (Hamani 1975:91). Agabba's 1674 expedition against the Kabi resulted in the amputation of the Ader from the Kabi's sovereignty. In 1720 the Kabi suffered other defeats by the Zamfara and Gobir, which went close to menacing Surame, the capital of the Kabi. In 1721 Agabba gave the final blow to the vacillating power of the Kabi, killing Kanta Ahmadu and forcing the court to disperse toward west. It was the end of the Kabi, which left the Istambulawa firmly installed in the Kabi's ancient vassal region, the Ader. Here, the Istambulawa created a dynasty of *Sarakunan Adar* whose descendants are still at the head of a canton of the Ader, Illela (Urvoy 1936:259; Hamani 1975:96).

In his descent to the Ader, Agabba was escorted by some dozen Tuareg tribes, including the Lissawan, Tawantakat, Inussufan, Gawallay, Watsakkawa, and Takarawa (Hamani 1979:393). Sarkin Darai chose to oppose Agabba's rule, and was defeated: Birnin Darai was destroyed and its population dispersed. Agabba took the title of Sarkin Adar and established his capital in Birnin Adar. Hence, the Sarakunan Adar was now a junior branch of the royal family of Agadez, and the Adar had become an *avant poste* of Air at the boundary of the main Hausa states of northern Nigeria.

Sarkin Magori, Sarkin Mambe, and Sarkin Follakam remained at their place, but became tributaries of Sarkin Adar. Hamani notes that this did not represent a simple 'change of masters', from the Kanta to Sarkin Ader, for the Azna chieftaincies: 'While the suzerainty of the Kebbi [sic: Kabi] was distant, intermittent, and little burdensome, that of Air was direct and permanent.' (Hamani 1979:393).

The remaining, and greatest part, of the ADM was divided into three sectors that were distributed amongst three clans of the Lissawan (cf. map VII), who had a special status amongst the tribes who followed Agabba in his first expedition against the Kanta. The chiefs of these three clans were the Amattaza, the Alamtai, and the Amattokes (cf. F. Nicolas 1950:52; Sèré de Rivières 1965:164). The latter obtained the privilege to elect the successors to the Sarakunan Adar. In 1687 Agabba succeeded to his father the

Sultan of Air, upon his death, and returned to Agadez, and Agabba's younger brother Saleh replaced him as Sarkin Adar (cf. Hamani 1979:393)[23].

But the Agadesawa, as the Tuareg groups coming from Agadez are called, were not to remain the only Tuareg group in the ADM. Around the end of the 18th century/beginning of the 19th century, a section of the Kel Iullemden, who came to be known as Kel Dinnik[24] or Kel Azawak, broke away from the Manaka region in today's Mali and reached the Azawak, progressively moving southwards and reaching the Ader. Also during the 18th century, other Tuareg tribes, grouped in the confederation of the Kel Gress (literally, 'people of the valley', cf. Hamani 1975:131), settled in the Adar – Gobir Tudu area, from where they continued leading a nomadic life engaging in periodic transhumance to the Air (cf. Urvoy 1936:259; Hamani 1979:394).

For the Ader, the 18th century was a peaceful interlude between Agabba's wars against the Kabi and Darai, and Usman dan Fodio's Jihad. The main source of information on the Ader society in this period are the writings of Ulrich Seetzen. As we have seen, with the supremacy of the Kel Air, a new aristocracy was superimposed over the old Azna chieftaincies, and the remaining Aderawa villages fell under the control of the Lissawan, who extracted a revenue consisting of a tenth of the local produce (*zakka*).

Society in the ADM was highly stratified. At the top of the hierarchy there was Sarkin Adar, residing in Birnin Adar with a circle of close relatives and the court. Below him, in their respective territorial sections, were the 'groups of privilege and of pact' (Hamani 1975:120), the Lissawan noble tribes of the Amattokes, the Alamtei, and the Amattaza. The Azna chieftaincies who managed to retain partial sovereignty over their regions of influence were Sarkin Magori (the most influential Azna Chief), Sarkin Mambe, Sarkin Folakam, Sarkin Kayasa, and Sarkin Gazaur. They exacted revenues from the villages, but had to send a part of it to Sarkin Adar (Hamani 1975:119). Below them were the village chiefs (pl. *hakimai*) whose contacts with the higher levels of the

[23] Urvoy offers a different version, according to which, when Agabba succeeded to his father in 1721, he was dethroned by his brother Mohammed el-Amine. Consequently, Agabba returned to Ader, defeated his brother, and remained there until his death (Urvoy 1936:257).
[24] According to Francis Nicolas, Kel Dinnik means 'those of the East', to distinguish this section of the Iullemden from the Kel Attaram, or Iullemden of the West, who remained in Menaka (Mali) (Nicolas 1939:579; 1950).

regional hierarchy were limited to the payment of tributes, and who were little more than *primus inter pares* amongst the villagers (pl. *talakawa*) which they headed. At the bottom of the social hierarchy were the slaves, who remained a prerogative of a few rich men and the aristocracy. The *talakawa* did not apparently have slaves at their disposal, and it was not until the 19th century that slavery became a more important phenomenon (cf. Hamani 1975:119).

A new distinction, based mainly on religious criteria, substituted itself to the previous one between Azna Mahalba and Aznan Ramu. The new categories distinguished between the Moslem Tuareg, or Aderawa, and the animist Azna. Although the Istambulawa had been Moslem for centuries, they did not engage in proselytism (Hamani 1979:395). The tribe of religious specialists amongst the Agadesawa was that of the Watsakkawa, who had followed Agabba from Air. To this tribe belonged Malam Jibril (Hamani 1979:395), a local precursor and teacher of Usman dan Fodio, the charismatic leader of the Jihad which was going to establish the primacy of the Muslim Caliphate of Sokoto over and beyond the ADM.

2.4 The Sokoto Jihad of Usman dan Fodyo Until the Zamani (19th Century)

By the end of the 18th century, Sarkin Adar's power had considerably decreased. The degradation of his relation with the Lissawan, and the exterior conflicts with the Magori and the Kabi under the reign of Mohamed Damo, together with a generalised discontent of the villages falling in its area of influence regarding the tributes exacted on them, had contributed to undermine Sarkin Adar's original power (cf. Echard 1975:91). Birnin Adar was abandoned and the Sarki settled first in the town of Azzau, then in Illela, where his name was changed to Sarkin Illela, and where his descendants are still established. From this moment onwards, there was a deterioration of the relationship with the Lissawan Amattokes, Amattaza and Alamtei. The Amattaza would move his residence to Mashidi (a village which used to be located to the south of Tamaské and does not exist anymore), then to Agouloum Tudu. Since 1893 the Amattaza and the Alamtei joined into a single role and in 1905 their capital moved to Keita[25] (Echard 1975:97), where the Lissawan Sarki is still established today (exerting considerable influence over the PDR/ADM's decisions).

The 19th century was characterised by the influence of the Sokoto Caliphate, especially on the southern areas of the Ader, and the wars between the Tuareg Iullemden and Kel Gress, until the final supremacy of the latter:

> Throughout the 19th century, the history of Adar [sic] and the Tuareg Kel Gress and Iullemden was inseparable from that of Sokoto. In the first half of the century these three groups were in fact vassals [of Sokoto]. In the course of the second half, the political ascendancy of Sokoto faded without entirely disappearing, for commercial and religious ties continued to be strengthened down to the European occupation. (Hamani 1979:406)

Malam Jibril of the Watsakkawa had preceded Usman dan Fodio as a religious preacher and holy man whose influence became widely renown in the ADM. He is said to have been one of Usman's teachers[26], and even though Usman later criticised some aspects of Jibril's doctrine, his respect for the master is attested in Usman's writings (cf. Hamani 1975:141). Usman, his brother Abdullahi, and his son Mohammed Bello are said to have accumulated an enormous religious knowledge, placing them amongst the most learned Moslem savants of their times (Hamani 1975:142).

At the early stage of what he saw as a religious mission, Usman preached in Degel, in the Kabi, and in the Gobir. Here, around 1782/3, he met Sarkin Gobir Bawa Yan Gwarzo, who respected him for his piety and scholarship, and granted him privileges and freedom to preach his doctrine. But Usman's relations with the Gobir's Sarauta would deteriorate with the succession to power of Bawa's brother, Yakuba, with whom the political power of the Gobir began to decline (cf. Hamani 1975:144).

In his preachings, Shehu Usman dan Fodio criticised the religious conduct of the Hausa kings (Last 1967; Hamani 1979), and exhorted the masses of believers to reach him in Degel and follow his teachings. With the rise in number of Usman's proselytes, Gobir's Sarki Nafata, who had succeeded Yakuba, started perceiving the growing influence of the Shehu as a threat to his power, and began a mild persecution of Shehu's followers (Hamani 1975:144). Shehu exhorted his followers to take arms, and under the reign of Yunfa, son of Nafata and, according to the oral tradition, ex-pupil of Shehu

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[25] Bonte's version differs from Echard's on this point, as Bonte, without mentioning the Amattaza, argues that 'After the vicissitudes suffered by the Lissawan, only the Elemtey [sic] would remain [*subsistera*], reduced to to the canton of Keita' (1967:42).

[26] 'Usman came to visit [Jibril], sleeping at Ruggar Fake near the present village of Mullela, and coming each morning to Kodi [in the present village of Arewa] to talk with Jibril, returning after Ahazzar prayer' (Hamani 1979:396).

Usman, the persecution against Shehu's movement became harsher. This led Shehu to move his centre to Gudu, to the north-west borders of Gobir. This displacement is remembered as the *hijra*, escape. In Gudu, Usman was given the title of Sarkin Musulmi (king of the Moslem) by his followers, and Yunfa declared war on Shehu and his followers. Shehu inflicted the final blow to Gobir in 1808, with the fall of Alkalawa, where Yunfa died. Now Shehu had to organise his vast empire, extending over virtually the whole of Hausaland, and comprising the West of Bornu, the Adamawa, Bauci, Nupe, and the Yoruba kingdom of Ilorin (Hamani 1975:147). Adar and Air, and the Tuareg Kel Gress and Iullemden were never integrated in the empire, but acquired the status of vassals: 'they were not vassals paying a compulsory tribute, but in fact they never took action without taking account of the interests or the eventual reaction of Sokoto' (Hamani 1979:400). The remaining part of this section shall focus on the events concerning the ADM region alone, leaving out many important facts which took place elsewhere within the remarkable outreach of the Sokoto Empire.

In spite of the rallying of Sarkin Abzin Muhammad al Bakri to the jihadists' cause, between 1804 and 1809 Sarkin Adar Hamidin engaged in incessant wars against Shehu Usman. Hamidin allied with Sarkin Gobir, and the Tuareg Kel Gress (and the minor group of the Itesan) also chose to side with what appeared to be the strongest side, that of Sarkin Gobir. The Iullemden, settled to the north and farther from the theatre of events, initially remained neutral, but their sympathies were with the jihadist, as the *ineslemen* (Tamasheq for religious caste: see following section) were particularly influential amongst them (and particularly weak amongst the Kel Gress).

In 1806, Hamidin and the Tuareg coalition were defeated, after a series of battles, in Zurmi. The Tuareg realised Shehu's power, even against Gobir, and the Amattokes deposed Hamidin, who did not want to give up the fight against Shehu. In 1809, Sarkin Abzin Muhammad Gemma took Hamidin with him to meet Usman dan Fodio, and forced Hamidin to submit to the Shehu's power, conceding certain parts of eastern Adar to Shehu, who now was commonly referred to as Sarkin Musulmi (Hamani 1979:398).

From around 1813, a minor holy war (*jihad*) arose in the Azawak led by Muhammad Al Jilani of the Attawari tribe, which had profound influence on the

relations between Adar and Sokoto's religious movements. Al Jilani, after having defeated the Amanokal Khattutu of Azawak, became the real chief of the Iullemden. He then defeated Sarkin Adar and the Kel Gress, who had refused to submit to his power, in 1817 or 1818 at Bagai (Hamani 1979:402). 'Jelani contented himself personally with controlling the Tuareg [Iullemden and Kel Gress], and left Adar in the hands of the sultan. He established a harsh theocracy amongst the [Iullemden] Kel Dinnik' (Hamani 1979:402).

In the highly hierarchical ADM society, the class aspects of Al Jilani's episode assume a particular interest. Al Jilani's preachings were against class and race inequality, and he preached the equality of all men in front of Allah. If this granted him the loyalty of the *ineslemen* of various Tuareg confederations, it turned the noble (Tamasheq: *imajeghen*) classes against him. Despite the fact that Mohammed Bello's advice to Jilani had been to moderate the social reformism of his doctrine, Jilani persisted on his line, and was defeated in the battle of Tudun Fama by a coalition of Kel Gress and Lissawan noblemen, who had allied with Mallam Ibra of the Timisgidda of Damergu, also son of a Moslem savant. After the victory, Ibra took Jilani's place and became chief of the Tuareg, whereas Jilani sought refuge in Sokoto with his only ally, Sarkin Adar. (Hamani 1979:402-3). Hamani tells us that Ibra is said to have written to Muhammed Bello asking that Jilani be handed over to him in the following terms: 'I do not wish to fight you. I was hunting and I wounded a guinea fowl. It flew off and entered your house. Let me have my wounded guinea fowl back'. To which Muhammed Bello replied 'Your guinea fowl is in the pocket of my robe. He who tries to take it out will tear my *riga*[27]' (1979:404). Ibra then built a series of alliances and fought the army of Muhammed Bello at Beleci, but was defeated. One year later Ibra tried to seek revenge, but died in the battle of Gawakuke in 1836, which 'marked the end of military intervention of Adar in the affairs of the [Sokoto] empire' (Hamani 1979:405).

The term 'Zamani' refers to the period of direct Tuareg domination over the ADM, extending between 1860-1900 (cf. map VIII). Between 1836 and 1860 the Tuareg Kel Gress, who had remained in good relations with Sokoto, gradually extended their power over neighbouring petty estates (*hakimai* and *sarakunas*). Sarkin Adar, as we have seen, had moved to Illela, leaving the Kel Gress alone. The latter, under the

[27] Hausa: man's robe.

leadership of a former brigand, Budal Inshilkin, extended their hegemony until all Adar Doutchi and Gobir Tudu fell under their supremacy. The Iullemden seized the north west of the country, leaving only the south west under the control of Sarkin Adar (Hamani 1979:405).

Tuareg supremacy was interrupted by the French conquest at the beginning of the 20th century. Until then, the Kel Gress dominated (i.e. received tributes from Hausa and Tuareg villages) over the east and south east; the Iullemden over the north, and Sarkin Adar (or Sarkin Illela: both denominations are used) over the south west of the Ader Doutchi Majiya (Hamani 1975:191). The political system and relations of production established in the ADM by Tuareg rulers are described in Chapter 3, as they represent the direct historical background to today's social organisation. The following sections focus on the impact of colonialism on the societies of the Ader, and particularly on the new discourses of 'development' which originated during colonial rule and would come to be recognised as the characterising trait of the Ader Doutchi Majiya region (cf. Bonte 1976:1).

2.5 The ADM During French Colonialism

Niger acquired its full fledged colonial status gradually. It first appeared as a separate geo-political entity in 1900, when, on 20 December, a decree created the *Territoire Militaire Autonome du Niger* (Niger Autonomous Military Territory) within the *Colonie du Haut-Sénégal et Niger* (Upper Senegal and Niger Colony). It was transformed into *Territoire Militaire du Niger* (Military Territory of Niger) in 1911, and in *Territoire du Niger* (Niger Territory) in 1920. Finally, in 1922, it became *Colonie du Niger* (Colony of Niger), with administrative and financial autonomy, under the direction of a *lieutenant-gouverneur* (lieutenant governor) and under the higher authority of the general governor of the *Afrique Occidentale Française,* or AOF (Fench West Africa), resident in Dakar (cf. Chailley 1968:413; Decalo 1979:14; Fluchard 1995:18).

In 1919, the Military Territory of Niger was divided into nine administrative units called *cercles* (Agadez, Dosso, Gouré, Maradi, N'Guimi, Niamey, Tahoua, Tillabéry, Zinder), subdivided into a varying number of *secteurs* (sectors), later renamed *subdivisions* (subdivisions), with four at most in each *cercle*, administered by officers of *lieutenant* rank (cf. Fuglestad 1983:80; Fluchard 1995:18). A *secteur* comprised

indigenous political entities, named provinces, tribes, cantons, or groups (*groupements*), under the authority of so-called 'traditional chiefs' (*chefferie traditionelle*). 'Most *chefs de secteur* [...] in the south had under their authority between three and eight cantons, and one or two *groupements* of Fulani and/or Tuareg nomads or semi-nomads. Provinces and cantons were territorially defined entities, tribes and "groups" were ethnically defined entities' (Fuglestad 1983:80).

Through this process, the colonial administrative structure superimposed itself onto the interethnic hierarchy of 'overlapping' Tuareg and Hausa chieftaincies. However, the conquest of the Ader Doutchi Majiya turned out to be a difficult task, as the Tuareg Kel Dinnik and Kel Gress opposed a strong resistance against the invasion by French Colonial Armies. Colonial domination gave rise to profound changes in the economic and political organisation of the Ader Doutchi Majiya, and indeed of Niger as a whole.

The confrontation with colonial forces followed a different path for the Kel Dinnik and the Kel Gress. The latter, located in the southern agricultural zones at the boundary with British territories, were in the front line to face French attacks, and the confrontation came early, with the military initially aiming at controlling the agricultural zone and at securing the boundary with areas under British control. The events of the Ader Doutchi Majiya are narrated by Yves Urvoy (1936), a colonial civil servant. In 1901:

> [T]he Azna and the Lissawan surrendered themselves after the first skirmishes around Tahoua, as soon as they realised that they did not have to fear a victory and the reprisals of the Oullimidens [Kel Dinnik]. The Kel Gress remained. (Urvoy 1936:301)

Initially, the Kel Gress submitted themselves by letter, probably just to take time. On 14 April 1901, 57 skirmishers led by captain Gouraud confronted the Kel Gress in Janguebe.

> Forced to sacrifice themselves to save the women, the Kel Gress, fighting with an incredible ardour, made themselves be killed. They suffered substantial losses and drew back, but also the [French] column withdrew. They [the Kel Gress] sent some reconciliation gifts, but only to take time, because the retreat of the column had filled them with pride and confidence [...]. On 15 June [Captain Gouraud] decided to attack the Kel Gress at the core of their domination, in Galma [...]. The column counted 220 rifles, on the morning of the 18th it reached a point where it could see the Tuareg (about 500 horsemen and many fighters on foot); after a half-hour fight, the enemy was defeated; one of the chiefs, Idiguini, killed; we took possession of 300 camels. But the Kel Gress did not surrender [...]. (Urvoy 1936:302)

Another battle took place between Tamaské and Guidan Gado, and on 2 November in Tamaské the Kel Gress officially surrendered to the French. But the treaty was signed with only one group of the Kel Gress, and others, who had escaped to the Damergou, were determined to carry on the struggle. The final confrontation with these Kel Gress fighters took place in December.

> At the famous attack of 3 and 4 December launched by Bou-Aguila against the post of Bir-Alali, it was one group of Touareg [sic] fanatics who dug a trench between the post and the wells, and tied their leg to the trench so that escape would be impossible, and were massacred to the last one, in our victorious attack of 4 December. (Urvoy 1936:304)

The confrontation was definitive, and from then on, for the Kel Gress it was either exile or submission, as in the administrative reorganisation which followed, they lost all their power over their territory, but were allowed to remain and maintain their herding and farming practices (cf. Urvoy 1936:305).

During that time the Kel Dinnik, settled between the Ader and the Azawagh, refused to have contact with French parties, to receive French militaries, or to honour their invitations, and only blacksmiths were occasionally sent to deal with them. Without any direct confrontation, a submission act was signed by a blacksmith on 31 December 1901, but this did not settle the situation, as the Kel Dinnik continued to organise minor incursions against the French and to sack other groups settled in the area. It was not until the wider revolt movement of 1916-1917 that the Kel Dinnik capitulated against the French:

> Among the Kel Denneg [sic], there was no decisive confrontation but a series of incidents that ended in the massacre of their main body of warriors, surprised and deceived by a bloodthirsty captain who killed them one after another without their having a chance to defend themselves (April 1917): this was murder without trial. From then on, resistance was broken among the Kel Denneg. (Bernus 1990:159)

Let us turn to the wider implications of the impact of French invasion on the society of the Ader Doutchi Majiya. Instead of forming a unitary front against the French, different Tuareg groups remained separated by internal strife and hierarchy, and their attacks against the French were at the same time directed against other Tuareg groups. Hence, the Kel Dinnik are reported to have refused to join forces with the Air Tuareg, led by Kaocen, whom they considered a 'slave', and to have staged their own attacks which were directed as much against the Lissawan, whom they considered traitors, as against the French: 'the Tamaske-Keita region is reported to have been

thoroughly plundered and sacked [by the Kel Dinnik], and the *amattaza* was killed' (Fuglestad 1983:97). The internal fragmentation of the Tuareg front weakened their resistance.

The French took advantage of the internal tensions between Tuareg groups and, within groups, between the social constituencies of the Tuareg hierarchically stratified society. Thus, if the nobles (Tamasheq: *imajeghen*) refused to collaborate with the invaders, the religious groups (Tamasheq: *ineslemen*) accepted contact and submission, sometimes being rewarded through the allocation of separate administrative units by the colonial administration (cf. Bernus 1990:160; Urvoy 1936:305). But colonial power undermined another institution which was at the core of Tuareg society, i.e. the relations of dependence between nobles and slaves. The position of the French authorities toward slavery was ambivalent. On the one hand, the representatives of the French Republic, heirs to the revolution, could not but condemn slavery, which was nominally abolished with the Treaty of Tamaské in 1901. On the other hand, pulverising the authority of the noblemen and giving leadership to groups of slaves could make French control over the Ader Doutchi Majiya society even more difficult (cf. Bernus 1981:108). So the French found indirect ways to undermine the nobles' power over lower strata of the hierarchy.

Coupled with the above-mentioned lack of internal cohesiveness among Tuareg groups, other factors contributed to undermine the power of Tuareg elites. First, French authorities imposed an annual tax in animals, which Tuareg chiefs had to pay in the name of the confederation; later the tax was claimed in cash, and changed from being for the whole of the confederation to involving each group (cf. Bernus 1990:159). In order to increase its control over the payment of tributes, the administration created a census, which allowed tighter French control and increased the security of farming (ex-captive) villages from the incursions and exactions of Tuareg chiefs. Dependent villages suffered less from the claims of their original suzerains. The latter, having lost their suzerainty in favour of the French administration, could not compensate anymore for wrongs incurred by their dependents, also because they now lacked access to the tributes which were being paid to the new authorities.

With the abolition of the right of the elites to levy tributes (under the threat of punitive incursions and sacks), and their corresponding obligation to provide protection

from external enemies, a fundamental tie between dependent and dominant sectors of the Ader Doutchi Majiya society was severed. The colonialists abolished the supreme body (Tamasheq: *ettebel*) of the Kel Dinnik and created the new administrative units (sedentary cantons), each of which was given a portion of the territory once under control of the dissolved central power. The cantons included farming villagers once dependent, along various gradations of servility (cf. Lovejoy and Baier 1977) on Tuareg elites, or religious groups, such as the Kel Eghlal, detached from their suzerains as a reward for their collaboration with the French. In order to provide 'punishment' or 'reward', in the form of giving or taking independent access to resources, the colonial power restructured local ties of dependence and undermined the economic and political bases for control by Tuareg noblemen (*imajeghen*):

> from previously existing relations of dependence, only relationships which were freely accepted survived within a new economic order that saw each tribe, each family, practising animal husbandry for its own profit. However, personal relationships survived, and, at the ideological level, the prestige of the *imajeghen* remained in the eyes of all categories of the population. (Bernus 1990:169)

Having broken the resistance of sedentary and nomadic populations, the French had to rule the country. Under the constraints of the two world wars, they did so with what has been called a 'crush and destroy' strategy (Fuglestad 1983:85). During the post-1911 period the French attempted to establish what may be described as direct rule (cf. Fuglestad 1983:84), imprisoning 'at random and at will' traditional chiefs and carrying out requisitions and forced labour (cf. Baier 1980:101). Several factors contributed to exacerbating the effects of French rule for Niger people. In 1913, the French set out to occupy the Tibesti, wanting to secure their control of this strategically important area in response to the Italian-Turkish war which involved the Tibesti and Fezzan. The task of occupying the western slopes of the Tibesti fell upon the French in Niger. Sending a sizeable column to the Tibesti and maintaining a garrison in such a distant and inhospitable environment required large-scale requisitions of camels, millet, and some men as conveyors (cf. Fuglestad 1983:90). This coincided with abnormally low rainfall in both 1913 and 1914, known as the Great Famine of 1913-1915. Under-staffed and short of funds, the French used a whole range of sanctions in order to force hunger-stricken Niger populations to pay taxes. The hardship imposed by French administration in those years contributed to the mounting unrest which led to the Tuareg revolt of Kaocen, and, as we have seen, separate minor revolts, in 1916-1917.

Since the 1920s colonial policy adopted a new approach, aimed at developing colonial production in directions useful to the French economy. This phase is characterised by the policy of '*mise en valeur*', literally, 'enhancing the value' of local resources with, initially, purely extractive purposes:

> [...] development [*mise en valeur*] is pursued, entering a new phase, in which agricultural value is recognised to the AOF. At the top of our colonial preoccupations was the intensification of industrial cultivations which would free the metropolis [i.e. Paris] from the burden of imports. (Chailley 1968:420)

As Charlick puts it, 'the French economic policy was purely exploitative – to keep administrative costs to a minimum by extracting resources locally. Colonial officers took so heavy a charge in material (taxes, grain, livestock) and human resources (construction labour and troops) that the population was often left hungry and exhausted. After World War I the French saw little of value in its Niger colony and pursued very limited economic goals' (Charlick 1991:37; cf. Charlick 1991:109)

The most important economic development programme of the colonial era in Niger was the French policy to promote the large scale cultivation and sale of peanuts (cf. Charlick 1973:14). In a contribution to the journal *Marchés Coloniaux du Monde* in 1949, the Governor Ignace Colombani described the economic potential of Niger as follows:

- generalised cultivation of millet and localised cultivation of rice and corn in the basins along the Niger river, destined to ensure food security;
- cultivation of peanuts, the main export product, destined in the post-war years to satisfy the pressing needs in fats of the metropolis [Paris]. The area of peanut cultivation is situated in the east of Niger, in the districts bordering with British Nigeria, between Konni and Magaria. The outcome of the 1948-49 harvest reached the amount of 45,000 tons;
- intensification of Arabic gum production;
- development of livestock, which constitutes the stable richness of the territory, with 1,800,000 head of cattle and 5,500,000 sheep and goats. Yearly exports are in the order of 20,000 head of cattle, 200,000 goats, 60 tons of leather, and 300 tons of hides. (quoted in Fluchard 1995:2)

Only the last of these points concerns the Tuareg living in the Ader Doutchi Majiya. Colonial activities with regard to herding were limited to acquiring a deeper knowledge of local races and carrying out vaccination campaigns. According to Bernus, the latter were so successful that, between 1954 and 1965, Nigerien cattle increased from 2,200,000 to 3,970,000, sheep and goats from 6,000,000 to 7,900,000 and camels from 250,000 to 360,000 (Bernus 1993a:248). However, there were no significant attempts at dealing with range management and herding systems.

After World War II, in 1946, France established a development fund that dispensed development capital to the French colonial territories, called FIDES (*Fonds d'Investissement pour le Développement Economique et Social des Territoires d'Outre-Mer*). Sources do not agree on how much money was actually spent in Niger. Decalo argues that about US $ 26,000 was granted to Niger between 1949 and 1960 'mostly for projects to increase food production and spur export commodities' (Decalo 1979:103), while Fuglestad quotes about 4,000 million FCFA between 1947 and 1957, compared to 105,000 million FCFA spent by FIDES in the whole of French West Africa for the same period (Fuglestad 1983:170). In 1959, FIDES was renamed FAC (*Fonds d'Aide et Coopération*), dispensing financial and technical assistance to former colonial territories. The FAC began carrying out large-scale projects (*grand projets*), introducing some of the rationales which characterise Niger's development and foreign aid discourse today. One of the first FAC projects, the *Projet de Développement Rural Intégré de l'Ader Doutchi Maggia,* targeted the Ader Doutchi Majiya region between 1964 and 1972 (cf. Martin 1995; Funel 1976; République du Niger 1987).

In 1946, the constitution of the Fourth Republic marked the end of France's Colonial Empire. Niger was no longer a French colony, but a '*Territoire d'Outre Mer*', member of the French Union, with its own political representatives, in Niger and within the French Republic. The *Parti Progressiste Nigerien* (PPN), led by Diori Hamani, Djibo Bakari, and Boubou Hama, became a member of the *Rassemblement Démocratique Africaine* (RDA) in 1947. In 1960, the Nigerien Constitution was adopted and the Republic of Niger was proclaimed independent, with Diori Hamani as its first president.

2.6 The ADM in Independent Niger as a Site 'of Common Problems and Common Development Possibilities'

The history of independent Niger until the end of the 1980s can be divided into two main periods (cf. Raynal 1991): the years in which the country was governed according to constitutional power (1959-1974), and the military regime of Colonel Seiny Kountché (1974-1989). A lot could be said about the first thirty years of Niger's independence. However, here discussion will be limited to those aspects directly relevant to the (future) relations between the Keita Project and the societies of the Ader Doutchi Majiya.

The structure and *modus operandi* of the administration did not undergo any substantial modification with the PPN/RDA's advent to power in independent Niger: 'at independence (1961), a Nigerian [sic] administration was substituted for the colonial administration without a blow and without any dramatic change in policy' (Bernus 1990:161). However, new themes appeared in political thought and propaganda: since the first years of independence, 'development' appeared, both as an internal process of economic restructuring and popular mobilisation, and as a process requiring the assistance of foreign donors. At the same time, in the early colonial years, a series of laws was conceived which provided the legal framework for rural development 'intervention' (Yacouba 2000). This section enquires into the new discourse of development in independent Niger and some of its constituent notions. It shows how, by the time the Keita Project arrived in 1984, an official discourse of 'development', with its institutional apparatus and regime of practices, had already been set, and was to become integrated in the Project's approaches and practices.

The Ten-Year Perspectives (*Perspectives Décennales*) 1965-1974 were published in 1964 (cf. Funel 1976:2) by the Hamani administration, and presented a comprehensive programme for the development of Niger. The three main axes along which the country's development objectives were organised were: 'economic independence within interdependence', 'national unity', and the 'improvement of the life standards of the masses'. The plan of actions foreseen by the document included rural hydraulic management, agricultural modernisation, reforestation, and herding

extension, and gave a key role to the 'participation of the population in its own development' (cf. Funel 1976:17).

If the application of the Ten Year programme came as a new responsibility for bureaucrats and extension workers at Departmental and District level in general, the Tahoua Department was under particular pressure, as it had to execute the above mentioned *Projet de Développement Rural Intégré de l'Ader Doutchi Maggia* financed by the FAC (*Fonds d'Aide et Coopération*). A French evaluation of 'Regional Development in the experience of Tahoua' (Funel 1976) comments upon the practices which, through the new problematic of 'development', had become familiar to the Tahoua's regional administrative bureaucracy:

> Confiding (more or less implicitly) to the Tahoua Department the responsibility for its own development, which included the execution of the regional programme of the Ader Doutchi Maggia, led it to confront and resolve problems regarding:
>
> - the programming of investments or operations (with the corollary studies and evaluations)
> - the implementation of programmes and the control of such implementation
> - the definition or the adaptation of models of *mise en valeur* (enhancement of the value of resources)
> - the definition of evaluation methods at different stages. (Funel 1976:19)

This passage shows that, since the first years of independence, the Department of Tahoua had been exposed to new discourses and practices of 'development'. Development was perceived as an 'integrated' process which brings together specific, sectoral approaches. At the stage of elaborating the funding proposals and programming the following investments, global programmes were subdivided into sectoral actions: roads and buildings are the domain of the *Traveau Publiques*, tracks and country planning (*amenagements*) of the *Genie Rural*, production activities of the UNCC (*Union Nigerienne de Crédit et Cooperation*) (cf. Funel 1976:34). In parallel to this holistic vision of 'development', there is an attempt to integrate all groups of society into the development venture. This is particularly evident with regards to participatory approaches aimed at including the grassroots in national development programmes. Commenting on Niger's government policies throughout the 1960s, Charlick argues:

> The new relationship between the governors and the mass has become a slogan in Francophone Africa under the title of "*participation populaire au développement*". In Niger participation has been considered a vital part of the development plan and has been institutionalised in a series of administrative reforms creating the Human Development service (Promotion Humaine) with its Rural Animation Division, the Nigerien Credit and Cooperative Union (UNCC) and local level consultative councils (established in 1962 and strengthened in 1965). There is no doubt from the

public statements of Nigerien politicians that the top leadership supports a policy of involving rural populations in development. (Charlick 1971:19)

The origins of some of the notions commonly employed in Niger's development discourse must be traced back to the practices and ideology of the French public administration. The French colonial education policy in Niger had focused on educating a small number of the colonised to a fully French level, dismissing entirely mass education and prohibiting education in native languages (Charlick 1991:36). Thus, the notions which characterised Niger's development discourse at the time of independence were partly inherited, via a minority of Nigerien intellectuals educated in Paris or at the Ecole William Ponty in Senegal, from French ideology. Hence, a preoccupation with '*mise en valeur*' of resources had characterised the above mentioned French extractive economic policies in Niger, and remained in use in Niger's post-colonial development policies (cf. Territoires en récomposition). '*Animation*', '*vulgarisation*', '*participation populaire*' and '*sensibilisation*' belonged to a different agenda, influenced by the thought of French Catholic humanists via the work of political advisors and experts (Charlick 1971:21). The weight given to 'popular participation' by the first state administrations after independence can also be seen as a way to check the power of local and traditional elites, and establish a direct link to grassroots support for new governmental institutions.

The notion of popular participation becomes inseparable from that of 'development' with the establishment of Kountché's 'Development Society' (*Société de Développement)*. The Development Society is a totalising institution, in which the State coincides with a macro development apparatus incorporating, through the notion of 'popular participation', all the sectors of society. 'Development' becomes inseparable from government, denying all contradictions and compelling the population, willing or unwilling, to 'participate' in the activities and rhetoric of a capillary system of administrative structures.

Kountché seized power in a 1974 coup d'état and remained in office until his death in November 1987. The 1968-1973 drought had exacerbated the problems of scarcity and political corruption, which characterised the end of the Diori Hamani presidency. Condemning the civilian regime for its corruption and misplaced priorities, Kountché identified drought control and famine relief as his government's immediate

priorities (cf. Robinson 1992:156). His advent to power coincided with more abundant rainfall, an unprecedented influx of development aid, and new wealth from the exploitation of Niger's uranium reserves, contributing to granting Kountché a generalised support at the grassroots of Niger's society. In these favourable circumstances, in his 1974 message to the nation, Kountché announced the necessity for Niger to establish a 'Development Society' (*Société de Développement*), in the following terms:

> Not a single Nigerien will die of starvation, not even if we had to devote to this aim the totality of our budget.[...] We will establish a rural development policy which, involving the peasant while at the same time operating on his environment, will make profitable our lands, our herding, our agricultural systems and all our surface waters wherever they exist. (République du Niger 1982:8)

In Kountché's participatory rhetoric, the Development Society figured as a purely Nigerien approach to society's development, which rejected all alternative visions (cf. Raynal 1991:20). He identifies 'nature', or the environment, as both the origin and the potential solution to the country's problems. In his programmatic statement of 3 August 1974, Niger's priority is identified with the attainment of 'freedom from [the constraints imposed by] natural factors' on Niger's development. His speeches were charged with military metaphors, which characterised Niger's development discourse under his power.

> This combat inevitably calls for the establishment of an audacious and determined water politics. To the enterprise started by the rains, which this year obtained spectacular results thanks to the timely installation of adequate logistic means, we must add, on the field, a vast and ingenious programme of dams, and wells. (Republique du Niger 1974:53)

These themes acquire a particular strength in conjunction with the narratives of 'desertification' of international development institutions discussed in Chapter 4, and they will provide a powerful ideological support to the intervention strategies of the Keita Project.

The participation envisaged by Kountché had to be channelled through the institutions of the Development Society. It expressed an encompassing vision of development, which engaged the population, organised though a complex administrative structure, in a unique national ideology.

> Schematically, I would compare the Development Society to a pyramid, in which the population will express itself from the bottom-up and can organise itself for [development] management at each level. The base of the pyramid will cover the entire territory of the country, organised into development cells. The scaffolding will be left up to imagination and adaptation. What will be

essential is the assurance of effective participation for all the sons and daughters of the nation in the decisions that concern them. (quoted in Robinson 1992:160)

As a result of the work of the National Commission for the Establishment of the Development Society (*Commission Nationale de la mise en place de la Société de Développement*), by 1982 the structures of the Development Society, called Development Councils (*Conseils de Développement*), had been established at each of the pyramidal levels of the Development Society, i.e., village, canton, sub-region (*arrondissement* administrative level), region (*département* administrative level), and finally the National Council. The Development Councils at each level comprised representatives of different social constituencies. Particular emphasis was placed upon the 'traditional' village-level youth organization (Hausa: *samariya)*, and the rural cooperatives, farmers organised through the institution of the mutual group (*groupement mutualiste villageois*). Representatives from these two institutions made up half of the Council's members. The other half included members from other ten socio-professional associations, among which were the Association of Nigerien Women (*Association des Femmes du Niger, AFN)* and the Islamic Association of Niger (*Association Islamique du Niger, AIN*) (Dunbar 1991; Cooper 1995; Thenevin 1984; Raynal 1991).

By the beginning of the Keita Project in 1983, the national and regional administration was already imbued with notions originated during the first decade of independence. In the early post-independence years, these notions became the way to talk about projects and rural development; they circumscribed the conditions of possibility within which 'intervention' was understood and, indeed, implemented. At its arrival, the Keita Project's apparatus was directly influenced by existing discourses of development. This is evident in its organisational structure, its 'participatory' approaches, and in the language used to describe 'intervention'. The men and women of the Ader Doutchi Majiya had become used to the forms and 'styles' of conduct which characterised their encounters with rural extension agents and the practices of '*animation*' and '*sensibilisation*'.

This section has shown that most operations later arranged by the Keita Project had already been experimented with since the early 1960s, and rested on an ideological substratum which originated at the end of French colonialism and, under Kountché's

power, became an encompassing way to think about institutional relations with Niger's rural populations.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has shed light upon a number of elements in the history of the Ader Doutchi Majiya which are important to understand the events presented in following chapters. Two aspects deserve particular attention. First, the establishment, through a series of successive migrations and conquests, of a society organised into an interethnic hierarchy, with Tuareg nobles at the top and captive villages at the bottom. Hierarchy is still a very important dimension in the ADM, and plays a part in the Keita Project's relations with the 'target population'. The negotiating strategies of different categories of actors vary according to their status and system of production (cf. Chapter 6) and, as the following chapter will show, to some extent status and economic specialisation are correlated.

Another noteworthy feature of Niger's 20th century history is the diffusion, before the arrival of the Keita Project, of a development discourse which, through the institutions of the Development Society, structured the activities of all levels of the national administration. The populist nature of this discourse, implicit in the notion of '*participation populaire*', ensured that all strata of the population became involved, willingly or unwillingly, in 'development' practices. In the first five years of project intervention, project national participatory strategy and structures coincided: the Italy-Niger-FAO evaluation report of 1987 claims that 'the Integrated Rural Development Project of Keita has been elaborated to serve as a technical, logistical and financial support to the Development Society and its participatory structures in the District of Keita' (PDR/ADM 1987:13; cf. Cremona 1984:37; Boubacar and Tiemogo 1994:15).

These pre-existing factors in the ADM context intertwined with the Project's agenda. The next chapter builds upon the historical background outlined here, and outlines the ethnography of present-day ADM society, focusing on those aspects which are particularly relevant to the relations between local people and the Project.

3. CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT

3.1 Introduction

> The Ader, a sort of peninsula of cultivations stretching into the nomadic steppe, has played an inconspicuous role in the history of Hausa peoples. It has always existed apart, retired within itself, without a conquest spirit, depending alternatively on the Kebbi [Kabi] or Sokoto to the South, or on the Touareg to the North (Kel-Air, Oullimindens de l'Azaouac and Kel Gress). (Urvoy 1936:251)

The previous chapter has shown that the Ader has been the theatre of repeated conquests and invasions, and it has hosted different societies organised into a peculiar interethnic hierarchy. French rule set a break with the past, putting an end to the Iullemden and Kel Gress supremacy and political organisation and establishing new administrative institutions and forms of control. However, the forms of power and systems of production which existed before colonial invasion remain important factors for understanding the way in which society in the Ader Doutchi Majiya is organised today. This chapter begins with a section that reconstructs the situation that French colonialists found on their arrival in the ADM, looking at the relations of dependence between Tuareg suzerains and other Tuareg and Hausa social constituencies. The breakdown of this system gave rise to the present order, which is described in the rest of the chapter.

An ethnography of Ader Doutchi Majiya societies must start from two provisos. First, the societies living there, mostly Hausa- and Tuareg-speaking[28], represent a specific, localised facet of the ideal types 'Hausa' and 'Tuareg'. Spread across Algeria, Libya, Niger, Mali, Nigeria and Mauritania, internally diversified into 'confederations' (Tamasheq: *Kel*) which have developed different ways of interacting with the environment and other societies around them, it is difficult to talk of a 'Tuareg identity' without qualifications (cf. Bernus 1981:6). The same holds for Hausa societies. Echard remarks that 'The term Hausa refers, *strictu sensu*, only to the language, but its use has been extended to the people who speak it – more than 20 million people – and the facts that concern them. Of different origins, Hausa-speaking populations, rural and urban, form a complex society which presents important differences across regions' (Echard

[28] The Peul or Fulani are a minority, and are not directly dealt with here because of their limited relations with the Keita Project.

1989:20). The societies discussed in this thesis are only a specific section of the larger constituencies to which they belong. The Ader Doutchi Majiya hosts the Tuareg Kel Gress, the Iullemden Kel Dinnik, and the Lissawan; and the so-called Hausa of the Ader. The term 'Aderawa' to refer to the people living in this region is often confusing, as it does not distinguish between Hausa and Tuareg groups, and all those groups which occupy socially 'intermediate' positions between these two.

The second proviso, directly related to the last point above, is that a characteristic trait of the Ader Doutchi Majiya society is the degree of mutual integration of Hausa and Tuareg constituencies. Historically (cf. Chapter 2), the Ader Doutchi Majiya has hosted successive waves of migrations resulting in a syncretic social system in which the traits of one group can only be explained through reference to another group. Tuareg suzerains relied on the work of villages organised according to different gradations of servility (Baier and Lovejoy 1977). Some of these villages consisted of Tuareg slaves, speaking the same language of their masters and relatively closely integrated in the political and social organisation of their masters' society, but arguably of different ethnic origins (cf. Bernus and Bernus 1972) and with different lifestyles as a consequence of their role and position in the hierarchy. Others were Hausa villages conquered by war and having to pay different types of tributes to their Tuareg suzerains, who, in exchange, offered military protection. The internal organisation and production system of these groups changed as a consequence of their encapsulation in the Tuareg system of political control, where dependent groups had a specific status, certain rights and obligations, and with which they exchanged goods and services. Even the elites changed as they intertwined with Ader settled societies. If the Iullemden Kel Dinnik, who remained at the northern fringe of the Ader, maintained a characteristically nomadic lifestyle longer than other groups, the Kel Gress are characterised, amongst the Tuareg, by their diversified livelihood patterns, incorporating extensive rain-fed agriculture, livestock husbandry, and trade, and by their becoming relatively sedentary in the more productive areas where they are settled. Finally, the Lissawan, who belonged to the group of tribes which had followed Agabba in his descent from Air, have now adopted Hausa as their mother tongue. They are permanently settled in Keita, and have acquired many Hausa customs and habits.

More than other ethnographic areas, the Ader Doutchi Majiya has been characterised by the integration of Hausa and Tuareg components into one system which cannot be treated, analytically, as the mere juxtaposition of separate 'cultural wholes'. Its political organisation, systems of production, and cultural and symbolic patterns are the result of a syncretic and dynamic interaction between the societies which constitute it, which have been in contact for centuries (cf. Chapter 2).

The sources and ethnographic references mentioned in this chapter are as specific as possible to the Ader Doutchi Majiya, but also include more general Tuareg and Hausa ethnographies. There are no Anglophone ethnographies of the Ader Doutchi Majiya societies, and the majority of available comprehensive ethnographic studies of the societies living in this area were produced by French anthropologists working for the French Cooperation between the 1950s and the 1970s, and mostly published in the *Etudes Nigeriennes* series. These include the work of Nicole Echard and Henri Raulin (Echard and Raulin 1964, 1965; Raulin 1969; Echard 1964, 1972, 1989). Nicole Echard had also worked on the reconstruction of Ader Doutchi Majiya history (Echard 1975a, 1975b) and her historical work appeared in parallel with that of Djibo Hamani (1975, 1979). Henri Raulin had conducted comparative surveys of Niger societies which include material on the Tahoua Department (1961, 1963a, 1963b, 1965, 1969). The Kel Gress have been studied by Pierre Bonte (1967, 1975, 1976), and the organisation of the Kel Dinnik has been described by Nicolas (1939, 1950). Urvoy (1936) refers to both the Kel Gress and the Kel Dinnik in his monograph on Niger history. In their comprehensive and wide ranging analysis of Tuareg society, both Edmond Bernus (and his wife Suzanne) and Johannes Nicolaisen offer important contributions to the Kel Iullemden and Kel Gress ethnography. There is no specific ethnography of the Lissawan of Keita.

With the exception of the work of Nicole Echard on Hausa communities of the Ader, the most detailed and comprehensive ethnographies of the Hausa of Niger have been conducted in the Maradi region, for which there is a well documented continuity of anthropological studies by French and American scholars (Nicolas 1960, 1962, 1969, 1975; Nicolas, Doumesche, Mouché 1968; Grégoire 1992; Rain 1999, to mention only some major works). While the work on Maradi provides a solid comparative reference to the Ader region, these two areas have followed different historical patterns and

Maradi, which was one of the Seven Hausa states (the *Hausa Bakwai*) and was situated in a more productive area, has not been under the constant influence and domination of Tuareg societies. Other important sources of Hausa ethnography are Anglophone studies of the Hausa of Nigeria (Starns 1974; Smith 1955, 1965, 1981; Cooper 1994, 1995a, 1995b, 1997; Dunbar 1990, 1991; Karaye 1990), but, like the Maradi documentation, they refer to a political, economic and social reality which differs considerably from the Ader context.

A more recent, if less systematic, source of information, lacking a thorough analytical framing, on Ader Doutchi Majiya societies is provided by studies and surveys carried out by various consultancies for the Keita Project (especially: Paoletti and Taliani 1984; Simonelli 1994; Cremona 1995, 1996; Bayard 1995; Bayard, Paoletti and Traoré 1997). Most of these sources provide quantitative data and statistics which were needed by the Project to compare the situation before and after its interventions, and which I occasionally refer to in this chapter to give the reader a sense of the dimensions of certain phenomena. However, my own enquiries and my experience following project surveys suggest that attempts to quantify information about productive resources (especially livestock and land ownership) are not welcomed by local people, who have always been exposed to the legalised exactions of different rulers. Hence, the few figures of this kind provided in this chapter should be taken more as orders of magnitude than as exact measurements.

I have built upon the existing sources through my own ethnographic work. The information I use in this thesis derives primarily from my enquiries in the Keita district, where the Project has carried out the majority of its activities. The districts of Bouza and Abalack, to which the Project expanded its operations since 1991, are situated in rather different ecological and social contexts, have hosted fewer project activities compared to the Keita district, and fall only partially in the description offered in this chapter.

3.2 Social Organisation in the ADM Before Colonialism

This section reconstructs the characteristics of the Kel Gress and Kel Iullemden political and social organisation as they existed before French colonialism (cf. Map VIII), and follows the process of change which led Tuareg and Hausa societies of the Ader

Doutchi Majiya to their present state. This process is characterised by the progressive dissolution of the hierarchical political system according to which relations of production were arranged. Several factors, including the impact of colonial domination (cf. Chapter 2), the establishment of the postcolonial state administration, the abolition of slavery, the impoverishment of the elites, and the effects of droughts on livelihood strategies, contributed to the breakdown of the pre-existing political-economic structure.

Nevertheless, many material and symbolic practices and values on which the political and economic order of the Ader Doutchi Majiya rested, remain alive in the present-day culture of the Ader Doutchi Majiya. Relations of dependency are no longer imposed on ADM societies, and ex-captives are free to act independently of their masters' decisions. However, the position of a person's family in the previous hierarchy is a marker of status in his/her present identity, influencing his/her economic, political and social behaviour towards others, as well as other people's behaviour towards him/her. On the one hand, it is as if a 'shadow structure' remained intact in the minds of people, influencing their practices and strategies in their every day life. On the other hand, old structures and dynamics have been integrated in the administrative apparatus of contemporary Niger and, with the establishment of the Keita Project, in the wider field of international development discourses and practices. This section reconstructs the political system and relations of production that existed in the ADM under Kel Gress and Kel Iullemden control, which represented the substratum which, after the colonial episode, hosted independent Niger's state structures and the Keita Project's 'intervention'.

Tuareg society is segmented into juxtaposed 'confederations' (Tamasheq: *Kel*), similarly internally stratified, but exerting their influence on different territorial areas, and unlike in total numbers and in the relative proportions of internal social sub-components. The general distinction between freemen (Tamasheq: *illelan*) and slaves (Tamsheck: *iklan*) is further internally stratified (cf. Bernus 1981). The *illelan* are divided into four groups: the *imajeghen*, or Tuareg aristocracy, closely associated with camel husbandry and war; the *ineslemen*, holy men or *marabouts*, whose numbers and status vary consistently across *kels* (they are particularly influent in the *Kel Dinnik*, while less so in the *Kel Gress*); the *imghad*, or free vassals, who used to pay a tribute to the *imajeghen* to whom they were attached; and the *inadan*, or artisans, who have

retained up their unique status and gendered system of economic specialisation to these days (cf. Bernus and Nicolaisen 1982).

The *Iklan*, also known as *Bella* in Songhay and *Bouzou* in Hausa, show different ethnic origins from those of their Tuareg patrons (Bernus and Bernus 1975:30), and used to be internally stratified into different 'gradations of servility' (Baier and Lovejoy 1977; Bernus 1981:92). Some lived attached to their master's family (cf. Bernus 1974; Bernus 1981; Bernus and Nicolaisen 1982), the women taking care of the domestic chores and the men providing the labour for their masters' productive activities, including herding, farming, and gathering herbs and fruits used for specific purposes (Bernus 1974). Others lived in semi-nomadic hamlets scattered between the edge of the Sahel and the Sudanic savannah. These, unlike the *iklan* living with their masters, had to provide for their own subsistence, while cultivating their patrons' lands. They represented a surplus labour force the nobles could do without in prosperous times, and relied upon in times of drought. They could be called back to join their masters' families at any time, and the masters could take with them adolescent boys and girls from slave hamlets to add them to their 'tent servants' (Bernus and Bernus 1975: 33).

It was possible for individual slaves, or also for entire slave-villages, to be liberated from their servile condition. Freed slaves were further distinguished in two categories, the *ighawellan* (in Tamasheq), who had enjoyed a free status for a long time, and the *iderfan* (in Tamasheq), recently freed to reward their loyalty to their patron, or as an act of piety (cf. Bernus 1974). *Ighawellan* could not (except through mixed marriages), be assimilated to *imghad* free vassals. Firstly, the status of the latter was irreversible (they could not be turned into slaves as the slaves could be freed). Secondly, slaves or ex-slaves were considered ethnically different from 'real' Tuareg, and denied full human status by high-class members: the ethnic criterion functioned so as to differentiate them from the *ilellan*, also after they had been freed (cf. Bernus and Bernus 1975:31-32). Beyond these general traits of Tuareg social structure, in practice every Tuareg group differed from the others with respect to livelihood strategies, production arrangements and the size of its internal subdivisions. Below I focus on the social organisation of the Iullemden Kel Dinnik and the Kel Gress, which, as we have seen in Chapter 2, were the dominant Tuareg groups in the Ader Doutchi Majiya since the middle of the 19th century.

Amongst the Iullemden Kel Dinnik, semi-sedentary *imghad* villages gravitated around a group of *imajeghen* to whom they paid a tribute in recognition of the rights of use they held over lands that fell within *imajeghen* estates. The *imajeghen* owned the greatest part of valuable resources (land and livestock), and in exchange for usufruct rights the dependents provided the agricultural and herding labour which allowed their masters to exploit these resources (cf. Nicolas 1939, 1950). This interpretation is, however, contested by the descendants of free dependents (*imghad*), who argue, against the *imajeghen*'s version, that they owned the resources they exploited and only owed a part of the produce to their suzerains in exchange for protection against attacks of other tribes (cf. Bernus 1990).

The Iullemden did not practise long distance caravan trade, and their livelihood depended upon dairy husbandry, from which they derived the bulk of protein for their diet, and which they integrated with the consumption of wild seeds and cereals. Dependent tribes had to give part of their crops to the masters, and looked after some of their masters' animals. The artisans (*inadan*) provided leather, wood and metal products, but, because Tuareg artisans do not practise weaving, cloths and clothing were bought in Nigeria, near Kano. Different types of goods were obtained in the course of incursions against villages of settled farmers or other nomadic groups. During the summer, camel and bovine herds were brought to the areas permanently occupied by the Kel Air and Kel Ahaggar (cf. map V) for the purposes of the salt cure[29]. Before the 1970s, the salt cure represented a collective movement, in which every person and every animal took part (cf. Bernus 1990).

Amongst the Kel Gress, the *imghad* were almost completely absent as a group (cf. Bernus and Bernus 1975:29), whereas variously classified slave and ex-slave groups were present in huge numbers. A distinctive trait of the Kel Gress was the emphasis falling on the hierarchical relation between small groups of *imajeghen* landowners and variously classified dependent villages with usufructuary rights over the *imajeghen*'s lands. Amongst these, three principal categories could be distinguished: (a) semi-

[29] The 'salt cure' refers to the Summer migration of herds to areas with a high concentration of sodium chlorine and sodium sulphate present in the surface layers of the soil and in wells and springs. 'The best areas are the clay plains near Tegidda, where the mineral salts found in the water and earth have a laxative effect on the herds, stimulating the elimination of intestinal parasites' (Bernus 1990:163).

permanent camps of slaves working for their patrons (farming and herding); (b) villages of *iderfan* or *ighawellan* owing their former patrons one tenth (*tamasadak*) of the agrarian produce and various kinds of extraordinary contributions[30] on special occasions in the *imajeghen*'s life-cycle (marriage, birth of a child, war, etc.); and (c) villages of Hausa or Hausa-phone peasants which had been progressively conquered and obliged to give a tenth of the produce and pay different kinds of tributes (*haraji*) to Kel Gress *imajeghen* (cf. Bonte 1976).

The Kel Gress livelihood system was more diversified than that of the Iullemden, and included livestock husbandry, agriculture and caravan trade. Their closeness to Nigeria promoted the trade of cattle with northern Nigerian cities and the development of important markets where the Kel Gress sold cattle, salt, and crafts, for money to buy cereals from the *ighawellan*, increasing the amount of cereals they received through tributes. Their herds followed a double migratory pattern, moving southwards during the agricultural slack season and obtaining access to grazing areas for manure produced by their herds, and northwards in the summer, for the salt cure. The rains increased the grass in the northern soils, which could support the surcharge due to the convergence of several Tuareg groups for the cure (cf. Bonte 1967).

Outside the area under Kel Gress and Iullemden control, many savannah towns, which were not in a relation of dependence from these groups, hosted communities of Tuareg immigrants from the North, who provided accommodation and economic services to Kel Gress herders. Some cities became specialised market places, where the desert nomads would exchange dates, salt, slaughter and transport animals, and a range of craft products, for grain and cloths from southern Nigerian towns (Baier 1976). Very little is known about the relations between Iullemden ad Kel Gress and the Lissawan *imajeghen* who had reached the Ader Doutchi at the time of Agabba's conquest (cf. Chapter 2), except for the reports of some colonial administrators recording conflictual relations between the Lissawan and the Iullemden Kel Dinnik. However, at some point between the colonial invasion and today, the Lissawan became Hausaphone and established their political authority upon an area comprising mainly Hausa-speaking villages.

[30] For a detailed description of these contributions, see Bernus and Nicolaisen 1982:120.

Below, I trace the evolution of some of the different components of Ader Doutchi Majiya society with reference to my enquiries in a sample of 20 villages (cf. section 1.6.). Who are the 'beneficiaries' of PDR/ADM activities, and how do specific constituencies of this society (e.g. Tuareg nobles, ex-slaves affiliated to the Kel Gress, Kel Iullemden or Lissawan, Hausa farmers and ex-tributaries) relate to the Project? Without simplifying the diversity that characterises this region, the following section attempts to clarify some elements of complexity that have consequences for the interaction between the Project and the 'target population'.

3.3 Contemporary Livelihood Patterns

The intervention area of the Keita Project is vast, and includes different types of villages which were, once, integrated in the hierarchical structure outlined above. It is possible to distinguish a general trend toward the adoption of similar systems of production on the part of Hausa and Tuareg villages faced with similar environmental and structural constraints. Local pastoral and agricultural societies rearranged their relations according to seasonal climatic fluctuations. In pre-colonial times, farming and herding systems functioned as 'two sub-sectors within a larger regional economy' (Baier 1976:1). The post-colonial trend has been toward the breakdown of traditional forms of interethnic complementarity and mutual dependency (Bernus 1974; Bourgeot 1975; Diarra 1975; Baier 1976; Lovejoy and Baier 1977) and, at least since the 1960s, ethnographic studies of Sahelian economies have documented a less clear-cut distinction between pastoral and farming economies: 'Even though there are pure herders, everybody is interested in the agrarian economy, and multiple liaisons connect herders and peasants. Moreover, farmers own cattle and many nomads practise agriculture' (Bernus 1974:138); and 'the pastoral and agrarian economies entertained a relation of complementarity which we still find nowadays, even though, due to a process of progressive settlement and acculturation, a certain levelling of [pastoral and agrarian] lifestyles is taking place' (Bonte 1976:31). The majority of the population has settled into villages in which both rain-fed agriculture and cattle husbandry are practiced. 'The evolution of Tuareg society tends to favour the development of semi-nomadic farmer-herders, seeking their own profit and detached [*détachés*] from the warriors and the great nomadic tribes' (Bernus 1974:142).

Since the advent of colonial rule, the history of Tuareg *imajeghen* is characterised by economic impoverishment and the progressive loss of political control. In the previous chapter I have shown that the colonial episode had important repercussions for the status of Iullemden and Kel Gress *imajeghen*. Colonial rule abolished the organs of Tuareg political control and the elites' rights to levy tributes, and established new administrative structures, carrying out a census and imposing a system of taxation. It put an end to Tuareg incursions, it compensated dependent groups for their collaboration granting them rights to land, and it punished other groups which resisted colonial rule through military attacks, forced labour and requisitions. The drought of 1968-1973 significantly reduced the Tuareg herds, but it was followed by government restocking programmes which granted loans to herdsmen. Throughout the 1960s, Niger pastoral politics included drilling deep wells and creating mechanical pumping stations in northern Tuareg territories (cf. Bernus 1990:171; Bernus 1994:46). Nomadic Fulani, who had been infiltrating Kel Dinnik territory since the 1940s, increased their pressure over the new wells during the 1968-1973 drought, concentrating their herds around pumping stations. As Fulani herds are always followed by herdsmen, whereas Tuareg herds are left to water by themselves, the Fulani cows formed a wall around the wells at the expense of Tuareg animals, giving rise to tensions over the access to water points in times of scarcity (cf. Bernus 1990:167).

The Tuareg elite has evolved in different ways. An exiguous successful minority has established networks of clientage and connections in centres where their status is recognised, maintaining larger herds than commoners, recruiting wage labourers to work on part of their lands, or developing the custom of 'farming by invitation' (lavishly feeding poorer peasants in exchange for their agricultural labour), and renting part of their lands to farmers. I have never seen a Tuareg *imajeghen* doing agricultural work in the Ader Doutchi Majiya. Some of the ex-slaves have maintained their relations with their former patrons, finding it more convenient than starting independent activities, and today they gravitate around the influence of relatively wealthy Tuareg *imajeghen*, following their patrons' affairs and taking care of their herds. Tuareg artisans (*enadan*) have been able to expand their activities, selling their products in local markets and to tourists or shops in some major cities.

The majority of Hausa and Tuareg (ex-dependent) villages are characterised by low internal economic differentiation, and all adult men are farmer-herders, practising seasonal migration every year to earn cash through wage labour in cities during the dry season. Many ex-dependents who had cut the ties with their impoverished masters began colonising the northern fringes of the agricultural area, beginning to occupy and cultivate lands which had not been exploited because of their low productivity, and entering into conflict with herders over the damage made by cattle to the crops, and questioning existing livestock corridors (*couroirs de passage*). In 1960 new legislation established a boundary between agricultural and pastoral zones 'beyond which cultivation was forbidden and where, if the land was seeded, destruction of crops by herds could not be prosecuted. Despite this dissuasive and repressive law, the agricultural front moved forward' (Bernus 1990:167; cf. Bernus 1994:250).

> Over the last 30 years, we have witnessed a paradoxical phenomenon. Rain-fed agriculture has expanded more and more toward the north even though there have been successive rain deficits: they have progressed about fifty kilometres northwards, despite the southwards regression of the 350 mm isohyet: in 1960 this isohyet set the northern boundary of rain-fed agriculture in Niger's legislature. Between 1968 and 1977, in the Canton of Tanout, cultivated surfaces have doubled, entailing the diminution of forest areas, the disappearance of certain vegetal species and the degradation of pastures. The inhabitants, who diversify their resources and almost all become farmer-herders, cultivate not only the valleys, but also sandy dunes for rain-fed agriculture and irrigation. (Bernus 1994:57)

In the absence of a cadaster, the property of land is still regulated by 'traditional' norms, which are recognised by the State in the 1997 *Principes D'Orientation du Code Rural* (cf. République du Niger, 1993, articles 8 and 9; cf. Lund 1993). In general, men own and control a greater proportion of valuable assets (land, livestock) and cash than women, who have rights of use over the products of their fathers' and husbands' lands. Adult men carry out the majority of farming tasks during the agricultural season (May-November), and migrate to cities where they work for wages in the off season (November-April). The cash they earn through their migration work is mostly used to buy cereals to integrate the household's production. Women are responsible for the majority of so-called 'reproductive activities' and remain in villages with elders and children when the men leave.

The principal agricultural products are millet and sorghum. Neither fallow nor animal traction are practised (cf. Raulin 1963; Echard and Raulin 1964). Some households with lands in productive locations dispose of small parcels for the off-season cultivation of vegetables and spices. In circumscribed areas (mostly on valley

lands around Toumboulana, Zangarata and Tamaské), the irrigated cultivation of onions constitutes a cash crop, and onion producers (who also have cereal fields) do not usually migrate. Farming works start in May, when men return from their seasonal migrations, to prepare the fields for the rains. The first rains usually fall in June, and the land is sown in cooperation with women and children. Sowing is the one agricultural task to which women tend to contribute; and their participation in agricultural work is otherwise minimal (cf. Echard and Raulin 1954:61; Raulin 1963:123; Echard 1989:37). A second sowing usually takes place with subsequent rains. Two to three weeks after sowing, the first weeding (*noma huri*) takes place; weeding is repeated two/three weeks later (*may may*), and sometimes a third weeding may be needed (cf. Raulin 1963). The new plants have to be supervised closely against animals and birds. The harvest is carried out in November, and soon afterwards men leave to work for wages in Niamey, Nigeria or coast cities.

Some specialised herders (mainly Fulani, but also ex Tuareg slaves, or Bouzou) have become wage herders, usually attached to an entire village, or a village section, or a few wealthy owners, for whom they tend livestock for a fixed rate of payment per head[31] and the use of dairy products while the animals are in their custody. The detachment of cattle from their sedentary owners (the animals still migrate to Nigeria and to the northern oases) makes it difficult to evaluate the importance of animals as a form of saving in the local economy, as the numbers quoted in surveys are underestimations of the real figures. Small livestock is kept in the village, and supervised by children or women, or by local herders for a small cash payment (my evidence here differs from the situation recorded by Bernus (1974), who mentions payments in kind as the most common form of retribution, probably accounting for a progressive monetisation of the region). Before looking more closely at the interactions between project activities and ADM livelihood strategies, I will illustrate how the situation I have described is reflected in the case of a few villages falling in the intervention area.

Seyté is a Bouzou village, whose inhabitants speak a dialect of the Tamasheq. They are farmer-herders, and elders recall a time, before the droughts of the 1970s and 1980s, when their herds were substantially larger than today. Seyté is peculiar in the

area, as the lands cultivated by its inhabitants belong to a family of Tuareg *imajeghen* of the Kel Iullemden who live in a small nearby settlement called Ouroub. The people of Seyté agree with Ouroub's *imajeghen*'s version that those lands belong to the noble Tuareg, but both parties argue that Seyté's people do not 'give anything' in exchange for the use of the land. However, my own research shows that Seyté's villagers provide agricultural labour for Ouroub *imajeghen*. The case of Seyté and Ouroub is unusual, as nowadays the majority of Bouzou villages in the ADM believe that they own the lands they cultivate, and their ex-suzerains have moved to other areas of the country. Tinkirana Tounga (cf. Chapter 6) and Tinkirana Ibarogan are typical examples of ex servile villages that have almost severed the ties with their former patrons, the Tuareg Kel Eghlal of the Iullemden confederation, who are said to have definitely moved to Abalack. Kossongo is a small village, to the south of the District of Keita, of semi-sedentary Tuareg who have moved to this area recently from the region around Agadez. It is a good example of the contemporary situation of Tuareg *imajeghen* who have not moved to bigger cities. Kossongo hosts an *imajeghen* family to whom a few families of dependents of different ranks are attached (cf. pictures 11 and 12). The *imajeghen* own a herd of camels which they keep between Nigeria and their village. The dependents cultivate the lands and manage the herd for themselves and for the *imajeghen*. Kossongo is situated close to the area which, before the colonial period, used to be under the influence of the Kel Gress. The descendants of the original Kel Gress landlords are settled in the village of Mansala Kel Gress, and one of them holds the administrative position of *Chef du Groupement Kel Gress*, representing the most important 'traditional authority' in the region (cf. Chapter 6). He traces the origins of his lineage back to the Prophet Mohamed. He is surrounded by his court and some dependents, and his version is that today he has maintained only a portion of the lands which once belonged to his lineage, allowing the local farmers to cultivate and exploit the rest, asking for nothing in return. Villagers living in the area falling under his influence have a different version, as they claim that the land they cultivate is theirs, today, and no longer belongs to the *Chef*, whose position now is only that of a traditional and moral authority. Mansala *Sedentaire*, right next to Mansala Kel Gress, used to be a village of liberated slaves who paid tributes to the *imajeghen*, but today it is formally independent from its former patrons. All the villages mentioned above speak Tamasheq as their mother tongue, but are fluent in Hausa which is a lingua franca in the

[31] I recorded FCFA1,000 per head of cattle a year and FCFA 200 per sheep or goat ayear plus the right to

region. I met only a few old women and small children who could speak only Tamasheq. Koutki, Kourega, Laba and Garadawa, are all Hausa villages which, in the past, used to be tributaries of Tuareg chiefs, but are today entirely independent from Tuareg control. Keita, Ibohamane, Tamaské and Chadawanka are bigger villages with a mixed population, comprising Hausa, Tuareg, and Fulani inhabitants. These villages are divided into neighbourhoods which reflect the ethnic composition of the village, and each neighbourhood had its own village chief (*hakimi*). The following section looks at the constraints faced by Bouzou and Hausa villages in the Ader Doutchi Majiya and at their livelihood strategies. It introduces the interactions between the local system of production and project activities, which are discussed in greater depth in Chapter 5.

3.4 Ecological Vulnerability, Male Migration and the Relevance of Project Activities for Local Livelihoods and the Sexual Division of Labour.

With the exception of a few villages situated in favourable, productive areas (on 'valley' lands which allow off-season cultivation), the majority of the villages falling in the project intervention area are characterised by yearly food deficits. Cremona's in-depth nutrition survey (1985) in a sample of 15 villages, finds that 'a 9-person household must spend approximately FCFA 45,000[32] in the local markets to cover its basic nutrition needs' (Cremona 1985: 103).

Despite the integration of a household's own production with external sources of food, Cremona's anthropometric measurements show medium to advanced levels of malnutrition, which are most acute amongst children under 2 years of age. The nutritional conditions of adults is not particularly better: 53% of adult men and 46% of adult women are considered under-nourished (Cremona 1985:93). Cremona's survey may present a particularly bleak picture, as her research coincided with the 1984-85 drought. Unfortunately, the Project did not carry out other surveys to assess the evolution of the nutritional status of the population in the project area. However, the FAO 1998 *Aperçu Nutrinionnel par Pays – Niger* (based on 1992 EDS[33] data) breaks data down to the Departmental level. For Tahoua and Agadez Departments together, 36.6% of children under 5 are underweight (*insuffisance ponderale*) and 13.7% are

consume the milk of the animals.

[32] The survey took place before the devaluation of the FCFA. In fact, FCFA 45,000 would be FCFA 90,000 after January1994, or approximately UK £ 90.

[33] Enquête Démographique et de Santé, Care International and DHS, 1998.

emaciated (FAO 1998:15). For the department of Tahoua alone, 17.5% of adult men and 23% of adult women have a bodily mass index below 18.5 kg/m2, the level under which they are classified as affected by 'chronic energy deficiency'.

My informants asserted that the origin of their problems is the variability of rainfall levels. Lack of sufficient and well spaced rains leads to shortfalls in grain production which results in variously severe yearly food deficits. This problem is exacerbated by erosion phenomena that tend to reduce the infiltration of water in the soil and/or the creation of water-ponds. In these conditions, farmers have to earn cash to buy the extra food necessary to feed their families throughout the year (cf. Faulkingham 1976).

In the villages falling in the project intervention area, this extra income is earned through three main 'subsistence strategies'. Selling animals is mentioned as an emergency measure, to which one resorts only when other options have been tried. Moreover, in many villages, elders lament a consistent decrease in the number of animals since the drought-induced famine of the mid-1970s. A minority of farmers, who own land in productive locations where irrigation is possible, practise off-season cultivation (French: *culture de contre-saison;* Hausa: *nomar rani*) of onions (sing: *albasa*) and, secondarily, other vegetables. The majority of villages lack such favourable conditions, and adult men resort to seasonal migration (French: *exode*; Hausa: *cin rani*). The men of the Ader have a reputation, in Niger, for being '*grands exodants*' (great migrants), working as agricultural labourers (sing: *yan barema*) or casual manual workers elsewhere in Niger, or outside the country (cf. Nicolas et al. 1968:14).

In the local construction of gender roles, male household heads are seen as responsible for the subsistence of their household's members. Seasonal migration is presented, by men and women alike, as the way in which ADM men fulfil their 'breadwinner' role. Migrating to cities around the months of November/December and returning in April/May, adult men are able to earn the cash which is needed to cover their land's production deficits. Women stay behind with elders and children, and feed themselves and their families with the cereal reserves from their household's harvest. If they own small land parcels of their own, or if they are able to access other cheap

sources of cereals (buying them when prices are low, engaging in rotating credit, selling a goat which belongs to them, using some of the household's reserves or the WFP ration), they prepare meals which they sell, directly or through their daughters, to individual members of other households. Participation in the activities of the Keita Project has given (mainly) women labourers another source of revenue (discussed below, and in Chapters 6 and 7). Selling cooked meals, together with other small-scale trade of goods (mainly straw mats), allows women to achieve a certain degree of economic independence from their husbands, which is not, however, seen as threatening to intra-household relations and power distribution. Women spend their earnings primarily to fulfil their 'social obligations'. Almost all the women I talked to emphasised the importance of bringing gifts to celebrations without having to ask their husbands for money. In marginal villages in the project intervention area, men and women do not have many alternatives to these activities. In bigger centres, the social division of labour is more diversified, and both men and women can find various kinds of jobs in different sectors. Bigger centres like Keita are also internally hierarchically stratified, and poorer people can sell their labour to a wealthy minority.

It is against this background that the impact of the PDR/ADM should be assessed. For men and women alike, the main aspects of its intervention have been the introduction of food-for-work rations (sing. *taimakon abinci*, literally 'help of food'), as compensation for labour on project work sites; the impact on productive resources (land and water) through its environmental rehabilitation interventions; and, for a limited period in its early stages, the reallocation of property rights in land. A noteworthy difference between these two project-related outcomes is their immediate (food rations) or long term (environmental change) visibility (cf. Chapter 6).

The importance of food-for-work is partly explained by the fact that the PDR/ADM has a monopsony over labour supply in the slack season. The number of work-sites that can be working at peak time (i.e. during the dry season) can reach 40-50 *chantiers* of reforestation trenches and 10-15 roads/hydraulic infrastructure building sites open at the same time, for a total of up to 4000-5000 people per day working for the Project[34]. The contribution of the World Food Program (WFP) to the Keita Project consisted in 4,438,505 food-rations for the first phase and 3,522,428 for the second

[34] There approximately 400 villages in the project intervention area, with a population of 330,000 people.

phase of the Project. The standard ration distributed in Keita in the first two Project phases consisted of the following, with equivalent values in FCFA (PDR/ADM 1997):

Millet:	2,250 kg.	248 FCFA
Sugar:	0,050 kg.	20 FCFA
Oil:	0,075 kg.	50 FCFA
Cow-peas (*niébé*)	0,200 kg.	28 FCFA
Tinned meat	1 tin	83 FCFA
Total value:		429 FCFA (approximately U.S. $ 0,86)

Due to male migration, women form the bulk of the labour for project interventions (cf. Chapters 6 and 7) and most of the WFP rations are received by women, as a counterpart for their work. Because of the food deficit situation in the project intervention area, ration cereals are used for household consumption. Relatively wealthy households, not vulnerable to food scarcity, would not send their members (men, women, or children) to work on the *chantiers* (work-sites). *Chantier* work is a sign of low status and poverty, and the wives of wealthy or high status men are not usually involved in heavy manual work, and are more likely to be secluded. Because, in the context in question, wealth is closely tied to a household's agricultural production, the most destitute households (i.e. the households whose agricultural production is scarce) are the most likely to use WFP cereals for consumption purposes, as well as to send their members (women and children) to work on the *chantiers*. Women sell the other components of their ration and retain the profit derived thereof for their own economic activities, such as the preparation of cooked meals to be sold in the neighbourhood or livestock breeding.

Able-bodied men aged between 18-38 do not compete with women over labour in project work-sites, as migration is both more profitable and socially more 'appropriate' for a man. Adult men say they would be 'ashamed' (Hausa: shame: *kunya*) to work next to women in a *chantier*, unless they fulfilled higher status roles, such as the *chef de chantier* or few other skilled jobs available only in a minority of sites and remunerated in cash. Men are able to gain more from their jobs as migrants than if they worked for the Project. Moreover, project work is available for a few villages at a time and only for a limited number of times in the same villages. Although rates of return to migrant labour vary consistently according to factors ranging from personal skills to the opportunities available at their destination, a migrant worker can save between 20.000

to 50.000 FCFA per month (cf. Sassi 1991:33). In comparison, an unskilled manual labourer on project work sites earns one WFP ration per day. A *chef de chantier* (work-site chief, cf. Chapter 6) on project sites, with general responsibility for the coordination and monitoring of workers in a *chantier,* earns FCFA 10,000 per month, and receives food-for-work daily rations (monetised, this more or less doubles his/her cash earnings). In the first two phases of project intervention, most *chefs de chantier* used to be men, even though the majority of *chantier* workers were women. This was criticised, leading to the establishment of a policy of preferential appointment of women to the post of *chef de chantier.* Today, most *chefs de chantier* are women.

The Project's impact on productive resources is more significant for local men than for women, as men have greater access to and control over land than women (cf. Cremona 1986; Bayard 1995). In limited areas, the Project's intervention allowed the development of off-season cultivation (French: *culture de contre-saison; cultures de rente;* Hausa: *nomar rani*), causing the permanent settlement of male migrant workers. The main project impact on the majority of non-valley lands consisted in the increase in vegetation, which could be used as fodder for livestock and cattle. The Project also created permanent and temporary water resources through the construction of earthfill dams and gabion weirs hydraulic structures, which had an important impact on the availability of water for human and animal consumption and agriculture. For the majority of villages facing water scarcity problems, this is the most profitable contribution that the Keita Project has made to their livelihoods (cf. Chapter 6).

The Project did not only have an impact on the productivity of natural resources, but, for a limited period of time, it also provided access to the ownership of new lands. In the first phase (1984-1991), project interventions were accompanied by the redistribution of property rights upon rehabilitated lands to two categories of beneficiaries: the original owners (*'les ayants droit'*), and the labourers (*'les nécessiteux'*) who participated in the rehabilitation works. In Chapter 1, I illustrated the coincidence between project intervention strategies and the participatory policies of Kountché's *Société de Développment.* The redistribution of rehabilitated lands 'to the tiller' corresponded to a national policy famously expressed in Kountché's 1974 message to the nation, establishing that: 'From the present declaration, every field already exploited under some kind of title by a producer, remains and will stay at the

disposition of this producer, irrespective of what was the initial title which had allowed the latter to acquire it [the field in the first place]'[35] (quoted in Sassi 1991:43, my translation). The original owners had abandoned many of the areas where the project intervened. The rationale behind the application of Kountché's policy to land tenure arrangements following project interventions was as follows: the original owners had abandoned their lands, therefore those local poor farmers who contributed to the land's rehabilitation deserved to become the new owners (Sassi 1991:52). The redistribution of rehabilitated lands was arranged by the Project in cooperation with the national administrative authorities, in particular the Conseil Sous-Régional de Développement (CSRD).

Although the vast majority of the labour force was female, the redistribution benefited male household heads almost entirely, giving rise to women's remonstrations in some villages and to critiques of the Project at an international level (Monimart 1989; Rochette 1989; Bayard, Paoletti, Traore 1986; Bayard 1995). However, redistributions triggered countless litigations and conflicts, and were definitely stopped by the end of the first phase, making it impossible to include women amongst the beneficiaries of the redistribution policy. Nevertheless, the critiques had raised the issue of women's access to land, leading to the conception of a new type of operation, indisputably limited in its extent compared to the earlier generalised policy, aimed at the acquisition of rights upon restored parcels on the part of women groups (cf. Chapter 7).

Another category of project intervention having particular relevance for local women is represented by an array of activities joined together under the vague heading '*volet femme*', such as food conservation and transformation, extension support to women in women's gardens, involvement in plant production for project reforestation sites (Fr. *pépinière*; Hausa *aikin leda*), health training and other forms of training aimed at income diversification. This type of operation had some success only where a demand for new goods and services which could be provided by women existed.

The impact of project activities on the distribution of power between men and women was limited. Through them, women were involved in activities from which they

[35] *'à partir de la présente déclaration, tout champ déjà exploité à un titre ou à un autre par un exploitant donné, reste et demeurera à la disposition dudit exploitant, quel que soit le titre initial qui avait permis à ce dernier de l'acquérir'*

derived a profit, most of which was used to compensate for the household's food deficits, and a small part of which increased the scale of women's 'traditional' economic activities without challenging men's role as primary owners of a household's productive assets and as providers of the bulk of externally earned cash through migration.

3.5 The Household and Food Production, Transformation, and Consumption Patterns

In both Hausa and Bouzou villages (sing: *gari*) in the ADM, the basic familial organisation is the *gida*, a term which refers at the same time to a compound (a physical enclosure containing one or more buildings) and to the people forming a residence group (the people living together in the same *gida*) (cf. Raulin 1963a:15; Nicolas, Doumeche, Mouché 1968). A *gida*'s composition is variable, depending mainly upon the stage of a household's life-cycle, but the commonest model includes one adult male (*mai gida*), seen as responsible for the subsistence and livelihood of his wife (*uwar gida*) or wives, and their children (*yara*) (cf. Nicolas et al. 1968:27 ff.). Several variations of this basic model occur, leading to the inclusion of different categories of dependent members, such as the husband's elderly parent/s, younger and/or unmarried siblings or cousins, adopted children, etc.

In polygamous households, each wife has a personal dwelling, and sometimes also a separate cooking place or hearth (*murfu*) adjacent to her individual house, where she resides with her young children. In the majority of polygamous residences that I could observe, each *gida* had a unique hearth shared by all of the co-wives (sing: *kishiya*). Separate cooking places usually attest to tense relations between co-wives and unwillingness to collaborate (cf. Nicolas et al. 1968:27; Raynaut 1977:573). The husband spends alternate nights at each of his co-wives' dwellings (sometimes the rotation is every two days), and the 'hosting' wife is responsible for preparing her husband's evening meal, while the other wives cook only for themselves and their children. When a husband only has one wife, she is always responsible for all of her husband's and children's meals. The preparation of meals is done by household women, and young girls begin helping their mothers to accomplish their domestic chores at a very early age (approx. 4/5 years old).

The husband is morally and socially responsible for ensuring his family's subsistence and well being, and it is he who provides the bulk of cereals (mainly millet and sorghum) necessary for the preparation of meals. Today in the ADM, at harvest time, millet and sorghum stalks are stored in household granaries (sing. *rumbu*). Weekly or fortnightly, women are given stocks of millet with which they shall prepare their family's meals. From these stocks, most women pound and process the millet necessary for the family meals on a daily basis.

The main meals of the local diet vary in composition across the year and with a household's socio-economic status. Depending on the time of the year[36] and on relative wealth, people eat two or three times per day. The morning and, if taken, midday meal is the *fura*, a kind of porridge composed of millet, water and milk. The evening meal is more nutritious, and usually includes *tuwo*, a thick, millet- or sorghum-based paste, accompanied by a sauce (*miya*) which, at its richest, includes abundant meat and/or entrails, but which, in poorer families or at times of hardship, may contain just vegetables, herbs, and spices. In particularly poor villages in the *brousse* (*daji*), people may spend part of the year eating only *fura* at all meals (cf. Cremona 1985:16), and consuming meat maybe once or twice a week or on the occasion of ceremonies and feasts (sing. *biki*). A variety of different foodstuffs enter the household's diet from extra-*gida* sources (cf. Raynaut 1977). These include meat (raw or cooked), cooked vegetables, tubers, fruits, fried snacks (beignets and 'pan-cakes'), sweets (dates, bonbons, caramelised nuts, soft drinks), and stimulants such as tobacco, tea, and the ubiquitous *kola*-nuts (sing: *goro*). Women control an important part of the cooked foodstuff trade.

Women are often given small parcels of land to cultivate individually by their husbands, or they may own fields inherited from their natal families (cf. Cremona 1986:2). However, because residence is virilocal, when women come from different villages, it is unlikely that they retain access to their part of inheritance. Women mostly use the product of their individual fields for trading cooked foodstuff, thereby entering a network of food circulation, the social and economic importance of which cannot be underestimated. Sometimes, organised in rotating credit groups, women 'speculate',

[36] People tend to eat more (increasing the number of meals or the quantities eaten at each meal) during the rainy seasons (approximately May – September), when agricultural work is most demanding, and in the 'cold season' (approximately November – February).

buying cereals from the poorest farmers, who are obliged to sell at the time of the year when cereals are cheapest in order to pay their revenues (after the harvest).

In general, meal variety, quality, and, in poorer households, quantity, decreases steadily since after the harvest: in the months immediately following the harvest, meals are richer, whereas in the rainy season, families often struggle to complement their partially or entirely depleted cereal stocks with external sources of relatively expensive food. Hence, poorer households are often facing hardship by the end of the rainy season. If the previous harvest had been poor, their stocks are likely to be minimal[37]. Nevertheless, they must use them not only to feed themselves, but also to sow their fields[38]. When the interval between rains, within the same season, is long, second or third sowings may be necessary, further depleting a household's reserves. It is only the wealthiest farmers who are able to sell grains in the rainy season, and the price of cereals is at its peak (see Table 3).

3.6 Women's Lives and the Sexual Division of Labour

Women are primarily responsible for 'reproductive activities'. In the ADM, these include fetching water, collecting fuel-wood, preparing family meals, washing clothes, cleaning the interior of the *gida* and the utensils used for food preparation, looking after the children and, sometimes, taking care of poultry or small livestock kept in the *gida*.

Cremona (1985) estimates that, in the project intervention area, a family of 5 consumes approximately 50 litres of water per day. This translates into a highly variable amount of time and effort across villages, depending on the location of the nearest water point and the availability of water. In certain areas, in the hot season (March-May), women must wait hours before water is available in wells, or go there early in the morning and queue, sometimes only to reach their turn when the well is empty. Cremona's survey of 15 villages, shows that the minimum time spent fetching water is 1 hour per day, in a village with a water point at 0.050 kilometers from its residential area. The maximum time is 6 hours, for several trips to water points 1.5 kilometers away from the village. Fuel wood is usually collected twice a week by women, and quantities

[37] According to Cremona, 'in September most of the food consumed is bought with cash (household stocks being practically depleted). In October, after the harvest, auto-consumption starts again' (1985b:103).

depend upon family size. On the collection day, they spend between 2-7 hours for this task depending on the distance of the collection sites[39]. The preparation of meals takes between 2-5 hours per day (Cremona 1985:15).

The contribution of women to agricultural activities on their husband's field/s varies substantially across villages. Their participation is almost always required at sowing and harvesting times, for tasks considered 'lighter'. Otherwise, women state that their main task consists in preparing and bringing meals to their husbands and relatives (e.g. adolescent sons) in the fields, and in carrying out their standard domestic tasks, increased by the presence of their husbands and unmarried sons who have returned from their seasonal migration sites. Women may also work on their own fields. Children and youths contribute consistently to agricultural labour, partly accounting for the high value which my informants placed upon a large family. When children are too small to work on the fields, and if a husband cannot afford to hire agricultural labour, a woman's workload is likely to increase substantially.

In the majority of villages in the intervention area, women and children are primarily responsible for the care of small livestock (sheep and especially goats), and sometimes also of cattle. However, as mentioned above, it is a common practice to entrust cattle and livestock to specialised herders, mostly Fulani or Bouzou, for a set price per head per year.

Weaving mats, pottery, and some tasks of leatherwork (in the Tuareg iron-mongers caste or *enadan*) are typical activities from which women are able to earn some extra cash. However, the most generalised form of 'female trade' is the sale of certain cooked foodstuffs. That this is not a recent phenomenon in Niger, is attested by the writings of Heinrich Barth about the market of Tessaoua around 1850, and Fernand Foureau, about the market of Zinder, in 1899 (Barth 1965 and Foureau 1902, quoted in Raynaut 1977).

In the ADM, there are important exceptions to women's 'monopoly' over food sale. Notably, male butchers (sing. *rindawa*) process and sell meat, both raw and

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[38] Although, for sowing purposes, farmers are likely to have selected the best stalks in advance.
[39] In Cremona's sample the minimum distance is 3 kilometers, and the maximum is15 kilometers (Cremona 1984:49).

cooked. Male shopkeepers also keep different types of snacks in their shops, which, in bigger towns like Keita, are open until late (10 pm and later), and sell their products to a mainly male crowd: small groups of friends, gathered to chat, to listen to the radio, or watch the public tv.[40] Male shopkeepers sell imported foods, such as packed cookies and sweets, soft drinks, tea, coffee, sugar, oil, pasta, bread, rice, cigarettes, and kola nuts.

Women retain control over 'traditional' home-style foods, mainly the above mentioned *fura*, *tuwo* or boiled rice with sauce, and cooked vegetables, often presented covered by grated nuts. They are also the sole sellers of a variety of fried beignets, and, in the morning, some women sell omelettes and tea or coffee (cf. Raynaut 1977). This activity does not exclude secluded women, who sell the foods they cook at home through their young daughters (see Picture 15).

Although varying in scale, the circulation of cooked meals across households takes place in big and small villages alike, and, with the exception of the specific case of fried beignets sold as snacks, it is not a business restricted to a specialised group of women, but a common practice of most married women. Its meanings must be sought beyond the sphere of economic transactions alone, as part of the food is given as a gift to relatives, including a woman's own husband, for whom she may reserve a portion of the food destined to be sold, and neighbours, who will reciprocate in the future, creating a network of food exchanges, whose partakers usually try to outdo one another in quality and quantities offered.

This system of food circulation gives rise to a number of interesting social phenomena. Raynaut suggested that its more general meaning lies in a tension between men and women in Hausa society:

> each wife, throughout almost the entire year, instead of cooking food for her husband for free, sells what she cooks to the husbands of her neighbours, who, in turn, do the same for her husband. At the end of these prestations and counter-prestations, the same result is achieved as if each spouse had sold to her own husband the *tuwo* and the [*galettes*] that she prepared – which does, in fact, sometimes happen. If one considers that women are not only producers of cooked meals, but that, globally, what they earn selling foodstuff to their competitors is largely evened out by what they spend to buy food from them, it is clear that the main benefit of this transaction comes from the male clients. [...] One cannot fail to see the artifice thanks to which women are

[40] This description would not apply to the great majority of villages, which are almost devoid of adult men between November/December and May, and which are likely to have only one 'boutique', if any.

> able to maximise their profit from their own stocks of cereals – produced on their personal parcels – and, on the other hand, making men pay for the job of preparing meals which they [women] perform. (Raynault 1977:583)

In the article's conclusion, Raynaut poses what he sees as an underlying question: 'where does the money necessary for these transactions come from?' (1977:595).

While Raynaut leaves the question unanswered, his reflections can be usefully integrated in the framework of Project/gender relations in the ADM. Here, the answer to Raynaut's question lies in the interaction between the following factors of the intrahousehold economy: influx of external cash from extended seasonal male migration; women's 'traditional' domestic and economic roles; women's massive employment on project work sites, compensated in food-for-work rations; and, after 1998, women's access to sources of cash through the initiatives of the newly established Division for the Promotion of Women (DPFSE).

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a selected ethnography, focusing on some traits of the Ader Doutchi Majiya social organisation which are relevant to its relations with the Project. It has highlighted the process of change undergone by the Tuareg political system, emphasising the continuities and discontinuities with today's context. In particular, the society of the Ader Doutchi Majiya went from an interethnic hierarchy which structured political and economic relations between suzerains and various categories of dependents, to a system characterised by relatively uniform patterns of production across villages with different ethnic origins (Hausa and Tuareg ex-dependents). While ex-slaves still carry a social stigma attached to their old servile status, and the *imajeghen* embody the highest values of Tuareg culture, the system of 'tributes against protection' which tied the dependents to their suzerains in the past has been replaced by Niger's administrative apparatus and national taxation.

The Keita Project interfered with this system in several ways. For about two years during its First Phase (1984-1991), it followed Kountché's land policy by supporting the redistribution of rehabilitated lands to workers who participated in the rehabilitation works. However, this activity gave rise to tensions between old and new

owners and between men and women, and was discontinued by the end of the First Phase. The Project had an impact on the productivity of resources (land and livestock), through the creation of water reserves and various activities aimed at restoring fertility (reforestation, anti-erosion bunds, increase in the quantity and quality of fodder). This category of 'interventions' had a greater impact on men's economic sphere than on women's. However, the Project enrolled local labour to work in its anti-desertification work-sites. The work-sites were open during the slack season, and the majority of workers were women, who did not migrate, and were remunerated with World Food Programme daily 'food-for-work' rations. Chapter 6 provides a detailed analysis of the impact of these operations on local livelihoods, trying to follow the different consequences of its activities across gender and status categories. Gradually recognising the importance of women's contribution to its achievements, the Project developed a series of initiatives aimed at improving women's status and income generating activities, which resulted in the establishment of a Division for the Promotion of the Role of Women. Chapter 7 looks at the gender axis across national and international actors, project staff and local women. Finally, the Project created a limited number of jobs in the city of Keita, mainly for extension workers, house and office guards, drivers, mechanics, electricians and domestics.

The following chapter shifts the perspective from the Ader Doutchi Majiya to International actors and discourses, and looks at the narratives which justified and sustained a certain type of 'intervention' in the Ader Doutchi Majiya context. Against the historical and ethnographic background outlined in Chapters 2 and 3, the next chapter reconstructs the different reading of this context provided by the 'developers', a reading which presents the Ader environment as awaiting 'restoration' and its society as having to undergo change.

4. 'FIGHTING AGAINST DESERTIFICATION IN THE SAHEL': UNRAVELLING THE MACRO NARRATIVE AND RELATED REGIMES OF PRACTICES

4.1 Introduction

How did international and national development institutions understand and represent the Sahel and its populations, and what forms of practices did these representations give rise to? Starting from Foucault's contention that 'practices don't exist without a certain regime of rationality' (Foucault 1991a:79), this chapter explores the 'understanding' of the Ader Doutchi Majiya entertained by official development 'macro' actors, and the types of 'intervention' entailed and justified by it.

As argued in Chapter 1, understandings should be seen as interpretations which are not independent from the position of relative power of the interpreting parties. With reference to the question of how understanding is possible across cultural distance, it has been noted that actors can establish different ways of understanding each other. The model of dialectical reciprocity implies an openness toward the other's beliefs and an awareness of the limits set upon one's judgement by one's own position and cultural and historical 'prejudices' (cf. Gadamer 1975). However, this form of communication does not accurately describe the disposition toward the other exemplified by development discourses. Development forms of knowledge production construct the other as a target for 'intervention'. In doing so, they address the other 'as a tool' (Gadamer 1975:323), and the claim to understand the other performs the function of legitimising control and 'intervention' upon it.

This chapter unravels the process of knowledge construction by which the Sahel came to be seen as in need of external intervention, and describes the institutional forms established to implement 'intervention' in the Sahel region, and more specifically in the Ader Doutchi Majiya. It does so by analysing the discourses and forms of rationality apparent in a number of programmatic texts produced by 'macro' actors. The chapter is 'funnel shaped'. It begins with an analysis of the wider historical conditions which made rural development, its logic and 'implementation' strategies possible at a particular moment in time. It then looks at the *ad hoc* institutions created to deal with the 'problems' affecting the Sahel, focusing on the rationales underpinning the

'desertification narrative', which constitutes the most influential background to the development of Integrated Rural Development Projects (IRDPs) as a 'combat strategy against the advancing desert'. Here the chapter shifts the focus to the Italian context, situating the Italian cooperation *vis à vis* other international and national development organisations with regards to initiatives in the Sahel, and reconstructing Italian positions as laid out in the first Italian Initiative for the Sahel. This programme set the foundations for the Keita Project, whose justifications and approaches are discussed in the last section, through an analysis of early project documents and *ad hoc* studies. Chapter 5 follows from this, by entering 'inside' the Project and enquiring into the beliefs and practices of project staff.

4.2 Setting the Scene

The end of the 1960s were years of drought and famine in the whole of the Sahel. But the 1968-73 famines in the West African Sahel differed from previous similar events. For at least 400 years, there are documented records of recurrent droughts in the Sahel, which had occurred on average every 7-10 years in the 17th century and every 5 years in the 18th century (cf. Watts 1983; Devereux 2000:8) and which, after a relatively favourable 19th century, had set tragic records in the oral history of Niger's peoples throughout the whole of the 20th century, alternating with periods of relatively abundant rainfall (cf. Laya 1975). However, the 1968-73 famines set the beginning of a new era in Niger's environmental history, with Niger becoming of interest to international organisations and, in particular, to some institutions which had the mandate to deal with problems of food scarcity, poverty and/or environmental crises.

One of the reasons for this apparent burst of interest in Niger's environmental problems was the fact that Niger had become independent from France in 1960. Until then, during the colonial period, France was mostly responsible for dealing with the conditions of its colonies (cf. Fuglestad 1983), and drought in Niger would not be seen as an international problem regarding other world powers, as well as *ad hoc* established international organisations. But by the 1960s, the configuration of world power and international relations had assumed a new shape which, for the purpose of the present analysis, was characterised by the rise of 'development' as an historically produced discourse and the problematisation of poverty in the 'Third World' (cf. Esteva 1992; Escobar 1995).

By the end of the 1950s, the Bretton Woods Institutions had shifted their focus from 'reconstruction' in post-war Europe to 'aid' in 'underdeveloped' areas. The 1960s were the first UN development decade, and also the decade in which the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD was established (Robertson 1984; Raffer and Singer 1996). Under the presidency of Robert MacNamara (1968-1981), poverty and the satisfaction of 'basic needs' became watchwords in the World Bank's agenda (Robertson 1984:58). One of the principal effects of MacNamara's warning consisted in the spread of so called 'Integrated Rural Development Projects' (IRDP). Critiques of the 'urban bias' of development assistance facilitated the acceptance of the new emphasis on rural development (Lele 1975; Lipton 1977).

The PDR/ADM analysed here belongs to the category of Integrated Rural Development Projects and, because of its perceived success, it soon came to be defined as a 'model' of its kind. In order to understand how it developed a peculiar framework for classifying the environment, identifying 'problems', ordering interventions according to widely accepted priorities, and establishing success and failure criteria, we have to look at how narratives of 'desertification' had laid down the premises for project/programme intervention in Sahel countries.

In the following analysis of 'desertification' narratives, it is not being contested that the area in question presents severe erosion and land degradation phenomena, nor that some human activities *can* be harmful to the environment. With Keeley and Scoones, 'our concern is not to comment on whether soil fertility is a problem or not – it clearly is in certain places and for certain people. Rather we want to trace how such claims are made exploring the social commitments and embedded contexts of policy debates' (2000:4). And, with Swift,

> An interest in understanding the received narrative about desertification does not imply a belief that there is no problem of land degradation in the drylands. [But] the narrative meets a need, and provides a useful discourse for someone [...]: national (African) governments; international aid bureaucracies, especially UN agencies and some major bilateral donors, and some groups of scientists. (1996:86)

As argued above, by 1970, drought in the Sahel was not an unprecedented event. What was unprecedented, instead, was the reaction it triggered amongst the international community. To deal with drought, a set of specialized institutions was

created, and considerable resources were allocated to them; a consensus on the nature of the phenomenon of 'desertification' was built across donor and recipient governments; plans were made; and strategies to 'fight against desertification' were identified and turned into practice. The PDR/ADM was just another practice which developed from this way of reasoning about 'desertification'.

The discourse of desertification set the premises for the establishment of the PDR/ADM in Keita. Its rationale, analysed in detail in the next section, can be summarised as follows: 'Equilibrium' between the environment and society has been upset by lacerating phenomena, partly induced by human action. This 'equilibrium' must be restored, or it will induce further 'desertification' and the destitution of the rapidly growing populations of the Sahel. The change from a situation of generalised breakdown to one of 'new' or 'renewed' balance must be induced through urgent external 'intervention' and the 'responsabilisation' of local producers.

Here, famine and desertification ought to be opposed through external 'intervention'. That external 'intervention' was not the only way to deal with drought in the Sahel is attested by the historical record of Sahelian droughts: before the 1950s, 'projects' had not been identified as an option to deal with drought. These narratives are historically rooted and specific to a certain configuration of interests. With Foucault, 'things weren't as necessary as all that: it wasn't as a matter of course that mad people came to be regarded as mentally ill; it wasn't self evident that the only thing to be done with a criminal was to lock him up; it wasn't self evident that the causes of illness were to be sought through the individual examination of bodies'(Foucault 1991a:76)... and it wasn't self evident that drought in the Sahel had to be 'fought against' through massive international planning carried out by *ad hoc* institutions. As soon as they were established, these institutions, in cooperation with national governments, elaborated a systematic knowledge apparatus with its related 'truth effects', claims of objectivity, forms of subjectivities and ensuing regimes of practices (cf. Foucault 1991b:89).

Many of the actors engaged in the organisation of the PDR/ADM modelled their actions upon the prevailing desertification narratives. In order to make sense of the activities of the PDR/ADM and to interpret the actions and beliefs of the actors involved in it, it is necessary to analyse the regime of rationality which made the

presence of Integrated Rural Development Projects in the Sahel possible in the first place.

4.3 'Desertification' in the Sahel and the Establishment of *Ad Hoc* Institutions

Throughout the 1970s the notions of 'rural development' and 'desertification' grew in influence. In the Sahel region and, for the purpose of this study, in Niger, they came to be used together in a mutually reinforcing way. This decade saw the creation of specialised institutions within the UN system and the OECD body, which contributed to the production of forms of knowledge and relative practices which, in turn, paved the way to the spread of Integrated Rural Development Projects aimed at 'fighting against desertification' in the Sahel.

In 1972 the UN Conference on the Human Environment was convened in Stockholm. The main outcomes of the conference were a recommendation for a new specialised agency and a commitment of financial support from the major donor countries. Consequently, later the same year, the General Assembly crafted the UN Environment Programme (UNEP). In 1973 the Office to Combat Desertification and Drought, or 'United Nations Special Sahel Office' (UNSO) of the UNDP, was created in response to drought in the Sahel region. The first major international forum to discuss the problem of desertification was the United Nations Conference on Desertification (UNCOD), convened in Nairobi in 1977, which resulted in the adoption of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification, and in the establishment of UNEP's Desertification Branch (MacDonald 1986).

The Sahelian states most directly affected by the 1968-1973 drought also reacted in concert, strengthening the emergence of a Sahel sub-regional perspective, with the creation of the CILSS (Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel[41]). The idea of creating the CILSS grew out of a meeting in January 1973 between Mr. Antoine Dakouré, Minister of Agriculture and Livestock of ex Upper Volta who, at the time, had been recently appointed to the Governing Council of UNDP, and Mr. Kurt Waldheim, Secretary General of the UN (de Lattre and Fell 1984). At the

[41] The acronym CILSS derives from the French '*Comité permanent Inter Etats de Lutte Contre la Sécheresse au Sahel*'.

meeting, Mr. Dakouré suggested that the UN agencies made a particular effort for the sub-region.

> Mr. Waldheim replied by saying that such an appeal would have more force if it came from a regional grouping of the drought-affected countries. Mr. Dakouré immediately contacted the Upper Voltan President Lamizana on a visit to Senegal, who after consulting with President Senghor, encouraged Dakouré to organize a ministerial meeting of the drought-affected Sahel countries. The Ministerial meeting was held in March 1973 in Ouagadougou. The Governments of Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Upper Volta[42] declared the Sahel a disaster area and resolved to establish the CILSS in order to promote the drought control efforts of the Sahelian Governments and to provide a focus for donor appeals. [...] In order to enhance coordination within the United Nations system and among other donors, it was decided in 1973 that FAO would assist Sahel countries in organising emergency relief operations. Consequently, the FAO established in its Rome Headquarters the Office for the Sahelian Relief Operations (OSRO). (De Lattre and Fell 1984:37).

The CILSS was formally established in September 1973. The principal goals of the Sahelian States, outlined at their conference in Bamako (Mali) in March 1974, were:

- To reduce the consequences of emergency situations in the future;
- To ensure self-sufficiency in staple foods while improving ecological conditions;
- To accelerate economic and social development

A few years afterwards, the 'Club du Sahel' was created[43] as an informal structure for donor consultation and coordination on 'information and discussion on long-term Sahel development' (de Lattre and Fell 1984:44) which would be serviced by the OECD and would be opened to non-OECD countries as well. The inaugural meeting of the Club du Sahel took place in Dakar in March 1976. The meeting, jointly chaired by President Senghor and CILSS President Moktar Ould Daddah, President of Mauritania, was attended by representatives of the eight CILSS member States and twelve Western donor nations, as well as observers from numerous international organisations. From the outset, CILSS and the Club du Sahel operated in tandem. CILSS new Minister Coordinator, Mr. Boulama Manga, Minister of Rural Development in Niger under Kountché's presidency, and Mr. Williams, Chairman of the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD, proposed a resolution creating the Club du Sahel and it was adopted at the conference. The Club's purposes and mandate would be:

- To support the CILSS, the principal agency for regional cooperation in the Sahel;

[42] Today the CILSS includes nine countries: Burkina Faso, Cap Vert, Gambia, Guinée Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, and Tchad.
[43] Its original name, suggested by Mr. Jean Audibert, Director of Development of the French Ministry of Cooperation, was 'Le Club des Amis du Sahel'.

- To inform and create awareness among the international community with regard to the Sahel's development prospects and requirements;
- To encourage cooperation between donors in order to implement projects envisaged by Sahel governments and facilitate the mobilisation of development resources;
- To be a forum in which the Sahel states can outline their policies and priorities for medium and long-term development and discuss them with the donors;
- To meet once a year and set up working groups to study specific problems.

The above mentioned specialised institutions are only the most salient examples of institution-building in reaction to the 1968-1973 drought in the Sahel, as many other 'joint working committees', 'advisory committees', 'coordination boards', 'focal points', etc., were created within international agencies and across intergovernmental bodies in order to coordinate action. Also within donor and recipient countries, as we shall see, a number of structures were established, in order to plan interventions, collect and diffuse information, and evaluate progress.

4.4 The 'Desertification' Narrative

The idea of man-made desertification was widespread in UN narratives. For instance, the above mentioned UN Conference on Desertification held in Nairobi in 1977 diagnosed the late 1960s – early 1970s Sahelian crisis as follows: 'the main threats came from increased intensity of land use, especially removal of the natural vegetation cover by farming, overgrazing, and incorrect irrigation exacerbated by drought' (UNCOD quoted in Swift 1996:80). The Plan of Action to Combat Desertification produced at the Conference set the main goal of preventing and arresting 'the advance of desertification' (UNCOD 1977 quoted in Swift, op.cit.:80)

The CILSS-Club du Sahel 1980 'Strategy for Drought Control and Development in the Sahel' is a vivid example of the kind of arguments which animated the early phases of theorising about desertification, which we shall see reflected in PDR/ADM initial appraisal studies. Chapter 2 on 'Strategy Objectives' spells out the two key objectives 'set by the Sahelians' as the achievement of food self-sufficiency and of 'ecological balance'. The loss of 'ecological balance' is described in the following terms:

> the advancing desert, a decrease in the yield of traditional crops linked with a deterioration of the soil affecting ever larger areas, a deterioration of grazing lands, and deforestation, not only around the capitals and larger cities, but also around the villages. This is an indication that the natural balance between the populations of the Sahel and the natural environment has been upset, and that there are no steps in the direction of an acceptable new balance; the Sahel no longer lives from its income alone, but is drawing on its capital in land and forests. If a strategy for food

> self sufficiency must be implemented through an increase in production resulting in still greater consumption of natural capital, this strategy is invalid. The Sahel's resources in land, in grazing, and in wood are limited, and in one generation, the region may be on the verge of being completely taken over by the desert. (CILSS 1980:8-9)

This passage focuses upon a perceived 'lack of balance' between people and the natural resources of the Sahel. Rapid population growth and 'destructive' human practices are putting an already unstable 'natural capital' at risk, and this would result in tragic consequences, unless the 'advancing desert' is 'fought against'. The strategies identified to resist this devastating trend are of two kinds: a 'negative' strategy, in the form of a 'fight' or 'combat' against desertification; and a 'positive' strategy, which consists in 'finding a new balance between an increased Sahelian population and an enriched, better developed natural environment through the use of new techniques' (CILSS-Club du Sahel 1980:9).

In this reading of the problems affecting the Sahel, the 'population' does not figure as an 'other' with whom a dialogue can be established, and whose practices on the 'territory' must be understood on their own grounds. Instead, the 'population' is presented as part of the problem and knowledge about it should be sought in order to induce changes in its practices: the other is represented as 'a tool' in an intervention strategy, which has to be induced to change for the strategy to be successful. In a section entitled 'gradual assumption of responsibility for development by the producers', the CILSS-Club du Sahel 1980 Strategy continues:

> In order to pave the way for changes in the production system, and to then accompany this transformation, a series of outside interventions are needed to demonstrate new production models to the farmer or livestock producer, to motivate him [sic] to change, and to help him acquire the new techniques. The option for mass development precludes that the change of system take place solely through outside action. The objective is to make the producers capable of gradually assuming responsibility for the change in production methods, to meet the needs of the region and improve their own conditions of existence. (CILSS 1980:21)

Although it is the 'developers' who diagnosed a certain configuration of problems and prescribed a set of strategies to solve them, in this passage responsibility for the 'changes' wanted by the 'developers' is attributed to the 'peasants'. This implies that 'peasants' will be held responsible for interpretations and prescriptions which they have not conceived. The use of the notion of 'responsibility' is clearly rhetorical, and it is hard to see any coherence in its articulation with the desertification narrative. The CILSS-Club du Sahel Strategy seems to imply that 'peasants' *are* responsible for

environmental damage which led to the present state of 'breakdown', but then it is denied that they are responsible for the situation of 'their' environment, and it is argued that they must 'assume responsibility' and change their production methods.

This interpretation of the 'problems' affecting the Sahel region leads to the following conclusion, which is, at the same time, the operationalisation of the rationale described above: 'It seems clear that the integrated rural development approach is the only one which can effectively start a pattern of changes to traditional agriculture, changes which [...] must be induced before the end of the century' (CILSS 1980:25)

4.5 The Initiative of Italian Cooperation in the Sahel (1984)

Italy had collaborated, as an OECD and Club du Sahel member country, in the definition of the CILSS-Club du Sahel 1980 'Strategy for Drought Control and Development in the Sahel' whose most salient points have been discussed above. Since the Ottawa conference in 1977, Italy had participated in the definition of common steps of the CILSS-Club du Sahel and, in 1984, it produced the 'DCS/MAE[44] *Iniziativa di Cooperazione Italiana per il Sahel'* (Italian Initiative for the Sahel). The PDR/ADM was going to be one of the four Integrated Rural Development Projects conceived and implemented within the Initiative umbrella programme.

The PDR/ADM was financed within the 'Italy/FAO Cooperation Programme', through which Italy's contribution to the FAO budget went from zero to US $ 490 million between 1980 and 1997. With a total funding of almost US $ 55 million, the PDR/ADM represented 'the most expensive Italian project in the Sahel' (GICO 1998:ii). However, the considerable sum invested by Italy in the Initiative should make us pause for a moment. How was Italy positioned amongst the institutional actors which manoeuvred the desertification narrative? Italy had been one of the recipients of aid within the post war Marshall Plan until about 30 years before the time when the Initiative was conceived and, compared to other European ex colonial powers, its experience with dealing with the conditions of overseas countries was limited.

[44] Direzione Cooperazione allo Sviluppo / Ministero degli Affari Esteri (Development Cooperation Direction/ Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

In an article focusing on the Italian Initiative published in the Italian journal 'Africa' (1985), Enzo Caputo, then Coordinator of the Sahel Centre of the Italy-Africa Institute[45] in Rome, acknowledges that 'It is often said that a culture of Cooperation is missing in Italy [...] this weakness can no doubt be attributed to the swift evolution [*al maturare improvviso*] of the political issue of 'aid' to the Third World in our country. [Italy] is an objective situation of delay [...]' (Caputo 1985:370).

Caputo, who has been an active cooperator and observer in the definition of Italian development policy and interventions since the times of the Initiative, maintains that, in the early 1980s, Italy was stimulated to increase its contribution to development aid by the UN (interview, 4 September 2001). Without previous political or economic interests in the region, Italy decided to invest in the 'fight against hunger' almost by chance, as the Sahel had, at that particular time, been suffering from recurrent droughts:

> At a certain point, it was said: why don't we put a big amount of money on the hunger issue? At the time there was a great drought in the Sahel, so we said, ok, let's do the Sahel Initiative. This infuriated the French, who were strong in the area, it surprised everybody a bit... but it is a state of fact that Italy found itself carrying out the Sahel Initiative, it could have done a thousand other things, Ethiopia, for instance... (Interview, Sept. 4, 2001)

In the 1985 article quoted above, Caputo outlines Italy's approach toward 'desertification in the Sahel' in the Initiative. Despite her relative 'lack' of a 'culture of cooperation', Italy adopted a framework for making sense of drought in the Sahel, and evolved a narrative which is consistent with those of other international actors. The *Iniziativa* was not just one programme amongst others in Italian aid policy, but the single most important Italian attempt to join other OECD countries in the organisation of overseas development programmes and policies:

> [The Iniziativa] is the only programme of the Italian Cooperation which starts with explicit analysis and strategy references [...] proposed in bilateral and multilateral contexts [and offering] both elements for dialogue and poles of convergence. The Italian positions, expressed and elaborated between 1982 and 1984, provided a noteworthy Italian contribution to the definition of CILSS strategies, and, on the other hand, [the content of CILSS strategies] influenced a large part of the Italian debate on development cooperation. (Caputo 1985:352)

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[45] In the early 1980s, the Istituto Italo-Africano (IIA) functioned somewhat as the research department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The relation between the two institutions was regulated, with reference to the Italian Cooperation with Sahel countries, by an *ad hoc* convention MAE-IIA of 9/2/1988. IIA researchers, university professors and international consultants working on their own account and for the MAE, had been variously involved in supporting Italian cooperation policies in Africa with research and publications, thereby backing intervention with theory. In more recent years, the Rome based IIA has lost its role in favour of the Florence based Istituto Agronomico d'Oltremare.

It seems that Italy partly 'used' the Initiative as a point of entry into the world of other 'cultures of cooperation'. As it strove to establish its legitimacy to operate in the field of development aid, despite its relative 'youth' compared to other aid agencies (e.g. French, British, etc.), it had to highlight aspects of conformity with the practices of other donor countries, as well as to claim elements of originality or 'Italian-ness'. Caputo identifies a communality of views and intents among CILSS and Club du Sahel member countries with regards to the general goals of the '*Strategie '84*', which was itself the revised version of the strategic lines approved at the Ottawa meeting in 1977 (1985:350). The three main options of the '*Strategie '84*' shared by CILSS and Club du Sahel countries (including Italy) are:

> returning to the Sahelian populations the control over their own growth and space, which had been devastated by lacerating phenomena (demographic growth, urbanisation, occupation of rural space not in conformity with the resources available, social degradation both in the countryside and in the cities). (Caputo 1985:350)
>
> [shaping] a new role for the rural producer: his responsabilisation [...], and the creation of technical, financial and market conditions favourable to this responsabilisation. (Caputo 1985:359)
>
> [identifying] in local collectivities the principal subjects in the search for a new ecological equilibrium. (Caputo 1985:351)

The desertification narrative is reproduced here in more or less the same terms described above. But if continuity with CILSS strategies is an important aspect of the Italian position in the aid policies to the Sahel of the early 1980s, Italy also attempts to establish an original, distinct place for itself among the donor communities. Hence, arguing that the Italian Initiative is 'quasi-synonymous with Integrated Rural Development' (Caputo 1985:356), Caputo moves on to the discussion of IRDPs as concrete examples of Italian policy, characterised by a number of 'original elements' in the 'Italian conception of IRDP', amongst which is: 'the will to realise a geographic concentration of multi-sectoral interventions, in order to determine a strong impact with demonstrative [...] effects for national politics and other donors' (1985:357). This 'policy of the strong impact', realised by opting for a geographic concentration of interventions, rather than, for instance, for the widespread application of a particular approach to development with less directly visible effects, distinguishes the Italian positions in the Initiative.

The perceived need, on the part of the 'young' Italian Cooperation, to establish a reputation within the development field results in a pressure to carry out 'exemplary'

projects, to produce Italian 'success stories' and thereby acquire a distinctive status amongst other donors. The PDR/ADM would, within a few years after Caputo's article, come to play this role of 'model' Italian Integrated Rural Development Project in the field of the fight against desertification. In the second half of the 1980s Keita represented, for the Italian Cooperation, 'a sort of "flower in the buttonhole"[46], one of the few, very few, flags to raise, because ministers could be brought there, because [in Keita] one could really see that, well, things *had* been done' (Caputo, interview 4 September 2001). The following section looks at how the 'desertification narrative' was articulated in the definition of goals and 'intervention' strategies for the 'model Keita'.

4.6 Italian Integrated Rural Development Projects in the Sahel.

The function of the desertification narrative in the conception and implementation of the Keita Project is explored in this section through the analysis of two important publications, authored by experts who had worked as consultants in the Keita Project, and published for the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These publications are 'Integrated Rural Development Programmes in the Sahel Region' (Candelori et al. 1992) and 'Territorial Reality and Development Policy: for the definition of an intervention programme with the cooperation of the populations of the Arrondissement of Keita – Niger' (Paoletti and Taliani 1984). Candelori et al. (1992) and Paoletti and Taliani (1984) refer expressly to the Keita Project, illustrating the links between the 'desertification' narrative and its operationalisations in the form of project activities and approaches. Candelori et al. (1992) compare four Italian projects in the Sahel, one of which is the PDR/ADM, with the intent of extracting lessons and deriving guidelines for future 'interventions' from the comparison of these projects' preliminary results. Instead, Paoletti and Taliani's (1985) 'Territorial Reality and Development Policy' focuses only on the PDR/ADM, and is the result of the authors' sociological study of the intervention area, conducted at project inception in order to identify appropriate modes of intervention.

In the first Chapter of 'Integrated Rural Development Programmes in the Sahel Region', Candelori et al. outline what they call an 'objective picture' of the 'natural breakdown' which has hit the Sahel as follows:

[46] This is a literal translation of the Italian idiomatic expression '*fiore all'occhiello*'.

> A part of the poor resources of this land have vanished at the very time when a demographic boom without precedents was threatening the already precarious man-environment equilibrium. The renowned ingredients of this disequilibrium are: the disrespect of agricultural rotations and the quasi-total disappearance of land fallow periods with a rapid chemical-organic impoverishment and a severe hydric-eolian erosion, the overexploitation of pastoral areas, the indiscriminate destruction of trees for the collection of wood to be used as fuel and animal feed, the rapid exhaustion of water resources. (1992:9)

In the section dedicated specifically to the Keita Project, under the heading 'principal problems' the general narrative is reproduced with a few adaptations to the Keita context:

> The increasing aridity [*inaridimento*] of the climate that developed over the last 20 years and the high human and animal pressure on the territory have caused rapid resource degradation and a breakdown of the pre-existent equilibrium, paving the way to a rapid desertification process. A noteworthy impoverishment of the population due to the reduction of agro-pastoral resources, the drying out of underground waters, the loss of the animal patrimony, as well as the disintegration *[disgregazione]* of the social tissue due to an increasingly long and diffuse migration, have followed. (1992:22)

Ecological and social breakdown are seen as happening at the same time (cf. 'the disintegration of the social tissue'). This is particularly clear in Paoletti and Taliani's (1984) sociological study of the PDR/ADM's intervention area. While the focus of Paoletti and Taliani's book is socio-cultural rather than environmental, the structure of the 'desertification' narrative is highly consistent with the one we have seen in the policy documents quoted above. Here, the local society (rather than the environment) is seen as having lost its equilibrium in a 'degeneration process at all levels of the social organisation' (Paoletti and Taliani 1984:15). Society and the environment are presented as 'parts of a whole': 'there are interdependencies between the various parts of a whole, and [...], in socio-ecologic terms, these interdependencies should aim at the equilibrium - or at re-establishing the equilibrium - of the man-production-environment relation' (Paoletti and Taliani 1984:45). Despite Paoletti and Taliani book's title, which refers to 'cooperation' with the 'populations of Keita', this image presents the latter as one term in an equilibrium relation, which, arguably, the 'developers' will have to act upon or 'fix'. Rather than parties to an inter-subjective dialogue, the people of the Ader Doutchi figure as objects, whose position vis à vis the environment must be 're-adjusted' from the outside, as they are unable to 're-establish equilibrium with their own means':

> Keita's village communities endure, maybe since always, conditionings [condizionamenti] imposed from nature without being capable, with their own means, to re-establish a socio-ecologic equilibrium greatly compromised. Therefore, in our wide meaning, to 'live in symbiosis' means resisting to environmental adversities – mainly the effect of an irrational use of human and environmental resources – in order to operate constructively within a project [...] (Paoletti and Taliani 1982:18).

The process of 'degeneration' that is supposedly taking place in the Ader Doutchi Majiya society is seen as a potentially fatal menace. Paoletti and Taliani's 'hopelessness' (of society) and Candelori et al.'s 'degradation' (of the environment) are presented as threats which must be addressed without delay, and therefore, in different fields, fulfil the same function in the narratives of the authors.

> At least from our experience of study and research in 'marginal realities' in Third world countries, one derives the suggestion to intervene before it is too late. Once the physical-environmental equilibrium is compromised, conditions of unfeasibility [*inagibilità*] are created so that no stimulus whatsoever, be it social or economic, can remove the populations from their positions: hopelessness becomes a crucial element of their way of being and reflecting about the world around them. (Paoletti and Taliani 1983:16, footnote)

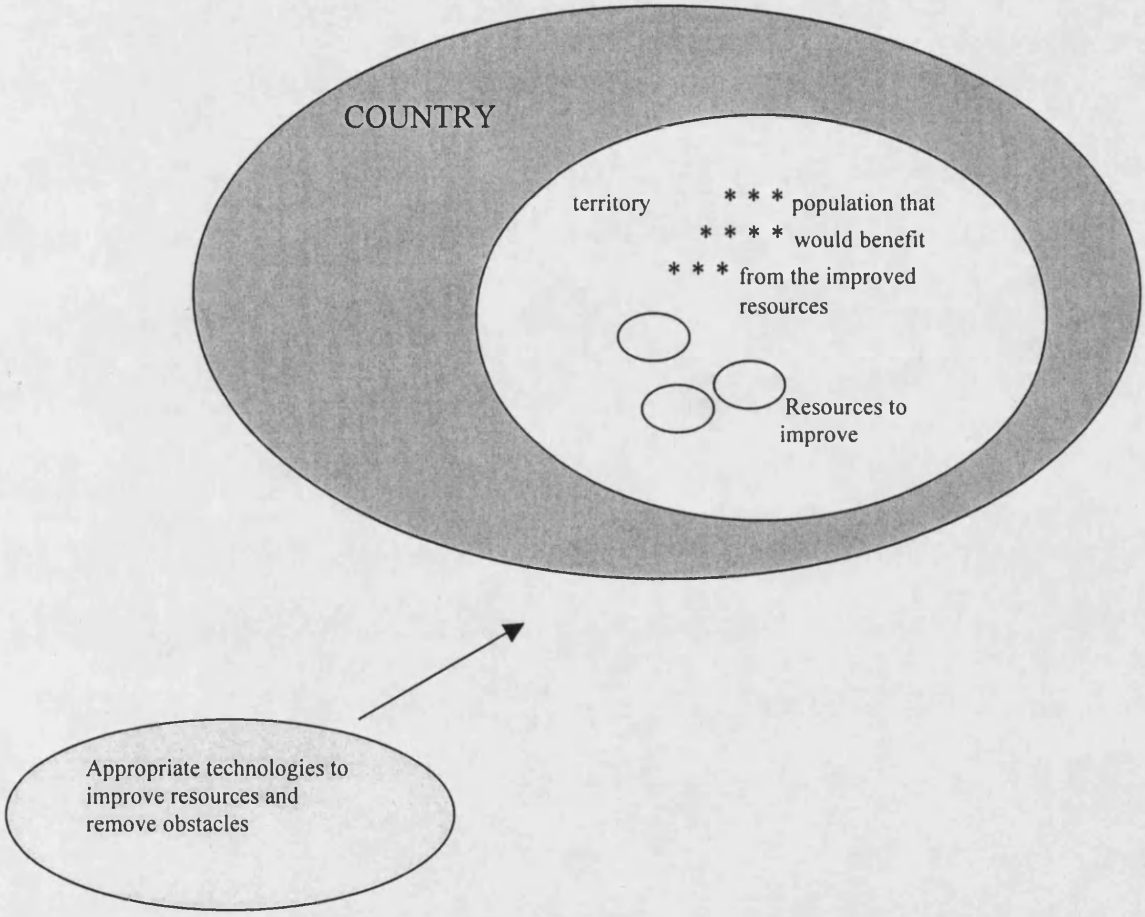
The scientific language (e.g. the use of terms such as chemical-organic, hydric-eolic, agro-pastoral, socio-ecologic, the man-production-environment relation, to 'live in symbiosis') used in these versions of the desertification narrative lends authority to the authors, making their description of the situation in the Sahel, and in Keita, look less like an interpretation and more like an 'objective' value-neutral description of the conditions of the Sahel region. The plea for 'intervention' is supported by the claim that at stake are values relevant to 'the whole of humanity': 'the planet's environmental degradation' and 'the survival of the peoples living [in the Sahel]':

> Besides the strictly ecological problems raised by desertification in the Sahel as a priority and worrying element of the planet's environmental degradation, whose solution is relevant to the whole of humanity, there is a yet more direct and immediate effect which ties closely the environmental rehabilitation of these areas to the survival of the peoples living there. In this sense, the intervention must aim at bringing back the vegetation cover, managed in harmony with soil and climatic potentials, and, moreover, at allowing the re-equilibrium of the man-environment relation specific to those areas and at ensuring the food security of those populations. (Candelori et al. 1992:11)

The use of terms which marshal solidarity (cf. Apthorpe and Gasper 1996), coupled with a scientific language which presents itself as 'objective', produce a highly compelling story. The way in which the narrative is 'framed' rules out the possibility that drought in the Sahel may call for anything but external 'intervention'. The area in question is constructed as awaiting 'intervention', it is as if the need for intervention were already there, together with the drought, the population, and the scarce resources. These elements are, indeed, there, but they should not necessarily be seen as 'preliminary conditions' for 'intervention'. This is suggested in a section which argues that any area should satisfy a number of 'preliminary conditions' in order to be considered suitable for hosting an Integrated Rural Development Project. These are:

(a) the presence of unexploited or deteriorated resources that can potentially be valorised (*risorse valorizzabili*) or recuperated;
(b) the availability of economically suitable technologies or solutions in order to obtain the increase of value or rehabilitation of the resources and the elimination of obstacles;
(c) a population which can benefit from the resources and is receptive to the adoption of the suggested technologies or solutions. (Candelori et al. 1992:31)

These preliminary conditions are summarised graphically in a diagram (Candelori et al. 1992:32):



This representation exemplifies what, paraphrasing Gadamer (1975), I have defined as the claim to understand the other in order to 'intervene' upon it. It is hard to think of any region lacking 'a population which would benefit from improved resources' and 'resources to be improved'. What is less obvious is why these elements should be seen as 'preliminary conditions' for a development project. The knowledge of the world produced by development narratives is a self-fulfilling prophecy, by which the 'project' comes to be seen as already there in the world, in the form of 'appropriate technologies to improve resources and remove obstacles', an external fix which ought to

act upon (the arrow) a crisis situation in which universally recognised values (human life, the planet) are at stake[47]. The following section contrasts this narrative with that produced by Niger's official authorities.

4.7 'Desertification' in Niger's Development Society

Chapter 2 has reconstructed the historical process which led to the establishment of the 'development society' in Kountché's regime and has explored the ideological foundations for its structure and objectives in Niger's post-colonial history. Here I will briefly illustrate the ways in which the desertification narrative figured in the Development Society's rural development policies. In the early 1980s, the organs of the Development Society produced two programmatic documents, as a result of meetings in which participated representatives of all ministries, all of the country's Departments, and national and international development organisations and donors. These were the Zinder Seminar on Rural Development Intervention Strategies (*Séminaire National sur les Stratégies d'Intervention en Milieu Rural*, Zinder 15-22 November 1982), and the Maradi Engagement for the Fight Against Desertification (*Engagement de Maradi sur la Lutte contre la Désertification*, Maradi 21-28 May 1984). These documents appeared at the beginning of the Keita Project's 'intervention' in the Tahoua Department and provided the policy guidelines for the orientation of the Project's activities.

The Zinder Seminar incorporates many of the themes characteristic of the desertification narrative (République du Niger 1982). However, the emphasis falls on the 'peasant's role' rather than on the breakdown of the supposed equilibrium between society and the environment. It is argued repeatedly (1982:13-15) that the peasant must 'take conscience' (*prise de conscience*) of the necessity to change his/her lifestyle, production methods and social organisation. The 'politics of the fight against desertification' (1982:15) must be founded upon the 'conscious and responsible participation [*participation consciente et responsible*]' (1982:14), or the 'conscious and effective participation [*participation consciente et effective*] of the populations' (1982:15).

[47] According to Roe (1989), development narratives have a structure comparable to the archetypal folktale, in which a problem ('crisis', 'breakdown') is encountered, and will be solved by a hero (the project/policy), who faces a series of trials (constraints).

In the opening discourse of the seminar, the Minister of Rural Development first listed Niger's manifold problems, and then argued that the Supreme Military Council and the government had 'accepted the challenge to satisfy the fundamental needs of the Nigerien man [*sic*]' (1982:8). Calling upon the representatives of donors and international development organisations, the Minister quoted President Seiny Kountché's statement at the United Nations in New York, inciting the world powers to 'proceed together to a reassessment of North-South relations and operate in solidarity, with a unitary view of the world's development and the well being of humanity' (République du Niger 1982:10).

The Maradi Engagement was introduced by the President of the National Development Council, who announced, in the opening statement:

> The "Maradi Engagement" is the symbol of the oath of an entire People, the Nigerien People, who has taken conscience (*a prise conscience*) of its historical responsibility in the task of national construction, with the aim of preserving its future and guaranteeing to its children a better existence. The "Maradi Engagement" is equally the symbol of the determination of an entire Nation, the Nigerien Nation, which has decided to go beyond all fatalisms and resignations, in order to fight the battle of development and gain the bet of the future. [...] We also believe that international organisations of the United Nations family and of bilateral and multilateral cooperation, governmental and non-governmental, will be, as they stated in Maradi, standing next to the Nigeriens, to ensure to the combat against desertification the means of its victory. However, it is primarily on the Nigerien citizen that rests the responsibility for the success of the fight against desertification. (Republique du Niger 1984:5)

The document argues that the 'politics of the fight against desertification' will follow multiple strategies, including 'sensitising and mobilising the populations in view of their voluntary and responsible participation in the struggle against desertification'(République du Niger 1984:9). This is repeated in the long list of 'recommendations' which concludes the document: 'the implementation, under the supervision of the Development Society, of actions to fight against desertification, involving the voluntary and conscious participation of the populations' (1984:24).

Niger's statements reproduce the international narrative, while at the same time calling for donor support and popular legitimation. Official documents emphasise the role of the population, inciting it to 'take conscience' of the necessity for change, and to 'assume responsibility' for the impact of its practices upon the environment. The tropes 'taking conscience' [*prise de conscience*] and 'assuming responsibility' [*responsibilisation*] figure pre-eminently in Niger's populist rhetoric and, as illustrated in Chapter 5 and Chapter 8, are also used frequently in the constructions of peasant

identity entertained by project staff. Their main function is to induce compliance with macro narratives and goals amongst the population, thereby legitimating 'intervention' on the grounds of popular consensus. Being the actors most directly affected by 'desertification', Niger men and women are clearly 'conscious' of what these phenomena imply, and their strategies to cope with rain scarcity and food deficit suggest that they consider themselves 'responsible' for managing the natural resources they exploit. What is really meant by the use of these expressions, is that Niger's men and women must begin to become aware of the problems they face *as they are expressed by the desertification narrative* and they must consider take responsibility for the introduction of *new* practices wanted by the 'developers'.

4.8 The PDR/ADM Original Project Document

Projects are 'the essential active ingredients of plans' (Robertson 1984:121). Through 'projects', the knowledge present in development discourses is operationalised, turning, to paraphrase Bourdieu, the model of reality into the reality of the model (1990:39). In this section we see how, in the original Project Document, the 'desertification' narrative unravelled above 'materialised' in the Keita Project's programme for action in the Ader Doutchi Majiya. In the PDR/ADM original project document the two principal problems affecting the area of project intervention are described as follows:

- Increasing vulnerability of the territory, due to erosion, land degradation, imbalance of the ecosystem, and threat of a remarkable increase in the alimentary deficit of the arrondissement;
- Difficulty of checking the pressure of livestock upon resources, due to the overexploitation of grazing lands, causing progressive soil degradation and loss of natural pasture (PDR/ADM 1984B).

As a result of these two main problems, four further phenomena contribute to creating a 'general process' of environmental breakdown:

- Wind erosion caused by sand particles covering fertile valley lands and forming dunes;
- Creation and deepening of koris[48] beds with a progressive reduction of the water spreading phenomenon [*épandage*], which makes cultivation possible outside the rainy season, deepening of the superficial groundwater supply and water erosion of the soil's thin clay particles;
- Reduction of arable lands potential, both in terms of surface and of quality. With regards to the fadama[49]-lands only, it is estimated that cultivable lands have decreased by one third from 1963 to today, from 22,000 hectares to 15,000 hectares;
- Finally, demographic and education constraints should also be taken into consideration (PDR/ADM 1984B).

[48] Violent temporary rivers created in the rainy season.
[49] Hausa term for fertile valley lands.

Intervention is necessary, as these problems, if unchecked by project intervention, will lead to the total unavoidable 'loss' of the area affected by them:

> 'the actions for the protection of the territory (anti-erosion fight, reforestation, regulation of the hydric system, etc.), which represent the most important project components from a financial perspective, are aimed at avoiding, *tout court,* the certain loss in the short and medium run of the project area' (PDR/ADM 1984B).

In line with the way of reasoning which we have seen already, which presents ecological and human breakdown as occurring together, the Project Document argues that 'human realities' in the Keita district are characterised by:

- Profound imbalance in the use and organisation of resources and production;
- High dependency of the arrondissement upon other regions for coping with food deficit;
- A situation of stagnation and isolation caused by the migration of the most active forces (PDR/ADM 1984B).

The last point above is controversial, as it may be argued that seasonal migration reduces both stagnation, by increasing the cash flow in the area, and isolation, by establishing cyclical contacts with cities both inside and outside Niger. Three types of resources are presented as having 'the potential' of being improved, namely, the 'human potential'; 'cultivable lands', particularly of the '*fadama*' kind; and 'livestock'. Each of these 'potentially positive resources' are described as constrained by problems which the Project should attempt to solve.

The Project's long term objectives correspond to those set out in Niger's Five Year Government Plan 1979-1983:

- Food Self Sufficiency;
- The establishment of a 'Société de Développement';
- Economic independence (PDR/ADM 1984B).

The short term objectives of the PDR/ADM are:

- Promoting agricultural production in all its aspects, with the aim of reaching self sufficiency or reducing the area's alimentary deficit;
- Strengthening the production and the commercialisation of horticultural produce;
- Preserving water and soil resources and ameliorating the environment [*'améliorer l'environnement'*]
- Increasing the livelihood of local populations;
- Reinforcing peasant institutions at the village level (PDR/ADM 1984B).

The Project's operational strategy will focus on the following activities:

- A qualitative and quantitative growth of horticultural and other productions;
- The amelioration of the living conditions of the populations concerned;
- An equitable distribution of the means of production and of the benefits;
- The intensification of interested individuals' participation;
- The return to ecological equilibrium (PDR/ADM 1984B).

However, it is noted that

> 'The last point should serve as a precondition for the achievement of the other points: the return to ecological equilibrium through the halting of erosion and of soils destruction in the glacis and in the *fadamas*. [...] The project should provide the necessary support and the means that the populations concerned are unable to gather by themselves to reach the above mentioned objectives at the decision making and execution level, so as to stimulate their potentials, still latent in terms of initiative and creativity, in the respect of great traditional values' (PDR/ADM 1984B).

Assistance must follow two parallel, but integrated, lines:

- A territorial approach aimed at defending and protecting soils as well as endowing village communities with material infrastructures and with stimuli [*instruments de promotion*], allowing them to increase their efficiency;
- A promotional approach relying upon the rearrangement and reinforcement of local economies and the human resources available within the communities through many small punctual interventions (PDR/ADM 1984B).

Here, for the first time in project documents, a net distinction is perceived between 'territorial interventions' and other types of activities. This distinction will be an important element in future perceptions of the PDR/ADM, which would come to be recognised as 'a model' for its territorial approach, whereas opinions differ, and in general tend to be negative, with regard to its 'promotional', 'social', etc. approach. It is argued that the 'common denominator of interventions' is going to be 'the responsible participation of the interested village communities' (PDR/ADM 1984B).

In the original plan, project action was going to cover primarily three catchment areas (Haute Vallée de Keita; Vallée de Laba; et Vallée de Tamaské) in the Keita District, with a total area of 79,000 hectares, even though the majority of actions would gradually involve the entire District, i.e. 207 villages and 156,000 inhabitants[50].

The division of project operations into 'project components' anticipates the following division of the Project's structure into operative units called 'Divisions'. For each 'component', planned activities and expected results for the Project's first phase are briefly described. The 'components' identified in the original document are seven,

[50] In the Second Phase, the PDR/ADM would extend its intervention area to the Districts of Bouza and Abalack.

namely: Forestry; Public Works; Agriculture and Herding; Cooperation, Commercialisation and Credit; Training and Extension, Promotion of women's role in rural development (crafts, herding, crafts); Health and Nutrition[51].

Three phases, the first two lasting for two years each and the third one for one year, are hypothesised. Again, we find the claim that the Keita Project shall serve as a model and a template for future similar interventions. The Project is expected to become 'an example of methods and organisation which could be applied in other regions in order to increase agricultural production' (PDR/ADM 1984B).

Institutional arrangements foresee that the Project will be under the direct responsibility (*tutelle*) of the Ministry of Rural Development, and that it enjoy financial and operational independence. Activities will be undertaken on the basis of yearly programmes agreed upon by the *Comité sous-régional de la Société de Développement de Keita*, headed by the *Sous-Préfet*. These programmes will have been conceived beforehand in consultation with the villages and in cooperation with the departmental administration (*services techniques départementaux).*

The Project will be directed by a full time National Coordinator, nominated by the government and selected on the basis of his human qualities, his professional competences, and his hierarchical level. The National Coordinator will share project management with a Primary Technical Coordinator (*conseiller technique principal)*, appointed by FAO.

4.9 Conclusion

The Sahelian sub-region had known famine and drought for centuries, but previous environmental crises had failed to generate the massive forms of 'intervention' which followed the 1968-1973 famine. However, the discursive fields of 'desertification' and 'rural development' were not singular events in post 1950s international relations. They belonged to a complex interdiscursive play, described by Escobar (1995) as the

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[51] *Forêts; Génie Rural; Agriculture et Elévage; Coopération, Commercialisation, Crédit; Animation et Formation; Renforcement du rôle de la femme dans le développement rural (agriculture, élevage, artisanat); Santé et Nutrition.*

historically grounded discourse of 'development'. One of the principal contributions of Foucault's theory to the analysis of development has consisted in highlighting the inextricability between the constitution of fields of knowledge and the exercise of power (Foucault 1995; Rabinow 1984). Two main effects of the knowledge produced by the desertification narrative have been highlighted in this chapter. First, it treats the other, in this case the people living in the Ader Doutchi Majiya, as a tool, and, despite the rhetoric of 'aid', understandings of the other are used as a way to dominate it, rather than to establish a dialogue in which knowledge about environmental problems and potential solutions are mutually constituted.

Second, it functions as a self-fulfilling prophecy, and naturalises 'intervention', making it appear as the only possible solution for the problems affecting the area in question. Hence, in the diagram of Candelori et al. (1992:32), 'technologies to improve resources and remove obstacles' figure as one of the preliminary conditions for the establishment of an integrated rural development project, along with 'resources that can be improved' and 'a population which will benefit from the improved resources'. Douglas has argued that 'most established institutions, if challenged, are able to rest their claims to legitimacy on their fit with the nature of the universe' (1987:46). IRDPs and the development apparatus sustaining them are presented as trying to prevent the planet's environmental breakdown and to protect human life, thereby rooting their function in values which are universally recognised and arguably beyond challenge.

The desertification narrative has direct implications for at least two categories of actors: the 'target population', which represents a 'cultural other' as it does not, and could not[52], participate in the constitution of the discourse, but is given a place and a role within it; and those actors who belong, in different ways and at different levels, to development institutions, and therefore have to reproduce and operationalise the narrative as they carry out their institutional roles. The narrative has consequences for both of these categories (the population 'acted upon' by the narrative, and the institutional actors 'acting out' the narrative).

It is claimed that the men and women of the Ader Doutchi Majiya must 'take conscience' and 'assume responsibility' for their relation with the environment. Their

'voluntary participation', which is actually unconditional as it is channelled through the capillary administrative structure of the Development Society (cf. Chapter 2, § 2.6), has to conform to the representations produced by macro narratives. They must comply to the role of 'beneficiaries' bestowed upon them, and at least pretend to address the problems as they are presented by the desertification narrative, and collaborate to meeting its objectives by engaging in the 'fight against desertification'. In other terms, because they have a role in the game of development, they must learn the rules of the game. However, because these rules are produced by culturally, socially and geographically 'distant' institutions, 'learning them' requires specialised operations, of which 'sensitisation' [*sensibilisation*], which is discussed in the following chapter, is a case in point.

Project staff are responsible for operationalising desertification narratives. This entails implementing a set of activities in relation to the environment and 'converting' local men and women to the fight against desertification. This second task is referred to as 'sensitising the peasants'. The following chapter looks at how the different categories of actors working in the Project relate to the forms of knowledge described above, what they understand their task to be, and how they conceptualise Ader Doutchi Majiya people and relate to them.

[52] Almost no-one can speak French in the villages falling in the 'intervention area', and the rural population is almost entirely illiterate.

5. THE PROJECT

5.1 Introduction

The international desertification narratives unravelled in Chapter 4 argue that, in the Sahel, equilibrium between the environment and the population has been lost through the process of desertification, and that change from a generalised breakdown to a new or renewed balance must be induced through external intervention in the form of IRDPs and the 'responsibilisation' of local producers. Projects are specialised institutions which operationalise development narratives, and project staff are the actor category charged with implementing project activities within the intervention area. Project staff have to translate narratives into action and carry out concrete strategies to 'fight against desertification'. This Chapter enquires into the perceptions of development of this particular group and examines its various roles at the interface (Long 1996) between official development organisations and local arenas.

The Keita Project is not an ordinary project. Italy and the FAO contended with each other for the 'paternity' of the Project, as each wanted the 'success' of Keita to be associated with its own name. Italian Ministers, UN Directors, and Niger Heads of State praised the Project as an example of its kind; there have been times when project staff worked without salary for months because they believed in 'Keita'; villages in the intervention area compete against each other over project interventions, and men and women, poorer and richer villagers, insist that the Project remains and does not 'abandon' them (cf. Chapter 8). A question addressed in this chapter is, therefore, what made the Keita Project special, *vis à vis* the norm of development failures. There are few success stories in anthropological studies of development to which I could look for comparative evidence and from which I could generalise some conclusions. However, in his study of successful South Asian NGOs, Hailey (2001) argues that a common trait of his examples is that 'highly personalised interaction has clearly shaped their programmes and created a bond of trust between key staff and the communities with whom they work' (2001:89). The Keita case confirms Hailey's suggestion to focus on the importance of 'informal, non-formulaic and highly personal modes of interaction' (2001:89) as factors which explain the results of development 'interventions'.

The personal nature of Keita's achievements is commonly underlined by different categories of informants when I ask them what, in their own view, 'made a difference' in Keita. Almost unanimously, they mention the role played by Keita's first Programme Manager, Dr. Renato Carotti. Carotti, an experienced agronomist and a charismatic leader, turned project staff into a team of proselytes, and motivated them to put all their energies in the Project's success. And when the disillusioned inhabitants of the Keita District, who had been the targets of 'development interventions' since the 1960s (cf. Chapter 2), realised that the Keita Project was really having an impact on their lives, they 'joined the fight'. 'The charismatic leader dominates others because through his person a mission has become manifest, which very often revolutionises the established order' (Bendix 1967:301). For 17 years in Keita Carotti to some extent revolutionised the established order in development. People were still seeking to maximise their interests, but they did so with, rather than in spite of or against, 'the Project'. The first part of this chapter looks at the personality of its two main managers, Carotti and Oumarou, because management style has played an important part in shaping the approach of the Keita Project and in giving it its distinctive status.

The second part of the chapter focuses on the perceptions of development of other categories of staff, who were responsible for executing the Project's programmes and who were in daily contact with men and women in the intervention area. National staff at the PDR/ADM portrays Niger as an 'underdeveloped' country, a country which needs foreign assistance to solve its problems, mostly due to the impacts of 'desertification'. According to them, these problems can be solved through the establishment of projects. However, for projects to achieve their goals, the 'peasant's mentality' must be induced to accept change. This is achieved through 'sensitisation' [*sensibilisation*], a specialised notion which refers to the 'developers' task of making 'peasants' aware of their problems and willing to accept change (cf. Bierschenk 1988; Tidjani-Alou 2000). As argued in Chapter 4, development projects formally operate with, not against, so called project beneficiaries, and it is therefore essential to convert the latter, at least superficially, to the desertification narrative. Through 'sensitisation', project staff act as specialised operators, turning local people into 'project beneficiaries' as a preliminary step for 'intervention'. But this process is not carried out, as it were, behind the backs and against the wills of local people. Project staff can be seen as 'development brokers' (Bierschenk et al. 2000) making possible what both 'the

developers' and 'the developed' want: a project (cf. Neubert 2000). As I shall show in the following chapter, far from resenting project interventions, Ader Doutchi Majiya villages compete against each other over project activities.

I have gathered the information provided here in the course of semi-structured interviews, at meetings, while working with members of staff, and in the course of informal conversations. Staff members would normally use French with me, as well as with all the 'whites' (*nassaru*), to talk about development. Not only because they assume that we will be more at ease and that the conversation will thus be smoother, but also because they themselves have learned development terminology in French. Thus, for example, they would normally greet me in Hausa, but they would automatically change to French when discussing their work. Amongst themselves, they would usually interject French technical jargon into Hausa speech.

5.2 Project Management

The PDR/ADM has an office in Niamey, where administrative matters are dealt with, but its headquarters are in Keita, the *chef lieu* of the homonymous district in the department of Tahoua. Keita is a medium-size Sahelian town of about 6,000 inhabitants, which owes much of its present 'cosmopolitan' appearance and flourishing boutiques to the presence of the PDR/ADM. It is composed of four neighbourhoods, which are called 'villages' (*gari*), each of which has its respective village chief (*hakimi*), and which were originally distinguished along ethnic and status criteria.

The PDR/ADM is a rectangular building located at the eastern end of Keita (cf. pictures 3 and 4). Today, the Project comprises eight 'Divisions', namely: Administration (*Administration*); Monitoring and Evaluation (*Suivi et Evaluation*); Public works (*Génie Rural* or *GR*); Environment (*Environnement* or *Forêts et Faune*); Agronomy (*Agronomie*); Women and Development (*Femmes et Développement*); and the recently established (March 2000) Communication Division (*Communication*) in charge, *inter alia*, of installing a radio system in the intervention area. The Garage is not a 'real' division: it has a hybrid status and is under the control of the GR Division, but it is commonly referred to as a 'division' (cf. table 1, where the 'Communication Divison' is missing).

The PDR/ADM has approximately 100 employees, including guards, drivers, mechanics and electricians (cf. PDR/ADM 2000a). Each division occupies two or three locales in the project building, and, in general, comprises a division chief (*Chef de Division)*, his/her vice (*Adjoint*), and other staff members whose number and functions vary substantially across divisions.

Since 1998, the PDR/ADM has been coordinated by a national Programme Manager (*Coordinateur National).* However, during the first fifteen years of project activity, management was distributed between two figures: a National Coordinator and an expatriate Primary Technical Coordinator (*Conseiller Technique Principal* or CTP). The first and only CTP of the Project between 1983 and 1998 was Dr. Renato Carotti, an Italian agronomist at the end of his long career with the FAO. Carotti left an indelible mark on the PDR/ADM and it is impossible to talk of the Project without mentioning its CTP, who devised the Project's widely celebrated intervention strategy.

5.2.1 Carotti, the sarkin aiki

Carotti has a degree in Agronomy from the University of Camerino (Province of Pesaro, Marche Region, Italy) and has always remained very attached to his Marchigian roots. International development 'expert' and highly praised agronomist, Carotti is primarily a 'farmer': in his Italian hometown, he grows grapes to produce wine and tills his own land. By the time he was assigned to Keita, he had five adult children, and had been working extensively in Africa and Latin America for the previous 30 years of his successful career with the FAO in international development projects. Keita had to be his final destination before retirement. For Carotti, Keita was his last bet, and he wanted it to be a winning one.

When he arrived in Keita, Carotti was no longer in his youth, but age increased his charismatic aura, particularly in Niger where an elder man is perceived as the appropriate holder of authority. Never without his pipe in wood and stainless steel, his presence was often introduced by a distinctive scent of Dutch tobacco. His penetrating gaze was framed by thick and rebellious eyebrows. His nose was rather big and his lips thin. Indeed, I would imagine Carotti's caricature as dominated by a disproportionately huge pair of eyebrows on top of a nose and a pipe. His hair was grey and his face covered with wrinkles. He was not tall and his stomach protruded (showing his

penchant for good wine and whisky) from his otherwise muscular figure. His hands were big and calloused, something he was proud of, as a sign of strenuous physical work, mostly on the land.

Carotti loved the land. He shared the Hausa peasants' attachment to their relatively sterile plots with a mixture of compassion and solidarity. He was a wonderful storyteller. In his repertoire, anecdotes were classified according to morale and hero-type. The hard-headed farmer was one of his heroes, characterised by '*tigna*', an Italian term which I have only heard from Carotti, by which he meant a strenuous, tenacious, stubborn behaviour primarily referring to a farmer's attachment to his land, but evident, in a diluted form, in all of a farmer's acts. Carotti displayed the traits of all his hero types, and vice-versa, his hero types incarnated and magnified the values which informed Carotti's lifestyle and beliefs. He described the hope of the Keita farmer sowing the land, the farmer's tranquillity and satisfaction in front of his full granaries: 'a full granary, is the farmer's dream, an empty granary his nightmare'. He noticed the air of feast in villages after abundant harvests, the tension when rains were scarce. The Keita farmer and Carotti loved each other, because they both thought that they understood each other deeply. And maybe they really did.

Carotti took the PDR/ADM seriously. FAO and Italian 'experts' I interviewed never failed to comment on the relation between the PDR/ADM and its CTP. The PDR/ADM was often characterised as Carotti's 'last child'. Different people who talked to me about Carotti characterised him as 'outstanding', 'of great value', 'seductive and capable', and attributed the success of the Project in great part to him. 'Carotti, a person of great energy and great skills, wanted to conclude his career with a personal experience of exceptional standing. He dedicated himself entirely to Keita, with a commitment that is extremely rare' (Caputo, Interview). One of the persons responsible for allocating funds to the PDR/ADM at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs argued 'When Carotti was there, we used to sign blank cheques for him. He was our guarantee that the Project would function'. Some members of project staff called Carotti a 'father' (*il était un père*), and the villagers often referred to him as 'the chief of the work'[53] (*sarkin aiki).*

Carotti defined 'development' as 'diminishing the distance between us and them' [*diminuire il divario che c'è tra noi e loro*]. When he saw me struggling to write this definition in my notebook in the jeep running across the dunes of Keita, he asked me to repeat what he had just said. I told him. 'Yes, that's what development is... and don't call me 'ethnocentric' and all these stupid ideas of nowadays: if you had a sick child and no food to feed it, no water, no hospital, no doctors, you would want all these things which make your life less miserable, and what right have you to deny these poor people some relief?'. He then explained his theory of the 'pace factor'. 'We can think of our world and their world as travelling at different speeds: if we are going at 80 km/h, they are going at 5 km/h. To help them reach 10 km/h is ridiculous, the distance between us would keep increasing. We go at 80? They must go at 90 at least, otherwise they'll never catch up with us... otherwise there's no game... I am against the micro-development approach!' The Project was there to reverse a process of severe erosion which hit the intervention area over the last 20 years, and make agriculture and herding more productive. It did it employing only local labour and training local people in most of the activities carried out by the Project. But it also did it with bulldozers and machines: the PDR/ADM fought against the desert at 90 km/h, and at approximately 4 million dollars per year.

Carotti conceived the Project's approach and intervention strategy. He tested it and perfected it throughout 15 years of work in Keita. He talked of Keita (by which he meant the entire project area) as a 'testing ground' or 'laboratory', meaning a place where a new approach to fight against the desert's advance would be developed. He didn't fight alone. Carotti had 'his men' in the Project, and a special relation with local people, men and women alike.

He had selected his key collaborators carefully, one by one, and gave each of them a key position in the Project. His success was based to some extent upon the loyalty of a team of capable individuals. Nasser, his closest assistant, whom he trained personally and treated as a son, said of him:

> Carotti... Carotti was a real father. He was a father. I had come to the Keita Project for a test of two months, and it went well. Then I left and they took another person, but Carotti said... no, there, really, I need Nasser. So he sent for me... I had to remain 15 days and...[laughs, meaning

[53] As we shall see in the following chapter, local people referred to the project simply as '*aiki*', work, so '*sarkin aiki*' could be more freely translated as 'project chief'.

> that he never left]... Carotti taught me everything... and if I did something he disagreed with, he wouldn't say anything... he would let you do, to show you where you had gone wrong. When I told my mother that Carotti was going to leave and return to Italy, really she thought... she was even sure that I was going to leave with him. Really, if it wasn't Italy, if it was anywhere in Africa, I would have followed him!

Carotti invested in project staff, defended them from external attacks, and delegated a considerable amount of power to Division Chiefs. In the words of the Genie Rural Division Chief:

> I worked with Carotti since 1985. He is not an engineer, but his experience directing projects is such that sometime I have no choice but to follow his advice in technical matters, because he has a sense of observation and critique, he knows a bit of everything.

Carotti gave members of staff a sense of dedication and involvement in the Project's goals. He once recollected, at a meeting, how they (the staff and himself) had defied a consultant's prediction, at project inception, that any money spent on the Loudou Valley (an area falling in PDR/ADM intervention) was being thrown away. The consultant argued that places like Loudou were the 'gangrene' of the Sahel, a 'lunar environment' which could never be rehabilitated and would never sustain human settlements anymore. Loudou had been, instead, one of the success stories of the PDR/ADM, and today it hosts three flourishing villages and a local weekly market of increasing importance. On another occasion, often proudly remembered by project staff, another development project had planned an expansion which would set its borders very close to the limits of the PDR/ADM's intervention area. Having heard about this, Carotti called the project staff to his office and exhorted them to send tractors and machines to the area where the PDR/ADM bordered with the incoming project in order to 'mark the limits' of what he saw as the 'PDR/ADM's domain'.

Once he had won a person's allegiance, and had been conquered in turn by this person's value, he would strenuously 'defend his men', even against all evidence. He might criticise or even scold one of 'his men' in private, but would never attack him in front of other people. He once told me of how, when he was about 7 years old, he used to play with a boy of about 14 years old, a lot stronger than him. The boy used to humiliate him and beat him up, until one day, at the beach, an accident provoked his anger to the point that he could not control himself. Little Carotti, enraged, hit the boy as hard as he could with a wooden stick which happened to be on the shore. The big boy who had been hit started bleeding and screaming. When his mother learned about the

fact, she was ashamed, she, 'the mother of Renato, who attacked the so and so boy, who behaved as a criminal'. When he returned home, that evening, he feared what his father would say and do to him. But when he was brought in front of his father, who had been a high ranking fascist military, the father gave him a coin and congratulated him saying 'I am really proud of you who were not scared of a boy so much stronger than yourself. But remember, never, never attack someone weaker, for only cowards do so'. He saw Keita staff, or most of them, as a team of 'combatants' of which he was the leader, and he felt responsible for 'his men', by which he meant both men and women. The 'combatant' was another ideal type in Carotti's repertoire, inspired by Kurosawa's 'The Seven Samurai'. However, he never mentioned violence as an effective way to win battles; he had 'strategies', made 'plans', and unfolded them slowly and subtly, 'circumventing' the enemy and defeating him with 'facts', which 'spoke for themselves'. He used to say that critics had only to visit Keita, he didn't need to answer their critiques. Keita defended itself on its own grounds.

He carefully observed farmers behaviour, and expressed his respect for their knowledge by testing ideas for future interventions in collaboration with local farmers known to him. He disliked office work, and spent as much time as he could in the field, following the Project's interventions and interacting with local people. In almost every village within the project intervention area, he knew some men and women personally. He couldn't speak Hausa, but his loyal driver, Sambo, a thin and tall old Peul, would interpret for him.

Whenever new appointments did not meet Carotti's expectations, he skilfully managed to get rid of unwanted 'experts'. He identified, trained, and selected his successor, the actual *Coordinateur National.* He met the latter as a young man, when he was working for the government in Tahoua and had come to Keita on official visits. Carotti liked him, and was able to help him obtain a scholarship at the Agronomy Department in the University of Camerino. Oumarou went to Italy, learned Italian and obtained a degree in exactly the same place and same field as Carotti. When he returned to Niger, the time for Carotti to retire had come, and a vacancy for Carotti's replacement was put out by FAO. After the application and interview processes, Oumarou Moussa was appointed first National Coordinator of the PDR/ADM.

Carotti and Oumarou had similar political tastes. Oumarou had been inspired by Seyni Kountché. Carotti had been a *balilla*[54] in his childhood and strongly believed in Mussolini's achievements and in many Fascist values. However, it would be unfair to portray him as the stereotypical fascist, because Carotti was certainly not a racist. He grew up in Northern Africa and once told me that for him black and white people were exactly the same. Many of his childhood friends had been Africans and he could not classify people according to skin colour. He had spoken thus to encourage me to do the same. Carotti enjoyed challenging people, and often tried to provoke reactions launching verbal attacks and engaging in verbal battles. In this vein, one day as we were returning to Keita from a site which he wanted to show me upon my first stay at the Project, he accused me of being a racist. He had noticed my behaviour towards a group of women we met, and found it exceedingly kind. He said that my face 'glowed' whenever I spoke with local villagers, and warned me not to idealize them, because they were just like us. I should treat them as I treated him, and jokingly added that he would get jealous seeing how much nicer I was to them than to him.

Nevertheless, Carotti personified a great deal of the fascist ethos. He was impregnated with the values, images, expressions, and behaviours characteristic of fascist culture and writings. He was a populist, and as such fitted very well the expectations of local villagers. He fitted into their ideal of 'leader', and was referred to as '*sarkin aiki*': *'Gaskiya mun gode Allah, mun gode Carotti, Carotti sarkin aiki ne, ya zo ya ghiara kasa*[55]', local people would say. He had all the prerogatives of the charismatic leader, and was able to attract proselytes and followers. When he described important meetings he had held, he would consistently define a won battle as an occasion in which people had 'made his idea theirs'. He would engage in rhetorical fights with the aim of imbuing the listeners with his thoughts.

Carotti had many enemies. Some people, e.g. international consultants coming to visit the PDR/ADM, would approach him with diffidence and scepticism. Many consultants would arrive in Keita with pre-conceived critiques about the Project, some

[54] Fascist children/youths military unit.

[55] 'Really, we thank Allah, we thank Carotti (i.e. Carotti), Carotti is the chief of the works, he came and restored the land'. Note that 'Sarki' is the term for highest ranking traditional authority, who belongs to the original group having a landlordly status over the area (for Keita, the Lissawan Group) and holding a hereditary chiefly position over groups of villages today falling in his 'sphere of influence'. His control overlaps almost exactly with the 'District' level administrative boundaries.

may have already criticised it without having been there. Nothing would infuriate Carotti more than critiques. He would never accept them. When visitors would come to see the Project, he would bring them 'to the field', either for the 'grand tour' or for the 'petit tour', depending on the visitor's importance.

Even in the FAO, not everyone approved of his management strategy. Some said that his relation with the Project was far too 'personal' and that he should not have been allowed to keep his place for such a long time, even against FAO regulations on the matter. Others said that Carotti had made it impossible for the FAO to follow the Project and contribute to its unfolding by opposing all interference in management, and blamed on his centralising behaviour the problems which characterised FAO-Italy relations upon Carotti's departure.

Carotti liked Mishima's writing, and had some of his books in his house in Keita. The last time he was in Keita, he had already retired from his CTP position, and had returned to 'his' Keita after some months of absence for a one-month consultancy. One day, I walked back home with him after work. He told me about his first thoughts coming back to Keita. When he stepped into his home after it had been locked for a few months, everything was covered with dust and spider webs, everything was abandoned and dirty, his orchard was dry, and his white horse looked old, in the garden. Also the Project's activities had slowed down. It reminded him of the last chapters of Mishima's 'The Decay of the Angel'. He said: 'I can smell a scent of sunset' (*sento odore di crepuscolo*).

5.2.2 Oumarou, the Coordinateur National

Oumarou Moussa's advent to project management in 1998 was not simply a change in person, but coincided with a substantial change in the way management had been conceived and intra-project hierarchies structured. With Oumarou, the dual structure of *Conseiller Technique Principal* and *Directeur National* gave way to a centralisation of power in the hands of a sole *Coordinateur National*. The number of international consultants residing permanently in Keita was also considerably reduced, and FAO-Italy relations began to deteriorate. Officially, these changes were commented upon as part of a general strategy to 'responsabilise' (*responsabilisation*) Niger, which went

hand in hand with the parallel intent to 'build ownership' of project results among the 'beneficiaries'.

Oumarou was an extremely skilled orator, and it was always difficult to discern how much of his speech was aimed at convincing the listener and how much of it really convinced him. Since his arrival he seemed to understand the overall context and related discourses, and effectively used the latter instrumentally. Most of his initial speeches with the project staff and, to a lesser extent, with the local population on the occasion of his sporadic field-trips, focused on the weight which Carotti's inheritance had left upon him.

Oumarou justified his initial slowness in assuming his responsibilities and taking the lead over project activities with various arguments. With the project staff, he underlined how difficult it was to continue where 'a Carotti' had left off, particularly at a moment when 'everybody' was expecting Niger to show 'maturity' and take 'responsibility' toward the project's concluding phases.

With international consultants, however, he did not hesitate to criticise Carotti, particularly the 'impulsive' decision making which characterised Carotti's management style and which made it difficult for his successor to have a clear idea of how interventions had been planned in different sites. He 'felt lost in a sea of messy papers' and struggled to find some sense and put order in the massive documentation produced in 15 years of project life.

When, at the end of 1999, FAO's departure became an imminent and much debated event at the PDR/ADM, Oumarou tried to stir feelings of nationalistic pride amongst project staff, arguing that once FAO had definitely gone, 'the whole world' would have looked at Niger. Failing to ensure the durability and sustainability of project interventions would amount to admitting their own backwardness and lack of capacity, and it fell upon him, as the Project's National Coordinator, to bring the Project to its 'successful' conclusion.

Clearly, the relatively new talk of 'responsabilisation' did not target Oumarou directly, but primarily addressed national authorities and administration. But his

manipulation of new themes in the development agenda represented a tactic by which he appropriated idioms and discourses perceived as emanating from 'international' arenas, hoping to gain prestige and following as a result of being associated with international power centres. But his speech did a lot more. As a newcomer in the management position, Oumarou had to come to terms with the difficult task of gaining credibility amongst 'Carotti's team': he needed them to sanction his power or he would never be able to exercise his leadership. Presenting himself as being held accountable for project success by powerful agents such as Governments and FAO, he, first, implied that these agents sanctioned his position as project coordinator; and, second, played with a rhetoric of unity and division in order to establish hierarchical distance and national proximity between himself and project staff. They had to recognise him as 'chief' because, his talk suggested, it was him who would eventually be held accountable for the Project's outcome. He and the project staff did not carry the same burden of responsibility and, as an implicit consequence, they held different amounts of symbolic capital. Nevertheless, they were all Nigeriens, all equally compelled to prove wrong international expectations of failure by their part and to bring the Project to a successful *finale*.

Often Oumarou's discourses followed a 'carrot and stick' strategy: he would start a speech with arguments that stirred feelings of compassion and allegiance in the listener by depicting himself in a vulnerable position (under the burden of responsibility) needing the maximum help and cooperation from project staff. He would then move on to using the 'responsibility' bestowed upon him as a moral obligation for him to be inflexible toward project staff. He was 'not prepared' to 'accept' 'disengaged behaviour', he was 'not interested' in people's 'personal resentments': 'on the job, everyone is expected to carry out his/her tasks', or he would 'not tolerate him/her in the Project anymore'. Oumarou's command was maintained by making people feel vulnerable, to the point of threatening them. Not long after he had assumed office, fears of being fired or admonished became widespread, particularly for staff working in divisions which had played a crucial role under Carotti's coordination.

Oumarou's strategy resembled Carotti's authoritarian approach only superficially. At first sight, both Carotti and Oumarou were using their charisma and personal skills to gain people's trust and attract proselytes. But if for Carotti the main

objective was to imbue 'his men' with a fervour for achieving their task, defying the challenge set by a sterile, unproductive land, Oumarou was more interested in building personal prestige.

Oumarou thought that 'underdevelopment' was 'not only a question of material poverty, but primarily a question of mentality'. He took the example of the twinning of Keita with the Italian town of Pesaro, as a result of which many items had been offered by Pesaro for the development of the city of Keita, but some corrupt people had taken all they could and the aims of the operation had failed (cf. Chapter 7). When he was younger, he said, he once had to conduct a survey to find out the development priorities of the people of a region. With his colleagues, they had prepared a list of possible 'priorities', but it turned out that they had failed to include the real priority in the list: the television. He said it was like the poor Peul nomad, who chews tobacco to appease his hunger as he walks in the arid plateaux with a small herd of cattle he doesn't own, and carries an enormous radio on his shoulder. Poverty in Niger is a question of mentality, people refuse to work hard to help themselves.

Oumarou undermined the authority and credibility of Division Chiefs while retaining the ultimate power over even small scale decisions. Manual workers, drivers, mechanics, and project employees at lower levels who found themselves opposed to division chiefs, started to bypass division chiefs and go directly to Oumarou who, in the majority of cases, initially complied with their demands and took measures against the plans and activities of division chiefs, only in order to obtain people's support, in a way reminiscent of what most Niger politicians do as a part of their campaign. By doing so, however, Oumarou undermined the credibility of division chiefs *vis à vis* their subordinates and, in the medium run, the Project was lacerated by interpersonal resentments of various sorts.

After the first two years of Oumarou's management, an air of secrecy dominated all relations within the PDR/ADM. I sometimes found myself dragged into an office and, while someone would stand outside to make sure no one would listen to the conversation, the division chief or assistant would explain to me all the problems encountered with the management.

Oumarou also had enemies, outside and inside the Project. The Nigerien coordinator of a project as important as the PDR/ADM is likely to be under enormous pressures for all sorts of favours. Someone in Oumarou's position would receive calls from Ministers asking to place a nephew at the Project, to house a relative living in Keita in a project building, to divert project resources to other purposes, etc. It is difficult to resist such demands without consequently putting yourself and your family at risk, 'risk' meaning, in the best case, lack of useful networks and powerful connections when 'things go wrong'. It is difficult to please some without offending others, and once the resentment of the unemployed people of Keita erupted against Oumarou, as they informed authorities that he was employing more people from his natal village in a distant region of Niger than from Keita itself, even though skilled Keita workers were available and in need of jobs. For a Nigerien, to be the only coordinator of a project like Keita is like sitting on burning coals, because, as Oumarou once argued: 'in the minds of the authorities projects are lucrative opportunities'.

5.3 The Divisions and the Personnel: Discourses of Development among the PDR/ADM Staff

I have described the character and beliefs of the most influential managers of the PDR/ADM at length, because, as argued in the first section of this chapter, the personal disposition of key members of staff toward their work and other people have consequences for project functioning and relations within it (cf. Uphoff 1992; Hailey 2001). Project management plays an intermediary role between the international discourses of development, presented in the previous chapter, and the micropolitics of development at project and village level. The ways in which a manager absolves this function is influenced by how a manager interprets the Project's activities and his role within. With reference to the two figures presented above, Carotti saw Keita as his last professional challenge, and he had a real respect and compassion for farmers, with whom he shared a love for the land and a stubborn determination to increase its production. Oumarou, on the other hand, was a politically minded man, and many people who worked with him thought that he used the Project as a path to a political career. Whatever weight one chooses to give to these assumptions, his position as a 'national' manager made him more vulnerable to different kinds of pressures, and he inevitably found himself involved in the inherently political game of carrying out his tasks without disappointing different categories of actors. While he was culturally

'closer' than Carotti to local actors, he seemed to be less open toward them, as he identified peasant 'mentality' as one of the main obstacles to Niger's 'development'. This view was also widespread amongst national members of staff. The particular view of 'peasant mentality' entertained by project staff legitimises their task to induce the 'beneficiaries' to accept change. This is done through the practice of 'sensitisation'. The group I refer to as 'project staff' includes seven division chiefs, four assistants, and a few field agents (cf. PDR/ADM 2000a). All of them are Nigerien. Below I illustrate the staff's conceptualisations of 'desertification' and 'sensitisation', and I look at how these notions are operationalised in the Keita Project.

5.3.1 'Niger is an underdeveloped country': the project staff's view of the desertification narrative and of Niger's problems.

The Agronomy division chief is Mr. Ibrahim. The division also counts two Adjoints and three field agents. Ibrahim is a high-class Hausa 'aristocrat', whose class and studies situate him in a position of prestige within the Project. He is more of an 'intellectual' than a 'fieldworker', and he carries the role of '*Directeur Technique*' of the Project, which says a lot more than it implies in practice. Ibrahim worked at the Project since its very early stages. One of his daughters married the Administration Division Chief and one of his nephews, Soumaila Mati, is employed as a fieldworker in his own Division. The scarcity of hair on Ibrahim's face and arms, as well as his plump solemn figure, made him look like a gigantic eunuch, dexterously orchestrating all project PR. He has ball-shaped eyes which he rotates, widens, shuts and moves a great deal in his expressive facial mimicry. His hands are soft and his fingers tapered. Since I've known him, he wears distinctive pea-hued glossy leather slippers from which his heel is left slightly hanging out.

Ibrahim is certainly not renowned for his technical ingenuity, but plays a vital role in maintaining the Project's 'ceremonial apparatus' efficient, fine tuning intra- and inter-project social relations, and presenting different images of the Project to different categories of actors, from international consultants to peasants. His social respectability is useful to the management, as well as his skills as a Hausa-French interpreter, as he is proficient in both. I have always seen him supporting project management.

At reunions with external consultants and project staff, Ibrahim would invariably support Oumarou's point of view, not only through separate interventions, but also by volunteering an intermittent background of supporting comments and evocative repetitions of Oumarou's salient words within a discourse. One day, Oumarou was giving a presentation of the Project's activities to the newly formed '*groupement*' of Keita Youths. He talked without interruption for an hour and a half. He began his discourse apologising for his imperfect Hausa, but, he added, Mr. Ibrahim was there and would help him with the language. Although Oumarou really isn't a native Hausa speaker, but a Djerma, his Hausa is almost perfect, and his standard initial apologies seemed to serve as a way to introduce Ibrahim and sanction his following interventions throughout the talk. But Ibrahim never had to translate parts of Oumarou's discourse. His role became immediately evident in the first section of Oumarou's presentation. Oumarou began his speech with a devastating image of drought and famine: before project intervention, he argued, a disproportionate drought had hit the area, drying the wells to the point that not only animals would die, but people too were lacking food and water to drink. As Oumarou was providing a dramatic representation of villages struck by drought and famine, Ibrahim distraught, passed his hands over his face, his eyes showing grief and desolation, and echoed repeatedly, as Oumarou went on with his account: 'No water to drink'... 'No food to eat'... 'The animals died, all! They all died!' (*'Babu ruwa na sha'... 'Babu abinci na ci'... 'Dabobbi, su mutu, duka! Duka su mutu!'*).

I often heard the desertification narrative reproduced in heightened dramatic tones in the *historiques du projet* given by project staff or management. Recalling (real or imaginary – as not all villages in the Project's area had been hit equally severely by the drought) images of famine is used as a rhetorical device to present the local situation before the Project's intervention. These images of devastation are mainly used in this specific way, as the Project's 'origin myth' and to justify its necessity. Face to face discussions with project staff reveal different perspectives, characterised by the perception of being 'underdeveloped'.

Commenting upon the killing of a President of Niger, Ibrahim Baré Mainassara, the Chief of the Environment Division exploded:

> Niger is underdeveloped: when we look at the problems that characterise our underdevelopment, they are enormous! They kill a president like a donkey because he was hard-headed, students are unemployed, professors spend months without a salary, state officials have got nothing, nothing is done to help the population... it is underdevelopment that creates this. In developed countries parents have the means to pay for the studies of their children. Here, we are obliged to find a job in the public sector alone, as the private sector is not developed!

Soumaila was a quick and smart man. Probably in his late fifties, he was experienced not only in the technical aspects of his job, but he was a fine connoisseur of human nature. It was difficult to fool Soumaila. When he visited villages to check if the reforestation trenches had been 'sabotaged' by villagers looking for fuel-wood, he would easily discover 'the culprits'. He always knew why some activity had failed, or why it had succeeded in a village. He knew the people there, and knew who could be an obstacle, and who could be an ally in his activities. Indeed, everybody recognised that 'he had lived'. According to others and to himself, his past had been rather dissolute: he had enjoyed alcohol, women, smoking, and gambling. Not tall, thin, with one eye half closed as if to penetrate deeper the thoughts of his interlocutors, and a sarcastic smile cast on his thin lips, Soumaila was an intriguing character. His speech was throbbing with indecent jokes and bad words, which he used to underline his point of view in lively debates, often about local and national politics. Having heard his quote mentioned above, I didn't hesitate to ask him what he thought were the causes of the deplorable state he was describing.

> As a *Forestier,* I think the greatest problem of Niger is desertification. Until the ecologic environment is reconstituted, any other development action is destined to failure. Because, going back in history, man destroyed the forest before developing agriculture. With the demographic push, soils have been overexploited, they were totally impoverished, they became sterile, trees have disappeared. The owner of the land abandoned, facing water and wind erosion! It is necessary, then, to fight against this desertification, to reconstitute the ecology and recuperate the lands, to plant trees that will protect the soils against hydric erosion, and allow local people to have access to cultivable land and develop agrarian techniques which increase agricultural productivity.

Despite his joking character, Soumaila was very dedicated to his job, and could count upon two skilled assistants: Ali, the fishery expert of the Project and a firm Moslem believer, and Ali, a *Forestier* like Soumaila, half Tuareg and half Arab.

Ali agreed with his Chief: 'The first problem of Niger is desertification'. Soumaila Mati, one of the field agents of the Agriculture Division, also expressed himself in similar terms: 'Underdevelopment is extreme poverty caused by scarce rains:

Niger depends 95% on exterior aid'. Ali of the Monitoring and Evaluation Division argued, in similar terms:

> Underdevelopment is dependency on other countries. In the case of Niger, you know, due to climatic conditions there are recurrent famines, and we haven't got enough cultivable lands. The more the population grows, the more the need grows, and there is not enough land to adopt the system of agricultural rotation. The lands become impoverished, and the poorer they are, the more we lack agrarian production. For a country to be independent, it must have alimentary self sufficiency: when the belly is full, even if there are no money, the spirit is appeased.

This view was very close to that expressed by Idi, the literacy expert: 'The main reason why we need development projects in Niger is alimentary self-sufficiency: the belly first! [*le ventre d'abord*]. Even if a project tries to solve other problems, people will not collaborate when they are hungry!'. Nasser, the assistant of the GR Division, argued that

> Underdevelopment is the incapacity, material or intellectual, to solve problems. If we have intelligence, we haven't got the means: we are underdeveloped. In particular, Niger's greatest problem is the rapid advance of the desert... maybe, it is also a lack of political will... however, poverty is due to the food deficit created by the bad distribution of rains in space and in time. Rains are often insufficient... I can see that when the Nigerien peasant has two consecutive years of good rains, the whole situation is calm. But after two or three years of drought, everything is tense, people go away and animals die.

Aboubacar, working for the Monitoring and Evaluation Division, thought that 'Niger's fundamental problem is that of agrarian production, which is linked to climatic factors which worsen year after year!' Yacouba, responsible for the Project's Administration, linked the question of 'desertification' to Niger's dependence upon foreign assistance:

> The State hasn't got the means! If you take the phenomena of water erosion and land degradation... if you take the glacis of this region... it isn't with handcarts that you can transform that! You need technological means, because today we are at a point at which nature menaces us up to our necks! This can only happen through foreign aid.

Some perspectives were different. Elhadji Abdou, the chief of the GR division, emphasised the corruption of Niger's government. Two other members of staff identified underdevelopment with a 'disposition', characterised by the induced awareness of lacking something. Rahmatou of the Monitoring and Evaluation Division had a subtle position:

> Underdevelopment is a disposition [*un état d'âme*]. It is a way of perceiving things that pushes me to say that you are underdeveloped, but, inside you, you know that you are not: it's a question of habits. You are used to eating pasta, you will continue to eat pasta, but I... today I eat pasta, tomorrow I eat rice, the day after something else. [...] To make you realise that you are underdeveloped, I should invite you at my place and offer you pasta today, rice tomorrow, meat on the following day. So when you'll go back at your place, you'll tell a third person: you know, there is the possibility of not eating pasta everyday, and you will explore this path of change.

In Rahmatou's opinion, then, the process by which an individual or a country *is made underdeveloped* by being made aware of alternative possibilities is induced from the outside. If we take the desertification narrative as something 'exported' from Northern Development agencies to Southern governments and countries, it is possible to see the perspectives presented above as 'offer driven'. The actors 'offering' anti-desertification remedies are creating a demand for their services by inducing in the recipient country an awareness of its own 'underdevelopment'. This interpretation is supported by the way in which the United Nations were characterised by some members of staff. Thus, Aboubacar, working for the Monitoring and Evaluation Division, argued

> The UNDP and the World Bank, for instance, make periodical macro-economic studies, to be able to say... Africa, or Niger: here are the indicators, here is the level of poverty, here is the level of revenues, here is the sanitary coverage... they tell politicians and development actors: this is the level you are at, this is the rank you occupy... and they stimulate them to move forward, to improve.

Boureima, who ran the food-for-work logistics said: 'In general, various UN agencies in different sectors will tell a country: here is your indicator... really, you are in the red... this is what you have to do'.

Three factors are evident in project staff self-reflexive perceptions of underdevelopment: Niger's underdevelopment is commonly related to desertification, or connected factors (rain scarcity, soil impoverishment, agrarian deficit, etc). This perspective is parallel to the macro narrative of desertification discussed in the previous chapter, and has been adopted by project actors through exposure, at professional institutes, in various ministerial and governmental offices, or in their work, to the sources of the macro narrative (the national project staff is almost entirely composed of Nigerien public servants, 'detached' from their public functions and allocated to the PDR/ADM). Secondly, the condition of underdevelopment puts Niger in a situation of dependency from foreign aid, needed because neither the government nor the population have the means necessary to 'fight against the desert'. Thirdly, some actors expressed the idea that underdevelopment is an induced notion, a state of being which you must be

made aware of. In front of the problems which, according to project staff, characterise Niger's 'underdevelopment', the main solution identified are projects.

'A project is the fight against famine to reach alimentary self sufficiency', said Soumaila Mati, an extension agent of the Agronomy Division. While Abdourrahman, responsible for hardware purchasing and inventories of project resources found that a project

> is something ideal for the rural population, there can be no alternatives. The ideal that I know is projects like Keita. For instance, before the Project there were no boutiques, trade was less lively, the dwellings were smaller and poorer... there was nothing! But with the Project, even the poorest rural areas have advanced!

The basic literacy expert described a development project as 'an action aimed at improving the living conditions in a particular area'. Most definitions were similar to this one, in that they emphasised the impact on the living standards of local people: 'An action which contributes to improve the quality of life of the population' (Hassan of the Monitoring and Evaluation Division); 'A project must satisfy the wishes of a population to improve the living conditions of this population' (Soumaila, chief of the Environment Division); 'A service which has to be established to solve the problems of the rural world... it has to provide the means that either the government or the populations lack, in order to improve the living conditions of the population, particularly in the rural areas which are the most impoverished' (Nasser, Assistant of the GR Division); 'it has the objective of improving the conditions of the entity where it finds itself' (Yacouba, Chief of the Administration Division); 'It's to advance the situation: there are initial conditions which... well... are not fine, and one must try to improve, advance' (Ali, Assistant of the Monitoring and Evaluation Division).

Another set of perspectives highlighted the fact that a project depends on external funds. This perspective is evident in the following definitions of a 'project': 'A series of operations implemented through foreign financial means provided in order to solve serious problems' (Ibrahim, Chief of the Agronomy Division); 'A series of development actions characterised as an investment... intellectuals can make their theories, but there has to be an investment' (Rano, Public Servant charged with some monitoring tasks for the WFP rations); 'A concentration of activities that brings revenue (*rendement*) to the peasants of a region, an area, or a country' (Ali, Fishery Expert of

the Environment Division) 'An action through which one tries to solve a particular problem, with a certain amount of resources, in a certain period of time'(Yacouba, Monitoring and Evaluation Division).

The function of external funds was also apparent in comments about the role of international development workers. Most of the members of staff referred to persons they knew and respected (such as the first project manager or the hydraulic engineer), emphasising their technical knowledge and contribution. But often the participation of international staff was related to the availability of funds from international donors: 'The role of the international staff (*des coopérants*) is financial support and technical control', argued Soumaila Mati. And Yacouba, the Project Accountant, explained:

> The internationals have great knowledge and, in general, a global perspective... and then, they are in the shadow of wealth (*ils sont à l'ombre de la richesse).* For instance, today, if you take Niger's technical officers *(les cadres techniques),* no matter their degree of instruction, they haven't got the kind of knowledge which allows them to be in the shadow of wealth.

The above mentioned statements suggest that, for project agents, a development project is essentially an injection of external funds to improve the living standards of the local people. No one, in formal or informal settings, ever contested the potential efficacy of projects. I heard many debates on why a certain project financed by a particular donor did not work or why a certain operation should have been done differently, but everybody believed in the type of solutions that a project could offer. Given the economic situation of Niger, I was unanimously told that there could be 'no alternatives' to projects. Moreover, from the perspective of what, in Niger, constitutes an elite minority of people, who achieved the kind of education which allows them to work as the staff of an international project, projects are the safest form of employment. As mentioned above by Soumaila, the Chief of the Environment Division, in Niger 'the private sector is not developed'. Employees in the public sector can never be sure that they will be paid their monthly salary, and this is the cause of frequent strikes organised by indebted public officials and school teachers. It should come as no surprise that, in this context, project staff see foreign projects as the only safe source of funds, able to 'provide the means that either the government or the populations lack, in order to improve the living conditions of the population, particularly in the rural areas which are the most impoverished' (cf. Nasser, above).

This leads to the question of how to make the 'target population' accept the activities implemented by projects and convince it to cooperate with project staff. The following section shows that project staff believe that local people are initially reticent to adopt innovations, and that they conceive of their task as turning peasants into 'beneficiaries', namely to make the inhabitants of a village or an organised group eligible as recipients of aid. In carrying out this 'brokerage' function (Bierschenk et al. 2000) between international development rationalities and what they refer to as 'peasant mentalities', they render a double service: to the agency they work for, as it facilitates the cooperation of local people who are presented, then, as expressing the right 'needs' and 'demands' for their services; and to the villagers, who are thereby granted access to the 'development revenue'. In the PDR/ADM, project agents have a specialised name for this function: sensitisation (*sensibilisation*). Sensitisation consists in making local villages aware that the type of activities carried out by the PDR/ADM are in their interest, and that they should accept the changes introduced by the project for their own good.

5.3.2 'The peasant' and 'sensitisation' : staff perceptions of the 'target population'

One of the factors most commonly mentioned as a problem for Niger, or an obstacle to its 'development', was the 'mentality' [*mentalité*] of 'the peasant' [*le paysan*]. The belief that 'the problem of Nigeriens is purely a problem of mentality [*mentalité*]' (Rahmatou) was very common amongst project staff and, as mentioned already, it was the National Coordinator's perspective.

But how is 'peasant identity' represented, and what are the consequences of portraying a particular image of 'the peasant'? Representations of identity are not neutral: the work of the project staff is evaluated against the degree to which project goals have been achieved. The success of the project staff depends upon the 'peasant's' willingness to maintain the project works and to exploit them in a correct way. On the other hand, it would be the project's staff failure, if 'the peasant' dismissed project initiatives and activities. It is therefore not hard to understand why project staff should be so preoccupied with 'peasant mentality' and willingness to change.

Here, views differ slightly with respect to how 'the peasant' is expected to think. However, the main points expressed by project staff in this respect can be summarised

as follows: 'the peasant' has a peculiar disposition toward 'change'; this is often characterised by a reticence to promptly adopt changes and innovations. 'Development', conceived as a move toward a better condition and better living standards, implies change. To motivate 'the peasant' to accept innovations, he/she has to be 'sensitised' [*sensibilisation*]; the aim of 'sensitisation' is for 'the peasant' to become aware [*prise de conscience*] of his/her own status and 'assume responsibility' [*responsabilisation*] for his/her own decision to follow a behaviour that will facilitate his/her 'development'.

I decided to enquire further into the staff understanding of local people's identity and role. How did they conceptualise so called 'beneficiaries'? Soumaila Mati of the Agronomy Division claimed, 'Certain peasants are hard headed and don't understand things easily'. Or, as the *Commandant* of the Environment Division said, 'The peasant is not good – you go there, you need information, he is going to give you false information... it is because his mentality is diffident, you must know them well and they must trust you, before they will listen to what you have to say'.

Rahmatou, who worked both in the Women and Development Division and in the Monitoring and Evaluation Division, expressed the staff view of peasant identity in a clear and articulate way:

> Now, the world today requires people to change, things to change: one shouldn't remain static [*Or, le monde aujourd'hui il veut mieux que les gens changent, les choses changent : il faut pas rester stationnaire*]. The problem of Nigeriens is purely a problem of mentality [*mentalité*]: there is a blockage which makes him not want to change... I can tell myself: if I exit this office and go into the other office, what will I find? Isn't it that I might die in that office? Ah, if I put this in my head, it's the end! I am never going to get out of my office... sometimes peasants are reticent even with regards to using fertilisers or improved seeds. It is because they don't know what will be the result... I am going to sow this millet because I know what it is going to give me: I do what I am used to do, and I know that if it rains it will give, while the other, I've never seen it... And then, there is also the fact that here the population is not very mature, there is the level of illiteracy which plays a role, which makes people believe that at a certain point the project will have to end, and therefore they should just share the resources available and that's it... that's the difference between those countries where there is enough awareness [*prise de conscience*] and those countries where there is no awareness yet. I am Nigerien, but I know that in Niger, in the political field and in the development field, people lack a certain maturity... I am desolated, but I am ready to defend my ideas in front of anyone!

Hassan, working at the Monitoring and Evaluation Division, emphasised the importance of field agents' approach to deal with the peasants' diffidence:

> Often peasants are hostile to all change [*souvent les paysans, ils sont hostiles aux mutations*]. For instance, if you take an illiterate peasant... he cannot rapidly perceive the utility of an

intervention: you will have to create the conditions to be able to advance with him. First, you will have to make the peasant understand what will be the result [of the change], what is the aim, what interest there is in doing so... it's sensitisation [*c'est ça la sensibilisation*]. [...] You will have to adapt the process so that he can understand the objective. I am telling you... the peasant is very diffident, but his diffidence is justified: if you have certain habits, it will be hard for you to change them, especially if the person who wants to change them does not have well adapted methods... since always, those who come to teach them something, come with a system which they impose...

Ali, the Project's Fishery expert and an experienced fieldworker, deeply trusted by villagers, provided an example from his own field to clarify the notion of 'sensitisation':

Someone who is older than 50 or even 60 years old, who has never seen a fish before... his ancestral habits are inculcated in his head [*son habitudes ancestrales sont inculquées dans son crâne*] and it is very difficult to convince him ... even if eventually he might accept, a real combat is required! What sort of combat? For example, you are a peasant [*paysan*] and I am a technician [*technicien*] of this matter... to make you accept a novelty, what can I do? I myself, I can go fishing... a demonstration... I can go fishing, return, prepare my fish, eat it... every day I will manage so that you are always next to me. You will observe me eating: has anything bad happened to me because I was eating fish? I have to repeat this day after day... you will observe and reflect. For me, sensitisation [*la sensibilisation*] is a practical approach to convince the individual: you must do it yourself, you who are an officer [*un cadre*], because theory... with the peasant... it really doesn't work! [...] You know, our Nigerien world... it's not only the water problem! If I take the social group 'peasant' [*paysan*]... 'backward peasant'[*paysan reculé*]... there is a great diffidence on the part of these peasants with regards to all innovation. This is what justifies the practical approach. If he reaches the point where he accepts [change], he will find himself in the same conditions I am in. Why is the peasant afraid? It is death he is afraid of, as a result of contact with anything new. With any new thing, one has to adopt a practical approach to demonstrate that it costs nothing [to adopt it].

The opinion of Nasser, the Assistant of the GR Division and one of the extensionists most respected by local people, is in agreement with that of Ali. It is noteworthy that Nasser and Ali are among the staff members who spend most time with local people, and their facilitating skills are renown in the Project. They have 'the pulse of the field' at all times, and in some villages their opinion is sought on different matters not directly related to project activities. Nasser thought that

populations are available... what they lack is the approach and the sensitisation [la sensibilisation]. They know the nature of the problem already, but they must be sensitised to be led to fight against this problem. [...] Sensitisation must also be accompanied by application. When you explain something to people at the beginning, it enters [their ears] and it goes: they will say "one day a gentleman has come to explain us – voilà, voilà, voilà ...", but people will not believe you unless you pass to action. Sensitisation is important, but there is also the approach: the peasant... he knows well... he has his ancient method which he conserves, which he has received from the elders. For him, all modern technique is a risk, it isn't safe. Technicians and fieldworkers must have a good approach, they have to support, never abandon... here, we have managed to convince these people that what we do, we do for their good.

Nasser emphasised that 'peasants' are not ignorant: they 'know the nature of the problem'; they 'have their method'. According to him, a lot depends on how they are approached. This perspective, which places responsibility for the results of the interaction between the local reality and the forces of change represented by development professionals on the latter, rather than on 'the peasant', was often put forth to me at the Project. Alhadji Abdou, the Chief of the GR Division, was also a strenuous defendant of the peasant's position, and, like Nasser, he thought that it was the extensionist's task, through 'sensitisation', to convince the 'peasant' to cooperate with projects for the peasant's own interest:

> The peasant is very receptive, he has a real will to change, but everything depends on the way in which he is approached: if you are the administrative type, you come once, you tell him a few words... [shakes his head]... what they want is someone ready to mix with them. It is normal that he will appear a bit reticent: The peasant, he has all the problems! No solution is ever found for him. Year one he pays taxes, year two he pays taxes, year three he pays taxes... and then he sees that in his village there is not even a school, not even a well, an infirmary... but why? Necessarily, he will lose trust in those who are supposed to make his interest. The majority of the times that they look for the peasant, it is because they need something from him: it's for his porridge [*boule*], for his kilo of peas, his kola-nuts, this and that... this is a real shame! [...] Sensitisation is to make someone understand the causes of the situation in which he finds himself and how to remedy to it.

With Nasser, Alhadji justifies the peasants' hesitation, not as an aversion toward change per se, but as an attitude developed out of their negative experience with technocrats, or as the natural reaction of someone who has been used for his/her entire life to different habits and different ways to interact with the world. As Alhadji mentioned and as I often noticed on visits to local fields, some of the Project's techniques to 'fight against desertification' were known to local villagers, who practised them in more rudimentary forms in their own fields. Hassan argued:

> Even before we started making anti-erosion bunds [*banquettes*], peasants had started to line-up stones to save their fields, but they stopped: there is no collective awareness... they do it for their own field, it's not durable, it's transient... but if there is a sensitisation that convinces him that it is an interest... peasants are not afraid of what one brings to them, they are afraid that it will not last: they must be sensitised to make them understand that it's up to them to save their territory [...]. But unfortunately, when projects arrive they never make the peasant understand that they can help the Project... but it's the peasant who has to continue afterwards! And peasants haven't got a tendency to look for new solutions : they think that one has what was sent by God, and there's nothing to do about it... but this isn't a religious problem, because religion has never said this: fatalism is tied to the climate, to the dependency from the rains...

The Colonel, the counterpart of Alhadji Abdou in the local Administration, thought that

> Peasants are open... but they don't have the same level of reasoning. They have their lifestyle, which is really different from ours: the peasant has his livestock, he has his field, his environment, the well... for him, the world ends there! We, we can see the long term... but they, if they see that there are some trees already, and they don't need more trees for any particular reason, they will not plant more trees [for reforestation purposes]. But they are not closed, really: if they see that an operation is profitable, they have no reason not to accept. A good sensitisation is needed to bring the peasant to accept a certain number of notions.

Ali, working in the Monitoring and Evaluation Department, expanded on the notion of sensitisation: 'Sensitisation, then, means to go to someone and try to make him reason, to involve him, to attract his attention on a number of points... people are the engine: If you want to make durable development, you have to start at the base, from the real problems'. In the first part of this quote, Ali is emphasising the agency of the development worker in 'making the peasant reason' according to development rationalities. This operation is seen as primordial, because, as he underlines, people are 'the engine', the 'basis' of development interventions and, for development to legitimate its interventions, the claim that the region in question is affected by problems and that change is needed must originate from the supposed 'victims', the 'peasants'. However, this is an offer-driven process (Neubert 2000:255), which relies on 'sensitisation' to make reality appear as if the problem was expressed at the local level in the first place, and as if the entire process which will follow was 'bottom-up'. This interpretation is confirmed by Yacouba, of the Monitoring and Evaluation Division:

> through sensitisation one has to bring information where it is needed, to bring someone to awareness of what is really happening [*amener quelqu'un à prendre conscience de ce qui se passe en réalité*]. Peasants have a peculiar comprehension, which is not always obvious, not always logic... certain phenomena, people live them, but they don't know exactly where they come from, what is at the origin, and what has to be done to fight them: it is sensitisation and demonstration actions that can lead them to adopt other behaviours, to acquire new competences.

And Soumaila, working in the same Division :

> Sensitisation means to inform people, to make them become aware of their problems [*la sensibilisation c'est informer les gens, c'est leur faire prendre conscience de leur problèmes*] : they know what they suffer from, but it is most often the solution to these problems that they ignore, and often these are entirely technical things.

5.4 Conclusion

You are a peasant. One day some people arrive and start digging reforestation trenches around your village. You may have witnessed erosion, you may have lost some animals, and maybe some relatives in the last drought, but you've never heard nor read about the narrative of desertification (besides, you are illiterate). Somehow, you must be 'made aware' that you 'need' the reforestation trenches that are being dug behind your hut. Someone must 'explain' to you what's going on and why. 'Sensitisation' induces a 'form of reasoning' which will make people accept change, a project, 'development'. The Hausa term for sensitisation is '*kai ya waye*' (or '*waye kai*'): literally, 'the head has been enlightened', and now you reason in accord with development rationality.

Shift perspective for a moment. You are a member of staff of an IRDP, the peasant who 'doesn't understand desertification' appears to you as someone with a 'different mentality'. You know that 'things must be changed', but s/he doesn't: her/his mentality is 'resistant to change'. Your task, then, is to help the peasant open her/his mind, so that her/his lot might improve. You have to 'sensitise' the peasant for his/her own good and because it's your job to do so. It's your job to carry out project activities in and around local villages, with local people. You, in turn, have been sensitised through exposure to the development narrative.

The following chapter argues that local people are not victims, instrumentally used to justify a process which is orchestrated against their wills and behind their shoulders. They too have an interest in taking advantage of the resources made available by a development project. 'Development' is a valued source of revenue in a context characterised by few alternative ways to make a living and scarcity of income opportunities. In the majority of villages falling in the PDR/ADM's intervention area, people's livelihood depends almost entirely upon subsistence agriculture and the remittances of male seasonal migration. The presence of the Project makes available a third form of income, a 'development revenue', which has a significant impact on local living conditions.

As will become clear in the following chapter, men and women in the villages of Keita trusted the Project because they appreciated its impacts on their land. It is undeniable that the PDR/ADM brought lakes where there had never been water, it

brought fish to the diet of herders, it covered barren hills with trees and fodder, it reversed a severe process of erosion. Keita farmers, trained as mechanics and tractor drivers, and thousands of women, alone with their children in the dry season, felt they contributed to what they saw as a 'success'. And so did President Kountché, so did FAO bureaucrats, so did Italian officers at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as the PDR/ADM's staff. During its first three phases, the Keita Project accommodated the 'projects in the Project' of various categories of actors involved in it.

6. THE PEOPLE

6.1 Introduction

Most of the 400 villages falling in the PDR/ADM's intervention area know the Project through its 'fight against desertification' worksites (*chantiers de lutte contre la desertification*). The *chantier*, therefore, is an important interface between the Project and the people of the Ader Doutchi Majiya (Long 1996). People working on the Project's *chantiers* are remunerated in food-for-work rations. Because almost all adult men (between 18 and 35 years) migrate seasonally to find manual jobs in Niamey, or in cities in Nigeria and the Ivory Coast, the Project's labour-force consists mainly of women and children. The elders remain in the villages (cf. Chapter 3).

Project works are normally stopped, or substantially decreased, in the rainy season, when the men come back from abroad to work in their fields. They leave again after the harvest, around October. The harvest varies consistently from year to year, and in good years it might be just enough for some wealthier farmers to provide food for the household, while in average years subsistence production is in deficit, and migrants' earnings and food rations, when available, are used to complement consumption (cf. Cremona 1986:103).

The Ader Doutchi Majiya is a vast region, and there are variations to this pattern. In the southern reaches of the project area (i.e. the northern Majiya valley) the rains tend to be more abundant and the lands are more fertile. In a few major centres, like the villages of Keita, Tamaské, and Ibohamane, the economy is more diversified, and agriculture and herding are not the only sources of income. Some small villages are located in limited productive areas, such as the villages of Toumboulana and Zangarata, where the production of onions (mainly), or other irrigated crops, is possible, and can represent an important source of revenue.

As we have seen in the first two chapters, class is another important axis of diversification. ADM society is highly stratified, and higher classes are wealthier, possess more and better lands, and have a larger web of social connections to rely upon in times of scarcity. The lowest social class is represented by the ex-slaves of the Tuareg, called Bouzou. Bouzou people can be found both in ethnically mixed villages

and in homogeneous Bouzou settlements, often installed on marginal lands. Better off Tuareg and Hausa people will do *chantier* work only if in real need, as the work is characterised as low status and is physically demanding. In this sense, food-for-work is 'self targeting', in that only those people who do not have enough means to fulfil their food needs will be willing to work for the Project.

Since 1997[56], with the establishment of the Division for the Promotion of Women, another institution connecting local villages and the Project became widespread, namely the '*groupement*' (organised group, local association). The majority of groups are 'women's groups', which today are almost 200. From local people's perspective, a noteworthy distinction between the *chantier* and the *groupement* is that the former is active for limited periods of time and in a few villages at a time: once a particular task has been accomplished, old *chantiers* will close and new ones will open elsewhere. Instead, the *groupement* is a group of individuals who chose to organise themselves around some income generating activities. Their official title is *Groupements d'Intérêt Economique* (GIE) and their legal recognition in Niger is a rather straightforward process (Yacouba 2000:16). *Groupements* rely on the support of the Project to form, obtain legal recognition, and carry out activities promoted by the PDR/ADM, mainly the Women and Development Division, and the Agronomy Division. Their activities include the production of seedlings, micro-credit, the management of mills, and various training courses (relating to literacy, hygiene, credit, etc) for women only, and testing improved seeds and inputs for men. While this is not a complete list of the *groupement*'s activities, it gives an idea of their functions and relations with the Project.

This chapter looks at different axes along which the people of the ADM have experienced their relations with the Project. It begins by describing the historical and social context of a socially marginal Bouzou village, Tinkirana Tounga. It then looks at the livelihood and subsistence strategies of different village households, giving examples of intra-household resource allocation and division of tasks, and focusing on the impact of project activities and food-for-work on local production and consumption

[56] There had always been local institutions like the '*groupement*' working with the project: in the first two phases, these were represented by the participatory institutions of Kountché's *Société de Développement*, but it is only with the establishment of the Women and Development Division that these organised groups of local people grew in number and carried out activities arranged by the PDR/ADM.

patterns. Moving from the household to project worksites, the chapter describes how different categories of workers carry out their tasks in a reforestation *chantier*. It then asks what is the significance for local labour of working for the PDR/ADM, and highlights gender variations in local perceptions of the Project. While women emphasise the food-for-work component, men are more likely to mention the environmental impacts of project activities. Both men and women are consistent in wanting to attract project intervention to their villages, as it provides a form of 'development revenue' in addition to the limited sources of income available. Finally, the chapter analyses the phenomenon of inter-village competition over project interventions and describes the various ways in which villages of different status, in this highly stratified context, attempt to 'capture' project works at the expense of their neighbours.

6.2 Tinkirana Tounga

Tinkirana Tounga is a relatively recent settlement, founded between 60 and 70 years ago by Boulla Atessa, its first village chief, who came from the nearby village of Tinkirana Thinkakatan (Tiemogo 1994; Paoletti and Taliani 1984; PDR/ADM, fiche du village; my interviews with Boulla Atessa and Idrissa Ichigu, 28 July 1995). Its inhabitants speak Tamas Agalal, a dialect of Tamasheq spoken by the Kel Agalal, the Tuareg group of origin of the people who today inhabit Tinkirana Tounga. The Kel Agalal[57] is a vassal 'tribe'[58] of the Kel Gress, one of the two major Tuareg constituencies present in the Ader Doutchi Region. The Kel Gress established their sovereignty on the Ader Doutchi Region in the first quarter of the 19th century (Hamani 1975:132). The four noble tribes (*imajeghen*) of the Kel Gress were the Tatmakkarat, the Ighayawan, the Kel Unwar, and the Tagayyis. With these noble tribes were associated tribes of free vassals (*imghad*): the Illabakan, the Inamagrawan, and the Kel Agalal. The Kel Agalal was attached to the noble Tagayyis Tribe (Hamani 1975:133). As mentioned in Chapter 3, tribes of *imghad* status could have (freed) groups of slave origin (*ighawallan*) as dependants, who lived in autonomous settlements where they practised small scale herding and agriculture, retaining weak ties of subordination to their patrons (ibid:134). Tinkirana Tounga is one of these settlements.

[57] According to Raulin, the term 'Kel Agalal' means 'people of the South' in Tamashek (1963a:33).

According to Tiemogo (1994), approximately 60 years ago the Kel Agalal noble men moved to Chadawanka, where they are now established, definitely leaving land and part of the animals to some of their dependants who remained behind and founded the village of Tinkirana Tounga, designating Boulla Atessa as their first village chief in 1956. Today, the livelihood standards of Tinkirana Tounga households are all relatively homogenous, and wealth and status differences are minimal internally. Even the village chief is a *primus inter pares*, selected, as I was told by other elders, because of his '*ilimi*', wisdom. From a regional perspective, Tinkirana Tounga's people are of low rank, and are commonly referred to as 'Bouzou' (a category designating the ex-slave castes of the Tuareg) by outsiders (cf. Tidjani-Alou 2000).

The UTE[59] of Tinkirana, comprises 6 village groups (3 administrative villages), for a total of about 1500 persons (881 in 1985), of whom approximately 650 live in the village of Tinkirana Tounga (Tiemogo 1994). The population is growing at an annual rate of 3.9% (ibid:14). The total area of the UTE is 81,4 km2, only 9-10% of which was cultivable before project interventions, following which this cultivable area has increased by 50% (Malam Manzo 1994).

Tiemogo's 1994 survey suggests that the UTE comprised 412.9 UBT, or 1,263 sheep and goats, 273 head of cattle, 35 camels, 16 horses, and 62 donkeys (1994:20). However, these figures are likely to be affected by the disastrous impact of the 1984/5 famine on local cattle and by epidemics which killed about half of the population of sheep and goats in 1992/93 (Tiemogo 1994:39). In general, villagers complain that, while in the past they used to have many animals, after the 1984/5 drought they were never able to reconstitute their original stock, because they had to sell their animals every year in order to buy cereals to feed their families (cf. Paoletti and Taliani 1984:164).

Before 1994, the UTE did not have a primary school, and none of its 250 children of school age had attended a 'modern' school. Accordingly, most of the

[58] The term 'tribus' is generally used in francophone literature on the Tuareg, designating a subdivision of the 'confederation', or larger Tuareg constituency. The definition of these social units (confederations and tribus) follow agnatic classificatory criteria.
[59] UTE : Unité Territoriale Elémentaire (Basic Territorial Unit), geo-morphological units used by the project to classify the local territory for the purposes of its environmental interventions.

population was illiterate, with the exception of a few men who had learned how to read and write as migrant workers. In 1994-5 the PDR/ADM built a school in Tinkirana Tounga, attended, at present, by some 90 students aged between 7 and 14. The biggest nearby village is Ibohamane (8 kilometers from Tinkirana Tounga), which hosts the most important market in Tinkirana Tounga's vicinities and the nearest health centre.

6.2.1 Perceptions of environmental crisis in Tinkirana Tounga

Tinkirana elders say that the hills surrounding their village used to be covered with a savannah-type forest where wild game could be hunted. The soil could not be seen through the dense shrubs, bush, and vegetation which covered the area. When the project arrived, the UTE of Tinkirana was severely affected by erosion. It did not contain any fertile valley lands (*fadama*), and three temporary water courses which form during the rainy season 'scraped away' organic residues, rendering the village of Tinkirana Tounga inaccessible for weeks, impoverishing the soil, and endangering village dwellings, only to disappear in one month or two, leaving almost no trace of water on site. In 1995 Tinkirana Tounga's water problem was rendered less acute by a small detention dam built by the PDR/ADM, which, in years with average rainfall levels, can hold water for about eight months after the rains.

The statements of Tinkirana Tounga's men, collected by Paoletti and Taliani in 1984, capture evocatively the sense of anxiety toward erosion phenomena and the fall in agricultural productivity: 'we can cultivate millet, but harvests are always more meagre because water does not 'stay' on our lands anymore' (Paoletti and Taliani 1984:168); 'in some places erosion has impoverished lands to the extent that they are now totally sterile'; 'having fields is not a problem, the problem is to have a harvest' (1984:163); 'water is the only medicine for our land' (1984:168); 'some of us have sold our animals to buy millet last year: what will we be able to sell this year?' (1984:168). Comparing the responses of the people of Tinkirana to those collected in other villages, Paoletti and Taliani conclude that 'the clarity and the accuracy of the technical terminology used by [Tinkirana's] men, who live in person an ecologic catastrophe of extreme magnitude, is certainly very surprising' (1984:164). The behaviour of Tinkirana Tounga's women also differed from what was observed in other villages. Paoletti and Taliani's (1984) research took place at a time when Kountché's propaganda had promoted the spread of women-groups and collective enterprises in the form of '*Associations Féminines*'.

Nevertheless, Tinkirana Tounga's women had not started any common initiative, justifying their atypical situation to the researchers in the following terms: 'We help each other as we can, but we do not engage in common works because each one of us has to help solve the problems of her family' (quoted in Paoletti and Taliani 1984:178).

The above suggests that the consequences of the 1968-73 and 1984-85 droughts were acute in Tinkirana Tounga, with a considerable impact on the livelihood of its inhabitants who are able to recall a time when the local production was not only enough to feed their families, but part of which could also be sold at the market. Today, the great majority of households do not produce enough food to meet its members' subsistence needs over the year, and seasonal migration is universal amongst young and adult men (Paoletti and Taliani 1984; Simonelli 1994).

Because of the severe conditions in which it found itself during drought years, the UTE of Tinkirana has received a particularly high concentration of project interventions. It is possible to classify different UTEs according to intervention 'intensity' by comparing the relative cost of rehabilitation works. Compared to the average expense per UTE of FCFA 167,239,411, by April 2000, the UTE of Tinkirana had 'absorbed' FCFA 426,870,800. If one takes into account the relative population density of different UTEs, while the average cost/inhabitant of project interventions in the entire intervention area is FCFA 55,927, the cost per inhabitant in the UTE of Tinkirana amounts to FCFA 325,856. In the difficult situation described above, the availability of WFP food-for-work rations was highly valued by men and women equally.

Due to the high incidence of male out-migration, in the first years of project intervention in the UTE, women comprised 90% of the local labour force on the Project's rehabilitation sites. Hence, the women of Tinkirana soon became a good example of the '*Femme de Keita*' model (cf. Chapter 7), and their efforts on project work sites gained them official recognition in the press. One of them, Hajiya, was symbolically decorated by the Head of State, President Kountché. At the same time, the acute food deficit and the lack of alternative income sources due to the village's marginal geographic location, made food-for-work a highly valued resource.

Paoletti and Taliani suggest that the extreme vulnerability of Tinkirana Tounga's livelihoods plays a crucial role in reducing intrahousehold and other social tensions: 'in the case of Tinkirana, the incumbent threat of famine and the reduction of cultivable lands appeases all [potential] social conflicts' (1984:183). This may, at least partly, account for the 'cooperative behaviour' between genders which characterises the relations between Tinkirana Tounga's men and women and the PDR/ADM until 1999. In other terms, in a context where different members have hardly any choice but to pool their incomes and resources so as to meet the household's subsistence needs, project activities with women, including women's work on the environmental work sites remunerated in WFP rations, are, really, benefiting the household as a whole (rather than individual women workers). In this sense, high vulnerability to food deficit tends to contain potential intrahousehold conflicts over individual control of resources (cf. Sen 1990). The following section analyses the function of WFP rations in Tinkirana Tounga's household livelihood strategies and intrahousehold resource allocation.

6.3 Livelihood of Bouzou Households in Tinkirana Tounga and Impact of Food-for-work.

On one of the first occasions I went to Tinkirana Tounga I was introduced to Hajiya. Hajiya must have been in her fifties and, after President Kountché's visit to the PDR/ADM, she had been decorated for her valuable efforts in the Project work sites, and she was awarded a ticket to visit Mecca. As soon as we were introduced, she took me by the hand and brought me to her compound. Inside the enclosure, she disappeared into the hut, and came back with a piece of cloth in her hands. She opened it and showed me a medal. Then she gave me some papers in French, attesting her contribution to the rehabilitation of Niger's environment. Her name was handwritten on the certificate, and she told me with evident pride that the medal had been given to her for her work on the project work sites. The President himself had allowed her to travel to Mecca by airplane. She showed me her hands. Her palms were as hard as wood. She said women had worked hard in the Project (*mata su yi aiki tukuru tare da projé Keita*). Another woman, somewhat younger than Hajiya, showed me the hills surrounding Tinkirana, where project anti-erosion bunds could be seen; then she also showed me her calloused hands, worn out by heavy manual work, and told me 'it is us, women, who did that job' (*mu, mata, mun yi aikin can*). Soon, most of the women present were showing me their hands, wanting me to feel their coarseness.

6.3.1 Issouf's household

Salamatou is 32, and she worked on the PDR/ADM *chantiers* on every occasion the project recruited labour in Tinkirana Tounga. During the last two project interventions, she used to work on the intervention sites 4 days a week, obtaining her daily food ration. In her household, Salamatou shares the burden of domestic chores and childcare with her co-wife; she participates in all agricultural activities; and is responsible for looking after three goats, which she does not own.

She is the first wife of Issouf, who has taken a second wife after 10 years of marriage with Salamatou. Their household is composed of 9 members, 6 of whom are children under 15 (three of them are less than 6 years old). Salamatou has four children, and the younger wife, Fatimata, has recently given birth to a girl. Salamatou and Fatimata lost one child at childbirth and one child at 8 months, respectively. A 10-year-old niece of their husband lives with them.

Their lifestyle is modest, but my own surveys suggest that Issouf's household falls in Tinkirana Tounga's average. They rely on the production of 6 fields, with a total area of 3.5 hectares, on which they cultivate millet (approximate yearly production: 0.800 tons) and sorghum (approximate yearly production: 0.500 tons). Of these 3.5 hectares, a field of 0.25 hectares belongs to Fatimata, who has inherited it from her father and on which spices and vegetables are grown; and they obtained another field of 0.75 hectares from the PDR/ADM's redistribution of locally rehabilitated lands. A field of 2.5 hectares belongs to Issouf and the remaining 1 hectare (divided into two separate 0.5 hectares fields) belongs to Issouf's classificatory brothers who no longer reside in Tinkirana. Issouf and his family cultivate it and consume its produce without paying anything to the owners, but I was told that were they to return to Tinkirana they would take their fields back. Issouf used to own 20 sheep, 10 goats, and 2 horses, but all the sheep died of disease in 1990-1993. Today, he retains 2 horses and 6 goats.

Salamatou says that the production of their lands is not sufficient to nourish them throughout the whole year, and they consume all the cereals of the food-for-work rations and use the earnings derived from Issouf's work as a migrant in Nigeria almost entirely to complement food production on their fields. She sells the other components

of the WFP rations, and gets involved in a small scale foodstuff sale. Issouf works in Nigeria every year for 2 to 4 months, earninga total of approximately FCFA 80,000. They do not use agricultural inputs on their fields, nor do they employ paid labour, but all children above 5 contribute to agricultural tasks and livestock. None of them goes to school.

If we take 250 kilograms per annum as the average cereal consumption needs per person (Sassi 1991:17), the quantity of cereals which Issouf's household should dispose of in order to feed its 13 members over the year would amount to 2,250 kg. The total production of Issouf's fields amounts to approximately 1,300 kg, and the household's food deficit is about 1,000 kg. As the average cost of one kilogram of millet at Ibohamane's market is approximately FCFA 100 (see Table 3), Issouf's household should earn about FCFA 100,000 in order to become self sufficient. Issouf's migration revenue is about FCFA 80,000. The cash value of WFP rations is about FCFA 20,000 per worker per month. These rough calculations show that Issouf's household has to spend almost its entire income on consumption[60].

I first met Salamatou on a project work site, and then went to visit her on other occasions at her place in Tinkirana. One day I walked back from the *chantier* to Tinkirana with her. Food-for-work had been distributed and one of her sons, who had joined her at the distribution, was accompanying her carrying the ration. At the outskirts of Tinkirana, she and other women returning from the *chantier* stopped at a communal pounding site, emptied their FFW millet into mortars, and began preparing the dinner with the help of children. I asked her if she didn't sell the cereals, as I had seen her and others sell other components of the WFP ration. In Tinkirana, she answered, everybody 'eats' the ration (*mutane suna ci taimakon abinci*). Other women agreed, one of them mimicking the act of eating the grains from her mortar, causing the others to laugh. People are too poor to sell cereals (mostly millet), but they often sell the tinned meat, and sometimes even the oil and sugar, to buy more grain and some meat for the sauce. The profits made from the sale tend to be used for women's independent food-sales business, rather than for domestic consumption. The Project is really 'a help' (*taimako*),

[60] A more accurate analysis should take into account several factors, e.g. not all family members are present in Tinkirana throughout the entire year; children are breastfed until they are 2 years old and young children's cereal requirements are less than those of adults; livestock is likely to play a more important economic role than what is claimed at the interviews; women's profits through their economic activities; etc.

and she wished there were *chantiers* every year. All the village women I heard were consistent on this point.

I heard women asking project staff to open *chantiers* in their villages endless times. Women's preferred project interventions were the *chantiers* and the literacy courses, as these were the only interventions for which food-for-work was distributed. Although it is mostly women who would work in the *chantiers*, men and women alike wanted *chantier* work in their village.

6.3.2 Mohamed's household: a wealthy household

Mohamed is considered to be amongst the most active and successful men in Tinkirana Tounga. His household is probably the wealthiest in the village. Today he is in his mid-forties and does not migrate anymore, but as a younger man he used to be considered a '*grand exodant*'. Mohamed is the classificatory brother (FBS or parallel cousin) of the village chief, but due to his personal charisma and personal achievements, his influence in Tinkirana is not inferior to the Chief's, and when issues related to project intervention are discussed in the village, Mohamed is an unquestioned authority. Mohamed has always been the *chef de chantier* of Tinkirana's intervention sites.

In all project initiatives, Mohamed was always involved. He has three wives and 13 children, two of which are adopted (four children died in the past). All his children attend, have attended, or will attend, Tinkirana's 'modern school' built in 1994 by the PDR/ADM. Mohamed's household has 5 fields, a total of almost 5 hectares. The total production of his fields is about 1.5 tons of millet and 1.2 tons of sorghum per annum. On four fields he cultivates millet and sorghum, on the fifth one, of approximately 1 hectare, situated in the immediate surroundings of the water detention dam built by the project, Mohamed has planted all sorts of vegetables and fruit trees, and even some sugar cane, and he has dug an elaborate system of irrigation canals throughout it. He is solely responsible for working on this field, whereas work on the other fields is carried out by all household members, and rarely employs some waged labourers. Mohamed owns 2-3 head of cattle and about 20 sheep and goats. He gives his cattle to a village herder over the dry months of the year, whereas his wives and children guard the small ruminants and poultry. Mohamed is a *marabout*: he reads some Arabic and teaches some Islamic verses. He is also a part-time tailor, a skill which he has learned in the

West African Coast, and he earns FCFA 10,000 (UK£10) per month when he works for the Project as a *chef de chantier.*

Although Mohamed's fields produce about 2,700 kg of cereals per annum, his 17-member household would need 4,250 kg per annum to reach subsistence levels. A deficit of 1,550 kg (equivalent to approximately FCFA 155,000) must be covered through other income-generating activities (the product of Mohamed's off-season field; Mohamed's job as tailor and *marabout*; the activities of other family members; livestock). Revenues from cattle are likely to be substantially more important than what I recorded at interviews: in Tinkirana, as in many villages in the ADM, herding used to be more important than farming as a source of income. Mohamed's sons will soon be old enough to start practising seasonal migration, but they will have to save part of their revenue for future marriage expenses. Today, his 9-year-old son is the best student of Tinkirana's modern school, and Mohamed hopes he will find a well remunerated job in the capital and send some money back home.

Mohamed's wives are responsible for domestic chores and do limited work on the household fields (they participated in sowing). Each one of them has received a small parcel of about 0.2 hectares from Mohamed, where they cultivate sorghum, *niébé*, *gombo* and a few spices. Not simultaneously, each of Mohamed's wives has worked on the project work sites, for about one day per week. The oldest wife, Fatchima, weaves about 5 mats per month, some of which she sells when she or one of her co-wives visit local markets. The most experienced in project work is Geshtu. She had been married to a poorer, now deceased, man, before marrying Mohamed (the two 'adoptive' children are her children from her first union) and used to work on project sites 3 or 4 days a week. Today, she says, she is able to retain a part of what she earns by selling tinned meat. She makes a small profit from this sale, and she uses it to make gifts to friends and relatives on special occasions. In her first marriage, however, she could not keep anything for herself and used to be ashamed of her poverty, which obliged her to ask for help from relatives and generous neighbours.

It is only relatively wealthy village women who are able to retain part of the returns from their project-related activities. They invest part of this income in small scale foodstuff sale amongst neighbours. Sometimes, they buy goats, make them breed,

and sell a goat when they need cash to pursue other economic activities or buy gifts. Some women told me that a woman may save money secretly and buy goats which she would give her family or trusted friends to keep for her, in order to retain some personal possession and buy herself what she may need without having to ask her husband. But only women with 'bad husbands' would do this. Poorer women say that if they needed money for small gifts, their husbands would give it to them. Otherwise, women could use their earnings from selling mats or foodstuff at local markets or at neighbours' houses.

6.4 Working for the Project on the *Chantiers* (*Aikin Gandari*)

6.4.1 Work organisation on project worksites

There are four main different ways to organise worksites, according to the type of project activity carried out. There are the reforestation trenches (*trenchées*) and dune-fixing (*fixation de dunes*) worksites, under the control of the Environment Division; and the hydraulic work (*'gabions'*) and the anti-desertification bunds (*banquettes*) worksites under the control of the *Génie Rural* Division. The labour force comprises volunteers from the villages in which the works take place, remunerated by World Food Program (WFP or PAM) food-for-work rations. Worksites are called '*chantiers*', in French, or '*(aikin) gandari*' in Hausa.

Local villagers refer to different types of *chantiers* with different terms. Hausa names identify *chantiers* with the types of soil or with the geographic areas where they are carried out: hence, reforestation trenches, usually dug on the slopes, are the works carried out on the '*tsakoni*' (hill, slope), and sometimes they are called '*aikin ramu*'. The fixing of moving dunes is the work carried out on the '*tuduni*' (dune) or '*tudunin kasa*' (dune-soil). The hydraulic works can either be called '*darmun ghiabbu'*, meaning 'fixing the water-course', or according to the specific task carried out within the *chantier*: '*aikin doutchi*', literally 'stones work', refers to the task of assembling stones and filling gabion weirs with them (pictures 27, 29, 30, 31); and '*aikin waya'*, or 'wire work', refers to tasks related to the positioning of gabion weirs (pictures 20, 21). Finally, anti-erosion bunds are built both on glacis lands (*fakonkoni*), and on plateaux (*dabbuga*), although their dimension varies on glacis and plateaux. In general, work carried out on the plateaux can be termed '*aikin dabbuga* or *dabagi*' and on the glacis,

'*aikin fakonkoni*'. Also here, stones are assembled to strengthen the bunds, and the stone carrying can be called '*aikin doutchi*', 'stones work'.

Activities are decided on the basis of the PDR/ADM's methodology, which conducts works of environmental rehabilitation organised from upstream to downstream sub-catchment systems. Moreover, the PDR/ADM continuously receives demands of intervention from villages in the intervention area (see figure 2), which it catalogues and which influence the selection of intervention sites, provided that they conform with the project's methodology.

At the opening of a *chantier*, an agreement, written in French and Hausa, (*Takardar Yarjejeniyar Shirin Ayyukan Gyaran Karkara*) is signed between the PDR/ADM, the village chief and an Administrative Authority (usually the Vice-Prefect or *Sous-Préfet*). Food rations are also managed according to an agreement between the PDR/ADM and the village, signed by the village chief (*hakimi*). Two books are kept, a participation book (*takardar sunan ma'aikata*) and a storehouse book (*takardar ma'ajiya*). The equipment (*kayan aiki*) for the conduct of project-related activities is provided by the Project for the duration of the *chantier*.

On the *chantiers*, there is a minimal differentiation of tasks, which varies slightly with the type of *chantier*. There is always a worksite chief (*chef de chantier* or *shugaban gandari*), who ideally should be a man if the majority of workers are men, or a woman if most labourers are women. During the First Phase of the Project, the worksite chief was almost always a man, but the policy changes in favour of female *chantier* chiefs when it was realized that the vast majority of labourers were women (cf. Chapter 7). There may be a respected elder (*lattizo*) who supervises the works and advises the *chantier* chief if any problem occurs. There is usually also an assistant to the *chantier* chief who can read and write and takes note of the participation. On the hydraulic works *chantiers*, there are a few workers who have received some extra training to coordinate the filling (*remplissage*) of the gabion weirs. And on the reforestation worksites, some workers (called '*traceurs*') have to define the positioning and shape of the trenches. The workers should be between 13 and 50 years of age.

6.4.2 'Aikin gandari' (chantier work)

Reforestation trench *chantiers* (see pictures 25 and 26) are organised by the Environment Division. The policy is that each worker has to build one trench, and once his/her work is accomplished, he/she can go home. However, in practice the rules are often altered to fit the needs of the participants.

On the *chantier* of Tinkirana, two older women were working in pairs, one was digging for some time, while the other sat next to her, crouching on the earth, with her chin against the back of her hand, and her elbow on her knee. The silence was broken by a joke: the one who was working in the trench, started removing earth from the trench with her hands, and pretended to throw it at the other one, telling her that all she did was watch her work, and that she worked a lot less, she just sat around. They laughed. The other woman answered that when she was digging she did a lot more in a shorter time, because she was stronger. Then they switched roles. No one had a watch, so they didn't time each other. I noticed that the one who made the joke, who seemed somewhat younger than the other, worked a bit more, but it didn't cause resentment between them. I found out afterwards that one of them was the sister, and the other, the elder wife of Aghali, who was not migrating anymore, he was just staying at home, while his wife went to work on the Project worksite. The sister was married to another man in the same village, and after the distribution of the food-for-work they shared the ration. Their husbands were engaged in other activities. One of them went to local markets twice a week and tried to sell small livestock; he sometimes sold other people's livestock too, for a small part of the price. He was not a specialised dealer, he was just 'doing a favour' for his relatives and neighbours. He had never worked on the Project's *chantiers*. When I asked him why, he answered: 'Why should I do so, if I can have my wife go?'. It was a 'project rule' that only one person per household could work in the same *chantier* at a time. It seemed to be a 'local rule' that that person had to be a woman or a youth.

In another trench, a young woman was digging with her baby of only a few months tied to her back. At around noon, she was half inside the trench. Her name was Fati and she was the only wife of a migrant worker in Nigeria. She had almost completed her task, which she had begun around 7 am. Under her skirt, appeared thin, stick-like legs, which contrasted with her bare large feet. She had no shoes, and the skin of her feet was thick, rough, and covered with red earth. The baby cried, under the heat

of the midday sun, and she stopped her work to turn him to the front of her body and breastfeed him for a while. Then, she adjusted him on her back again, tying him firmly with a cloth knotted above her breasts, trying to keep his head covered from the sun and protected from the dust. I asked her if she couldn't leave the baby at home with someone. She said her older girl was still too little to take care of her brother. She had left her daughter, of about three years old, with the neighbours. She was still breastfeeding this baby, and could keep him with her while working. Besides, she argued, the boy was still tiny and not too heavy on her back: she wished he'd grow fatter and bigger, then she would leave him with his sister who was a big girl, thank God. She thought she would do so by the time the boy would be about two. The boy was not an obstacle to her work: look, she showed me the trench, she would be one of the first to finish her work and go home.

An old woman had brought her grandson to help her. In reality, the boy was doing all the work, and she was just standing there, looking at him. He must have been eight or nine. At his age, it was normal for him to share almost the same workload and responsibilities of an adult in all types of tasks, and he dug the trench energetically, despite the Project's regulations. The grandmother would give him suggestions and show him where to dig. She helped a bit with taking the earth out from the trench and spreading it around the hole. I asked her why didn't she send the boy on his own. She said that she was the worker here, and he was simply helping her. He didn't know how to work, he was learning the job. But next time there would be a *chantier*, perhaps he'd do the work alone. She was the one who would collect the food ration, but they'd use it together as they all lived in the household of the boy's father, who was in Nigeria at present. His mother was pregnant, and was at home preparing food.

While the majority of the labourers were young women, about one fifth of the trenches were being dug by boys, who must have been between eight and sixteen. The oldest boys were working in the same area and they were joking frequently amongst themselves, throwing a bit of earth back in the trench of their peers and stealing their tools while they were emptying the trench. The *chantier* chief rarely brought them back to order, as their work proceeded steadfastly. There was no pressure on the workers, all they had to do was to finish their task, and each could go at the pace adequate to his/her age and strength. Some people made an effort to complete the work early, others did not

seem to care. It was mostly young women who strove to get the work done quickly, as they had to go back to their domestic tasks, especially if they had no co-wives or daughters.

Women had some work-songs and at times one of them would start singing, followed by others who sang and clapped their hands. They often sang while going to or coming back from the worksite, or for the arrival of an unexpected guest, such as Carotti, coming to follow the works. Carotti was often warmly welcomed on his visits to the field, and women sang for him and greeted him repeating his name, smiling and waving at him. They surrounded him, stretching out their arms and pulling each other to shake his hand and say a few words to him. At the end of the work, most workers would walk back home, usually not more than two kilometers away from the worksite. If tractors and bulldozers had been working on the site and were returning to the garage at night, all the young girls would try to get a lift from the driver, who would load the machine with young and good looking women and joke with them on the way.

In the *chantiers* for the construction of hydraulic structures there was a certain division of labour by gender. Almost only women (and a few boys) carried the stones needed to fill the gabion weirs, holding red stones of various sizes on their head as they walked. These worksites required a greater use of machines, and all the drivers and mechanics were men.

The drivers formed a cohesive group of about 60 people; they had all been recruited locally, and they displayed a certain partisan solidarity and pride. Sometimes they would spend some weeks, or months in a village near the worksite. There was plenty of gossip and stories about their stay in guest villages, where they established a network of social relations, that often involved flirting with local women which sometimes ended up in marriages and (legitimate or illegitimate) births. Machine drivers were aged about 30, and they tended to specialise in operating specific machines: graders, bull-dozers, and tractors. They relied on a small group of experienced electricians and mechanics who worked at Keita's garage. The garage contained spare parts to the value of US$ 1.5 million, making it one of the first, if not the first, garage in the country. The Project had about 40 tractors, 40 trucks, and 30 machines to move the earth. It also had 30 jeeps. When I did my fieldwork, only about

60% of these machines were in good condition, and about 10-20% were broken. All the machines were Fiat, and some of the local mechanics, about 30 people, had been trained in Turin (Italy, Fiat headquarters).

6.5 Significance of *Aikin Gandari* and Food-for-work (*Taimakon Abinci*): the Gender Factor

6.5.1 'Muna son aiki' (we want work): women's perspectives on project interventions

Many of the workers in the *chantiers* referred to the Project as '*aiki*', 'work'. In villages where *chantiers* had not been opened for two or three consecutive years, the women repeated again and again '*muna son aiki*', we want work, 'because it is useful' (*shina da amfani*), 'because it makes us happy' (*muna jin dadi*), 'because it brings us rations' (*an banmu taimako*).

Rahamatou was a woman in her thirties. She had worked in project *chantiers* and was a member of the women's group of her village, Tinkirana Ibarogan. Ibarogan is geographically close to Tinkirana Tounga, and belongs to the same conglomerate of villages carrying the name 'Tinkirana', but the two villages have different historical origins, and relations between them are tense. Rahamatou is an active and determined woman. When she talks, the tone of her voice is loud, and she is always ready to defend her perspective vehemently, as I've seen her do in front of other women as well as men. She is a widow with two children, and hasn't remarried yet. Her husband died of disease three years ago, and she lives with his family. One of her children, both boys, is seven, the other five.

Rahamatou works hard to support four dependants. Her sons can work on the fields which used to be their father's, but she invites the neighbours' unmarried sons to do communal work on her field in the rainy season. In return, she offers them free food (a form of *gaya*). For four years, she has worked on the Project's *chantiers*, but when I was there, it had been a while since there had been an opened worksite in Tinkirana Ibarogan. 'We want work!' (*muna son aiki!*), said Rahmatou, when I asked her what she thought about working with the Project.

> We want work, we are always ready to work, tell them to come to Ibarogan! The women's group (*kungiyar mata*) is active in our village. We have a committee of hygiene (*tsabta*), we have a

small and a big fund (*karama da babban asusun*). With the small one we help each other in the village (*karami nan shi ke, sabo da matsalar gari*), with the big one, we take credit on turn (*sai mu bashi*). When the Project worked here, they brought us millet [food rations], they brought us machines, they brought tools (*an banmu hatsi, an banmu inji, and banmu kaya*), and we did our work and these things were helpful to us (*su yi amfani da mu*). But now all the other villages have had new *chantiers*, except for us. Many works (*ayukka*) have been carried out in Tounga, has the Project forgotten Ibarogan? (*Furogé ya mance Ibarogan?*) If I could, I would go to work in other *chantiers*.

Would she work without food rations, I asked. 'No, I wouldn't, I need them to feed my family (*iyalina*). The Project gives rations for the work, why should I work without them?' She followed the literacy course (*yaki da jahilici*), I said, would she continue the course if there were no rations with it? No, she wouldn't.

No woman I met was willing to work in the worksites without the rations. As some of them put it: 'would *you* work for nothing?'. Rahmatou's words, '*muna son aiki*': we want to work, were a refrain in every village I visited. Because nobody, however, was willing to work without rations, it was clear that the main reason why women wanted the Project to open worksites in their villages was to have access to the rations. There were a few exceptions with regards to literacy courses. In general, a few young and ambitious women argued that they would follow literacy training with or without the rations. In one case, the woman who said so was a white Tuareg noble woman, the wife of a relatively wealthy Tuareg. In the other it was the president of the women's group of Tinkirana Tounga, Rakiata. Both women had young children who would soon be of school age and they intended to send them to school. The exceptions, therefore, included women motivated by the perspective of being able one day to put literacy skills to some use (working as the women group's president, belonging to an elite, helping their children to study). For other women, especially older women, who could not reatain anything from adult literacy courses, food rations were the main, or only, stimulus to participate in courses and work in the *chantiers*.

6.5.2 Men and the Project's impact on productive resources

Men's position with regards to project interventions was different. The Project's impact on productive resources was more significant for local men than for women, as men have greater access to, and control over, land and cattle than women (cf. above, Chapter 3; Cremona 1986; Bayard 1995). As described in Chapter 3, migration for men is not only a financially more profitable option, but also an ideologically sanctioned

'rite of passage' which, in the Ader Doutchi, turns adolescents into adult men ready for marriage. Being recognised as a '*grand exodant*', i.e. a man who has acquired substantial experience of living and working abroad, is a sign of status. Despite husbands' long periods of absence from their villages, and the responsibility accrued to wives while the men are migrants, the household's productive resources belong to the male household head. Women control and own a considerably smaller proportion of resources than men. As a consequence, men displayed a greater awareness of the Project's environmental impacts. When asked to comment upon the Project works, they would almost invariably mention the creation of new water resources and the increase in vegetation.

Houssa was Mohamed's father (see above, 'Mohamed's Household'), a respected old man in Tinkirana. His brothers, Boulla and Idrissa, were, respectively, Tinkirana's village chief and the *marabout*, or religious leader. He was a jovial, eloquent, elderly man. Through his white beard, his lips could always be seen smiling calmly, and his eyes had an amused and penetrating look. He was considered a man of great experience. He had been away for many years, travelling and working in Nigeria and sending money back to his family. When he came back, as a mature man, and settled in Tinkirana, his son Mohamed had already started following his steps as a '*grand exodant*'.

One afternoon toward the end of my stay in Tinkirana, I was visiting Houssa in his compound. A neighbour was also there, and women (Houssa's wife, the neighbour's wife and some daughters) were preparing food in the 'cooking corner'. Houssa and the neighbour were eating some kola nuts which I had brought to thank them for their hospitality and assistance during my fieldwork in their village. The neighbour's child of about three wanted to play with a young chicken in Houssa's courtyard, but the chicken kept running away while the child chased it angrily. After a while, the child lost his patience and broke into tears. Houssa laughed at the exasperation of his young guest, threw some grains on the earthen floor, and gave a fistful of grains to the child. The chicken went to peck them, and the child amused himself feeding it for a while. I was watching the scene sitting next to Houssa in the shade of a tree. I asked Houssa if he could tell me the story of the Project.

The neighbour, who had been sitting quietly, amused by the child's struggle with the chicken, exclaimed: 'The works the Project did for us are many: it built the dam for us, the trenches, the [anti-erosion] bunds, the school, the store-house... what has it not done for us? (*an yi muku barrage, an yi muku tranché, an yi banquette, an yi lacole, and yi magazé, mi ya ba yi muku ba?*)' The woman grinding millet said '*Alhamdulillahi!*' (praise be to God), as a sign of agreement. Then Houssa began talking.

> In the past there were many trees in Tinkirana (*Itace a zamanin da suna da yawa*) and people used to hunt wild animals who hid in them. The hills were covered with thick bush. But then many problems were brought by the drought (*matsalolin da ranin ya taho*): the people suffered for lack of food (*rishin abinci*), the desertification reduced the fodder (*hamada ta kawo ragewar cimakar dabbobi*) and then followed the death of the animals (*mutuwar dabbobi*). The trees which covered the hills decreased (*itatuwa suna ragewa*) and the (temporary) river course became deeper (*ghiabbu suna kara girma*). Many men migrated (*exode: dandi*). And the village people couldn't prevent the destruction of the soil (*mutanen gari ban iya kiyayewa tabarbarewar kaza ba*).
>
> Thank God, the Project (*Furojé*) came and restored the land (*Mun gode Allah, Furojé ya zo ya gyara kaza*). It did many different things. It planted trees in the hills (*dashen icce bias tsakoni*), and it planted trees on the dunes (*dashen icce bias tuduni*): it planted so as to stop the wind's erosion (*gakuwar iska*), and it fixed the [temporary] river (*darmun ghiabbu*) so that the water would stay for the people and the animals.
>
> The Project opened a *chantier* (*a buda aikin gandari*) in [Tinkirana] Tounga, and distributed food rations (*rabon taimako*). In the *chantier*, people worked for the preparation of anti-erosion bunds (*tahanyar darmun fakonkoni*), for which machines are needed for subsoiling and for carrying the stones (*sai an yi aiki da injuna don su daddabe kasa da kuma daukan duwatsu*). Many women (*mata*) worked in the land rehabilitation activities (*aiki raya kasa*) and got food rations (*taimakon abinci*) to bring home. Also Hama did a lot of work with the Project! [Hama Houssa, his son, who coordinated *chantier* work for several years in Tinkirana Tounga].
>
> The work of village people was to gather stones (*daukan duwatsu*) on the hills and load them on the trucks (*su zuba su cikin manyan motoci*) and then cover the anti-erosion bunds with them (the stones) to make them resistant. In a *chantier* they also built the dam (*tabki*) using stones (*duwatsu*) and trucks (*babban motoci*). The Project build a road (*hanya*) and a school (*makaranta*) for the children of our village.
>
> Trees started growing again on the plateaux and the hills (*cikin fakonkoni da dabbuga itace su yi ta girma*). Harvests of sorghum and millet on the barren glacis gave confidence to the people (*girbi na hatsi da dawa bias fakonkoni ya kawo jindadi da yarda cikin zucciyar manoma*).'

He stopped. During his talk the neighbour and the woman interjected expressions of agreement many times, saying '*gaskiya ne*' (that's true), '*alhamdulillahi*' (praise be to God), or simply clicking their tongues against their throats.

Houssa's presentation of the Project's activities resembled the accounts I recorded in other villages; it was perhaps somewhat more precise, more technical in its descriptions. I thanked him warmly for letting me record this and other accounts. He replied that he 'wouldn't be like the chicken' (*ba zan yi kaman kaji ba*). I was puzzled,

and asked him what he meant. He explained, pointing at the sandy ground where the chicken had been pecking the grains fed to him by the neighbour's child, that after they peck, chicken cover up the signs left by their pecking rubbing their heads against the sand. Chicken are not grateful, as they hide the evidence that they received the grains from someone. Houssa wanted to say that he welcomed the questions of an Italian researcher, as Italy had helped their village, and his willingness to help me was a sign of gratitude toward the Project.

6.5.3 Men and women's attempts to attract the Project to their villages

Men had more formalised procedures than women to try to attract project activities to their villages. The village chief and the elders wrote official demands (*demandi*) for new project activities addressed to the project manager. Although after the spread of the *groupement* institution some women-groups started addressing letters to the Chief of the Women and Development Division (cf. figure 2), in general women seemed to prefer informal lines of communication (personal contacts, meetings, verbal demands).

Members of project staff would visit villages to follow up the state of infrastructures built in previous years, or to survey the situation, or to respond to the villagers' demands. Their visits were important occasions in the village. When the village had been informed about the visit in advance, the chief might convene a small party of elders and present active men. Sometimes, the Women's Group Committee would also participate, and some old women, but women would mainly mobilise on the occasion of visits of members of the Women and Development Division. Also these visits were sought as occasions to try to persuade 'project people' (*mutanen na projet*) to carry out works around the village.

Gender variations in the reasons why project works were appreciated and desired eventually converged in a common attempt to attract project activities to a village. In this regard, men and women shared the same interest, whereas there was a competition between villages over project interventions. This explains a sort of rivalry between villages characterised by the adoption of different stratagems to 'capture' the Project's attention. Official demands, signed by the village chief and often written by the teacher of the nearest school or one of the few literate community members were the most common action.

In some exceptional cases, some villages tried to express the urgency of the problems they were facing by volunteering to work without food rations, or by beginning to perform the initial tasks of an hydraulic structure *chantier*, such as accumulating stones in scattered piles, as a sign of their need for project interventions:

> there is the example of a village which worked the entire year but didn't want the food rations. In Boussa Ragué, they asked for technical support and materials (gabion weirs, etc.), but they said that they were even willing to pay money for the project work. Of course Elhadji Abdou said that it was not necessary, but they are really willing to work because they understood the utility of the work.

commented Nasser, an experienced project agent.

Entertaining project staff on occasional follow up visits was another device, which varied according to the hierarchical status of the village. Below I give two examples of the attempts to induce the PDR/ADM to carry out specific activities in the village of Mansala Kel Gress and Tinkirana Tounga. In the former, the initiative was led by the high-ranking Tuareg Regional Chief, and in the latter it was a communal effort on the part of both men and women in Tinkirana to quite literally 'direct' the Project's selection of place and activity. Tinkirana's people accepted the Project's initial wish to test an operation to promote women's status in their village, but then tried to turn it into an operation which they deemed more suitable to their needs.

6.6 The Hierarchy Factor in Inter-village Competition Over the 'Development Revenue'

Villagers do their best to convince project staff to intervene in their villages. Sometimes, they offer food, and thank the Project for its previous interventions, expressing satisfaction over the results. They may also present a list of problems afflicting their village. Sometimes they complain about damage to project infrastructures, and ask for assistance to repair an earthfill dam, or to strengthen some anti-erosion bunds. At the project delegation's departure, they usually insist project agents accept one or two chickens, or a woven mat, or some gift as a sign of gratitude. Project visits offer an occasion to try to attract the Project's attention to the problems of one's village, with the aim of obtaining new interventions. These are sought for the benefits that accrue to the village, such as new infrastructures, impacts on the

environment's productivity, and access to food-for-work (food rations being particularly appreciated by women). I refer to these benefits as 'development revenue' (cf. Bierschenk et al. 2000:34), as they are made available locally due to the presence of a development project. To the people of the ADM, who are not exposed to macro-level development narratives, 'development' comes down to those concrete facets of its activities that influence their lives directly. It is at this level that local agency is most apparent, mainly in their attempts to secure a portion of the 'development revenue' for their village.

6.6.1 The Chef du Groupement Kel Gress' requests to the Project

An example of this type of attempt is the speech of the Chief of the *Groupement*[61] of Mansala Kel Gress, of the Kel Unwar noble tribe of the Kel Gress confederation. This old white Tuareg, thin and physically fragile, claims descent from the Prophet Mohamed, and his ancestors were powerful landlords in the region, which is now characterised by the presence of many hamlets of freed slaves (cf. Chapters 2 and 3). In his court, he listens to the voice of his son who works for the Project's radio station, and remembers the past glory of the nomadic Tuareg warriors. His mother tongue is Tamasheq, but he can speak French fluently. Nevertheless, due to a speech problem his words are like a continuous nasal sound, and his speech is hard to decipher. One of his courtiers seems to have learned his master's way of expressing himself, and helps during conversations. On the occasion of a visit of a project delegation, he had once prepared a written speech, which he read aloud, and then gave the text to project agents.

He welcomed his guests with a small banquet featuring dishes, cutlery, and noodles, showing that he knew how to entertain a party which included some Europeans, and he offered bottled drinks, to avoid his European guests the embarrassment of refusing to drink local water. After the meal and the preliminary courtesy exchanges, he read his speech (cf. figure 3):

> Sirs, your great institution the Keita Project has enormously contributed to the general development of my region, and in particular to the considerable decrease of the sufferings of my populations. Your actions, such as the reforestation trenches *chantiers*, the adult courses, the

[61] Here the term 'Groupement' does not refer to a participatory institution, but to an administrative category to distinguish regions traditionally inhabited by settled populations (called '*cantons*'), and regions characterised by nomadic lifestyle (called '*groupements*').

construction of buildings, etc., are highly profitable to the populations. For this, please accept all my sincere and grateful thanks. May God the all-powerful, the merciful, bless you.

With regards to the requests, they are as follows:
Repair of the doors and windows of the school of Mansala Kel Gress;
Construction of a toilet cabinet and installation of a rural pump;
Completion of the well (gift of Saudi Arabia);
Construction of a block of classes in Gabassa Kel Gress (creation of a school);
Repair of the small car route connecting the royal palace to the lateritis route with heavy car traffic.

Please do accept, sirs responsible [for the Project], the expression of my most grateful feelings.

The approach of the Tuareg Chief was one of someone confident in his power and authority. He addressed the Project's coordinator as an equal, and expressed both his appreciation for previous project interventions in 'his region', and his requests for further services. He was treating the Project as a service provider. The works he asked for did not include *chantiers,* but were mainly construction works which would improve the infrastructures of the area under his control.

The approach of the people of Tinkirana Tounga, a village of freed slaves with little hierarchical stratification within it, was strikingly different. The men and women of Tinkirana resorted to various stratagems to keep the Project focused upon their village. In the following case, they accepted an intervention for which they had no interest, mainly to maintain frequent contacts with project staff. In the course of these contacts, they strove to obtain the type of activity which benefited them most, a *chantier* for the building of a second dam.

6.6.2 The women's field operation in Tinkirana Tounga

The 'Women's field' operation in Tinkirana Tounga started in July 1995, at a time when the Women and Development Division had not yet been established. The operation was aimed at giving the women of Tinkirana Tounga exclusive and inalienable control over a rehabilitated perimeter situated at the outskirts of their village. In the Project's First Phase, once a perimeter had been 'rehabilitated', property rights upon parcels contained within the perimeter would be redistributed amongst men who originally owned land within the perimeter, and those who had participated in the rehabilitation work (cf. Chapter 2). Even though women had done most of the work, the following redistribution had benefited only (male) household heads. This fact gave rise to a wave

of criticism against the Project's approach toward women, which is discussed in Chapter 7.

As a partial remedy, the PDR/ADM gave groups of women informal access to rehabilitated parcels of land in a number of villages, encouraging them to produce and sell vegetables and spices with the Agronomy Division's support (training, seeds, inputs, etc.). But sometimes original owners of these informally assigned 'women's plots' returned and claimed rights over their lands. These unsuccessful experiences convinced the PDR/ADM that if women were to gain secure rights upon land, they should instead have taken out a collective loan and purchased the parcel which they would exploit, rather than simply use a (temporarily) abandoned parcel.

In the PDR/ADM there were considerable expectations about the 'revolutionary' potential of this type of operation with regard to women's status and empowerment. Tinkirana Tounga had always been a 'testing site' for project interventions, and in 1995 it was suggested that the women of Tinkirana buy a rehabilitated parcel on the outskirts of the village. Women were consulted to see if they might have been interested in the operation and they were informed about all the transaction's conditions and details. Undeniably, the operation's approach was highly 'top-down'. After a number of consultations with small groups of women, the women came to the conclusion that they were interested in the opportunity which was being offered to them. However, that the issue was not a priority to them was clear by the considerable delay with which the women reached the meeting that had been arranged to discuss the operation with them, and by the scarce enthusiasm which they displayed in the course of preliminary arrangements. Men had also been contacted, and after some lively discussions had declared themselves in favour of the operation.

In the discussions between the land's owners and Nasser, the 'gendered nature' of the operation was never mentioned. However, the whole point of the transaction, at least in the PDR/ADM's intention, was to target women. The PDR/ADM justified it as a transfer *from men to women*, i.e. the actors least likely to 'buy land with money'. But at the meeting between the owners and the project agent, as well as in the actual degree of mobilisation of women themselves, the question of 'women's empowerment' appeared to be marginal to everyone's interests. The transaction, which would shift

property in land from men to women, was described as 'passing property from one pocket to the other' in the negotiations which preceded it. Dealing with the owners' reticence to sell their plot, Nasser commented: 'once rehabilitated, [this land] will return to you anyway: one parcel will also go to a member of your family'. The fact that the member would be a wife or a daughter did not seem to be relevant. Also for women, the intended beneficiaries of the operation, the transaction would not make a great difference. Single women would end up having a parcel smaller than 20x20 meters, which, as we shall see, on a glacis land, is not even worth the effort of cultivating it.

Nevertheless, in July 1995, the women of Tinkirana Tounga bought five hectares of rehabilitated land from the owners, and redistributed the perimeter amongst themselves in sub-parcels of equal extension. Women were asked to repay the Project loan in two years, but the project manager's idea was that the money they would return could be made available to the same women in the form of a social fund.

It soon became clear that the operation failed to give the expected results. The women of Tinkirana Tounga cultivated the fields they had acquired only in the first year, immediately after the Project's sub-soiling. Since then, rainy season after rainy season, project staff were sent to Tinkirana to check whether the *groupement's* women members were taking advantage of their private 'women's plots', but every season new excuses were provided by the villagers, men and women alike, for not having done so.

In 1997, upon project staff enquiries, Rakiata, the president of the women's group, said that a few men had cultivated their fields before women could do so, and that women were late because they were busy after their domestic chores and, more importantly, because they had to work on their household's fields. She had tried to summon the *groupement*'s women, but the majority had not agreed to come. Later, I asked Agaishatu, a woman who owned a parcel, if in fact women had reaped any benefit from their parcels even though men had cultivated them. But she looked at me with a puzzled look and told me that the field's production had been really negligible: the land was as hard as a stone, and men had used low quality seeds and no manure. I enquired whether it had been all the husbands of the women owners who had sown the field, but she said that only four or five men had sown some areas of the field 'to be kind to

project people' (*sabo da kirki wajen mutanen na projé*). That land, she reiterated, was not good and animals crossed the field all the time.

I decided to go to see Hajiya. I found her in her compound, preparing the meal with some neighbours. Hajiya was now almost an 'honorary' member of the *groupement*: I hardly ever saw her at the meetings, and she was not amongst the women who had taken a loan to acquire a parcel, because she was 'old', and her daughters were married outside Tinkirana. When I asked her if she knew why women had not cultivated the land, she answered that women were busy at that time of the year, and the field was not going to yield a good harvest. But why, then, did women acquire it in the first place? Because 'Carotti' had given that field to the women of Tinkirana to thank them for their hard work on the *chantiers*.

In 1999, the fourth year since the acquisition of the field, a gender consultancy came to visit the Project, and organised a reunion with Tinkirana women's *groupement* to assess the results of the operation. This time, the unanimous explanation provided by Tinkirana Tounga women was that they had not cultivated their fields because there was no enclosure, and animals could enter the parcels and destroy the young plants. They therefore wanted the Project to provide them with iron wire to build the enclosure (*sai waya sabo da dabbobi, suna shiga suna karye hita:* we need wire because of the animals: they enter and destroy the new plants). Some men supported the women's account. Iron wire is very expensive in the area and can be put to many uses more profitable than enclosing fields, for which the traditional method consists in using locally available thorny shrubs. Project representatives suggested that they resort to 'traditional methods', or that they pay for the wire: the Project could have assisted them to obtain it at a wholesale price.

At this point, the village chief stated that men would have supported their women in dealing with the enclosure problem, eventually even paying for wire, but what the village really needed from the Project was to deal with the water problem. Swiftly, other influential men began explaining that the first retention dam built by the Project for their village had been vital, but that they needed another one as there was not enough water to satisfy their needs over the whole year. Another problem was that now village houses were menaced by waters in the rainy season, and they wanted the Project

to do something about it. Women added without hesitation that water was a priority problem for the whole village. One woman said that when the dam (*tabki*) dried up, in the dry season, she would have to walk all the way to a distant well. Other women agreed. Some women said that transhumant herders used a lot of their dam's waters, and did not leave enough water for their own goats.

Tinkirana Tounga's men and women subscribed to the operation first and foremost to strengthen the village ties with the PDR/ADM and thereby to invest in a social relation which would bring potential benefits to Tinkirana Tounga. Villages falling within the PDR/ADM intervention area are competing with one another over project interventions. There is always something to gain from project interventions, and usually one operation calls for other activities to complement, refine, or supplement it. The entire village would have strengthened its liaison with the Project, as the creation of a 'women's plot' was likely to attract other interventions and to increase the chances of contacts with project staff. These occasions are sought mainly in the hope that new *chantiers* will be opened, possibly to deal with what is Tinkirana Tounga's crucial problem, water, but also because *chantiers* involve the creation of slack season 'jobs' and the availability of food-for-work.

Even though, from the Project's point of view the operation fell in the 'gender' agenda, it is not for its impact on gender relations that it came to be relevant to Tinkirana Tounga men and women (cf. Razavi and Miller 1995:27). Their behaviour at various reunions suggests that they were taking this chance (which happens to be presented in 'gendered terms') in order to invest in their relations with the Project and obtain benefits that do not involve a reallocation of power between men and women.

6.7 Conclusion

The PDR/ADM represents a source of revenue in a context characterised by few income opportunities and little income diversification. Although members of Bouzou households tend to pool their individual incomes to achieve household subsistence, some distinctions can be made along gender lines. Project food rations are a short-term contribution to the household's livelihood, with a particular impact on women's status and income. In the medium term, the works carried out by the Project increase the productivity of the means of production (water availability, land productivity, fodder for

the cattle) controlled mostly by men. Project works, therefore, are equivalent to slack-season income for women (who remain in the village while the men migrate), and to a medium/long term investment in the means of production for men. However, local perceptions of working with the Project are not strictly economic, but are also characterised by a sense of pride for the results of project activities.

This accounts for the perception of project activities as a sort of development revenue. Women often referred to the Project as '*aiki*', literally 'work', and in their accounts men emphasised the 'interest' component of project activities: '*akoi riba*' (literally, there is an interest). Both men and women argued that the Project 'benefited', or 'was useful' to their villages (*shina da amfani, akoi amfani*), and employed different strategies to attract new project activities to their villages. This situation is similar to that described by Mongbo on the occasion of an NGO's visit to the village of Gliten in Benin. The NGO had never worked in Gliten before, and the villagers orchestrated a performance to convince it to intervene (2000:236-239). In his example, he mentions a 'real hunt of NGOs and political parties' (2000:235), motivated, on some occasions, 'primarily by the perspective of obtaining WFP rations' (2000:221).

We have seen in Chapter 5 that project staff narratives portray local 'peasants' as resistant to change and needing 'sensitisation'. Local people, across gender and class, attribute meanings to project activities which make them fit into their world. This chapter has explored the 'view from the bottom', showing how the Project fits into the lives of local people, opening spaces where the 'projects in the Project' of different categories of actors can be unfolded. To turn these opportunities into concrete resources, various forms of agency are exercised at multiple interface sites: the *chantiers*, the *groupements*, meetings and correspondence with project staff.

The next Chapter brings together the different 'levels' analysed separately in the last three chapters: the development narratives, the project staff, and the people, and traces the question of 'women's status' across these levels. It enquires into the relative bargaining power and strategies of struggle of agents situated at different levels, and examines the ways in which the issue of 'women's status' changes its meaning and is operationalised in different ways as it is transferred across levels.

7. THE *FEMME DE KEITA*, THE *FEMMES DU SAHEL* AND THE WOMEN OF THE ADER DOUTCHI MAJIYA: INTERFACES BETWEEN 'WOMEN' AND PLANNED DEVELOPMENT

7.1 Introduction

The PDR/ADM's approach to gender issues and the nature of its relations with local women have changed throughout its long life-span. As we have seen in previous chapters, despite its supposedly 'integrated' approach, the PDR/ADM's primary focus was environmental, its main goal, the 'fight against desertification', and both the Italian and the Nigerien project coordinators were experts in sub-Saharan agriculture and related disciplines (PDR/ADM 1984b:20; GICO 1998:24). The Project began its activities at the end of a series of repeated droughts in the Ader Doutchi Majiya, and its first year of intervention, 1984, was characterised by extremely low rainfall levels. Reacting to the 'emergency' situation found, the original operation plan was modified so as to prioritise interventions in the CES/DRS[62] sector, at the expense of 'related activities (such as hydrological and environmental studies and observations, and the equipment of village wells), and activities programmed within other project intervention sectors' (PDR/ADM 1987:7). CES/DRS interventions were labour intensive, and it was established that the local labour force would be remunerated in WFP food-for-work rations.

However, when recruitment began, it was soon realized that, in the majority of local villages, almost all able-bodied men had migrated to places where they could find an occupation from which to support themselves and their families. Old people, children, and women had remained in the villages. The Project had no choice but to employ mostly women in the environmental rehabilitation work-sites. The massive participation of women in the first years of project intervention had not been foreseen:

> In the original [project] hypothesis [...] the role of women in activities different from the ones included in the *volet femme* had not been expected. Initially, the constraints in the availability of male labour force had been underestimated in the [planned] distribution of tasks to local populations (PDR/ADM 1987:9).

The period 1983-1987 is characterised by the initial 'wonder' at the 'fact' of women's massive participation in project activities, and the subsequent elaboration of

such a 'fact' into a much publicised image, that of the '*Femme de Keita*' (the 'Woman of Keita'). The '*Femme de Keita*' became the protagonist of existing international development narratives and national populist propaganda, embodying the notion of women's 'participation' in development interventions and national reconstruction, respectively.

The popularity of the '*Femme de Keita*' stirred the attention of international development actors active in the field of gender, wishing to understand the 'Keita phenomenon' and to look at the measures taken by the Project to deal with women's participation. But, as mentioned already, the Project had not expected women to play such an important role in its environmental rehabilitation interventions, and its initial approach toward them was soon found unsatisfactory by variously positioned observers (cf. PDR/ADM 1987; Monimart 1989; Rochette 1989; Bayard 1995; Bayard, Paoletti, Traore 1997).

A second phase in the PDR/ADM's approach to gender issues is therefore characterised by growing external critiques and internal project attempts to come to terms with the question of 'doing something about women'. The publication, in 1989, of the OECD book '*Femmes du Sahel*' (Monimart 1989), containing an analysis of women's participation in the PDR/ADM and of the shortcomings of the Project's gender approach, represents a 'landmark', which compelled Italy and the FAO to take the issue on board as a major concern. A series of *ad hoc* consultancies were arranged, eventually leading to the establishment of a Division for the promotion of women's role in 1997.

Since 1997, project relations with local women have been coordinated by the Division for the Promotion of the Role of Women and of Socio-Economic Activities (DPFSE). The long interval between the reception of critiques and the installation of a project division aimed at targeting women as particular stakeholders is explained, *inter alia*, by a considerable discrepancy between expected and actual donor funding during the Second Phase (1991-1996) of the PDR/ADM, and the consequent limitations set upon the opening of new activities (GICO 1998:56).

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[62] *Conservation des Eaux et de Sols / Defense et Restauration des Sols* : Soil and Water Conservation /

This chapter focuses on the interfaces between categories of actors with different perceptions and practices in relation to the issue of 'women's status' in planned development. It highlights the relative room for manoeuvre available to these groups and the strategies to which different groups resorted, manipulating the notion of 'women's role in development' to make it fit their respective agendas. Soon after the beginning of the Project's activities, women's role and status became a political matter for national (Kountché's populist regime) and international (the FAO, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs) actors, whose positions are evident in their construction and use of the '*femme de Keita*' trope. However, international and national consultants influenced by the 'Gender and Development' (GAD) framework criticised the Project's approaches toward women in the influential book *Femmes du Sahel* (Monimart/OECD) and in *ad hoc* consultancy reports. These critiques were operationalised into the new Division for the promotion of women. Within the spaces opened by the new Division, female members of staff and local women carried out their own 'projects in the Project', using the opportunities made available by the Project to win battles on various fronts and in various fields of their lives. As noted in Chapter 1, the geographic, cultural and social distance that characterises the positions of the actors analysed in this chapter amplifies their respective room for manoeuvre and allows for their semi-independent strategising.

7.2 WID Narratives and National Participatory Ideology: Partial Overlaps

By 1984, when the PDR/ADM became operative, the idea that women represent an important stakeholder in development interventions was not only broadly accepted, but had already undergone a number of interpretative changes at *ad hoc* international fora. In the 1970s the term Women in Development (WID) was coined in reaction to the failure of development to address women's needs and, more generally, to include them in the activities and ensuing benefits of interventions. Its meanings and applications informed the debate of the First UN Conference for Women in Mexico, in 1975.

The primary concern of the WID agenda in relation to development in the South was the integration of women in projects and programmes, not only as wives and mothers, but also as producers. WID advocates argued that dismissing the potential

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Soil Defence and Restoration.

contributions of women to economic development undervalued the potential role of women as an economic resource to the development process itself (Tinker 1990:31). By emphasising women's productive labour, they claimed that 'women as a social group [should be] targeted by planners as a means through which prioritised development goals can be realized' (Razavi and Miller 1995:10).

Early women-focused consultancies in the PDR/ADM were influenced by a WID approach. Lucia Cremona's 1986 '*Aperçu sur les activitivités socio-économiques des femmes de l'arrondissement de Keita*' makes no mention of gender roles. The document deals with women's productive activities, and men are referred to only marginally. The report recommends that women be fully incorporated into promotional socio-economic activities also because of their role as a source of manual labour on project rehabilitation sites. In other terms, women deserved to be targeted by productivity enhancing interventions (credit, agricultural inputs, access to land, etc.) because they had proved to represent an efficient source of labour on the project work sites at a time when men were not available on site. This argument is the logical extension of WID attempts to integrate women in development in an instrumental capacity.

But women's participation was also instrumental to Niger's political forces as a source of legitimacy: 'women's and youth associations have served as a means of mobilizing and making visible the power bases of the various political parties in Niger's post-war history' (Cooper 1995:860). Reflecting upon the relation between Kountché's regime and the 'Development of Women' in Niger, Roberta Dunbar notes that

> the ultimate goal [of the Development Society] was to provide a framework for the participation of Nigerien citizens in their own government. [...] That Colonel [...] Kountché hoped that this project would provide institutions uniquely suited to Niger is apparent in his statements along the way. (1991:77)

On 16 May 1975, only one year after his seizure of power, Kountché gave a speech on the occasion of the UN International Women's Year. In his speech, President Kountché expressed his desire to see 'the zeal of all the women and the young girls of Niger have a tangible and continuous impact on the construction of a new Niger' (*Rep. du Niger, Discours et Messages du Lieutenant-Colonel Seiny Kountché* 1976: 90). On this occasion, he foresaw 'a new awareness [*prise de conscience*] fully linking all the

women of Niger to all the phases of our irreversible march toward development' (1976:92). This 'linking' was to take place through the structures of the Development Society, which also functioned as the institutional interface between the PDR/ADM and the local society in the Project's First Phase (1984-1991). Until the establishment of the Division for the Promotion of the Role of Women, which came after the official dissolution of the structures of the Development Society in Niger, project and national participatory strategies and structures coincided. This coincidence was reflected in the narrative trope of the '*Femme de Keita*', who embodies and merges in herself the woman of WID international development narratives and the woman of national participatory populism.

7.3 The 'Femme de Keita': Women Working in the *Chantiers* Become the Icon of National and International Propaganda

In 15 years of intervention, the PDR/ADM evolved into a myth within the wider 'fight against desertification in the Sahel' narrative. Like all myths, the PDR/ADM had its heroes and its heroines. The undisputed 'hero' of the PDR/ADM was, and remained after his retirement in 1998, the first Italian Project Manager. In contrast, its 'heroine' was not a concrete person, but an ideal type, '*la femme de Keita*', which was mentioned as an example in national newspaper articles and in political rhetoric and propaganda. Below, I briefly review some of the main statements in the national press, responsible for the spread of the image of the '*femme de Keita*'.

In 1985, the magazine Le Sahel/Nation published an article on the broader theme of Niger's efforts in the 'fight against desertification'. For the first time, the PDR/ADM is mentioned in the press, in the article section reviewing national efforts at a departmental level. When it comes to the Tahoua Department, a long parenthesis is opened to introduce the stated goals and strategies of 'a huge integrated rural development project financed by Italy and the FAO' (Le Sahel/Nation, Vendredi-Samedi-Dimanche 22-23-24 Novembre 1985, p. 5). A picture shows a girl holding a reforestation seedling, but 'women' are not mentioned as special actors.

In 1986, the first results of the PDR/ADM activities started to be visible, and the President Seyni Kountché paid an official visit to the Project. The presidential visit was

followed by a series of propagandist newspaper articles in which women are recognized as key stakeholders in development.

'Le Sahel' of 13-14-15 June 1986 reports the results of the President's visit to Keita, and quotes the speech given by the President on the occasion:

> what has moved me most and encouraged me to persist in our philosophical concept of the '*Société de Développement*' has been the participation of women. Carrying a child on their backs, with a shovel in their hands, working with rudimentary instruments built for drawing the outline of reforestation trenches on the ground, they work for the soil's recuperation and rehabilitation. (Le Sahel 1986:3)

In the same issue, another article describes the engagement of the people of Keita with the Project in the following terms: 'The region's inhabitants prefer to engage themselves in a war against a hostile nature. They took the lead, *women on the front line*. It is people's participation that most impresses the visitor of the project intervention sites' (Le Sahel 1986:4). Another article, entitled 'Hope is Allowed', of the same issue of Le Sahel, which immediately followed the President's visit, begins as follows:

> plunged to mid-thigh in the trenches, holding shovels or spades, [*women*] were excavating and ceaselessly clearing that rocky, arid, burning, and pitiless earth. Far from distracting them, the arrival of the presidential delegation, made them double their efforts. Under their strenuous hits, half-moon shaped holes were taking shape little by little. And it will be these holes that will catch the water at each rain, it will be in these holes that trees will be planted and that, in some years, the site of Tinkirana, one of the sites of the integrated project of Keita, will turn green again. Perhaps, it will return to be a forest like in the 'good old days', when the arid desert had not yet swallowed the vegetation of that part of the Ader. (Le Sahel 1986:5)

On 3 August 1986, the newspaper Sahel Dimanche published an article titled 'Thanks to God and to... the Project'. The article begins with a description of the Project intervention area as seen by the reporter in a tour in the Project's Fiat Campagnola, which had become the Project's 'emblem' in the area, as they were immediately recognized by villagers as the vehicles of the '*Projet Keita*': 'After 15 kilometers we reach the Plateau of Laba. Only a few months ago, this plateau was the exclusive domain of bulldozers, tractors, camions, and, obviously, of the famous *"mama-courage, les femmes de Keita"*' (Sahel Dimanche 1986:7).

An article of 10 August 1986, in the Magazine 'Afrique-Asie', no. 379, entitled 'Keita saved from the Sands', presents the narrative that would become ubiquitous in explanations of the Project's association with women:

> In Keita, over the last two years, lands which were once agricultural, but that have been abandoned for about half a century, have turned into gigantic work sites [*chantiers*]. Will [*la volonté*] is certainly not lacking. But the major part of men migrated to Nigeria, Benin, the Ivory Coast, or elsewhere, chased by the drought. Some of them came back last year thanks to the exceptional rainy season, others are beginning to follow their example. [...] But, then, *only women and children had remained: there was no alternative but to work with them.* They are of all ages, and their destiny can be measured, today, against the 2,500 Sq. km of land to rehabilitate. (Afrique-Asie 1986:16)

The article continues:

> President Kountché has visited the 'model' Keita at the beginning of the month of June. Back in Niamey, he sent hundreds of metres of fabric produced by the Sonitextil (State Society) *to the women of Keita.* Since then, *the women used it as their working uniform.* The president's choice is in fact symbolic: vegetables on a green background are printed on the fabric almost to exorcise the nightmare of drought. (Afrique-Asie 1986:17)

In that same year, President Kountché also decorated three women who had distinguished themselves for the quality of their work or for their catalytic role in motivating other women on the PDR/ADM work-sites. One of these three women, 'Hajiya'[63] of Tinkirana Tounga, also received a ticket for a trip to Mecca as recognition of her outstanding contribution to the country's fight against desertification (cf. Chapter 5 and Chapter 6).

Another 1986 article is entitled 'Niger: captured waters'. The sub-title is: '*Women, artisans and machines: a lived participation*'. The text quotes the Italian Project Manager, Dr. Carotti:

> In the village of Waddey only 80 people had remained: some children, some elderly, and the fool of the village. The men had left. I refused, explaining that the work was too hard. *The women remained silent, in a corner. But then they discussed amongst themselves, and declared that they would take charge of the affair [elles prennaient les choses en main]. They created the first [work] groups. The battle was won.*

In 1996 another article appears on Le Sahel of February 29, claiming that the Keita Project had anticipated the major principles adopted at the Rio Conference. It argues that

> the population's contribution has been incredibly important. Approximately 3000 people, *mainly women*, have been working in groups every day on tens of the Project's work sites [*chantiers*]. Almost 6 million working days have been contributed in one decade. People's participation

[63] 'Elhaji' or 'Alhaji' (masc.) and 'Hajiya' (fem.) are the epithets given to believers who have visited the Mecca.

reached almost 10 million work days in 1996, thanks to the support of the World Food Programme's family food rations. [...] The male labour force, which constituted only 5% at the Project's beginning, has actually reached 35% despite out migration. (Le Sahel 1996:6)

Finally, on 30 July 1999 an article on the Keita Project entitled 'The Keita Miracle' appeared on Le Sahel Dimanche, in concomitance with the 9th Quadripartite Reunion Italy/ FAO/PAM/Niger, which took place in Niamey on 27-28 July. Here, we find perhaps the most positive, yet also the most stereotypical, 'celebration' of the 'Keita Project myth'. With reference to the participation of women, we read:

In the absence of able-bodied men, the Project employs women. The integrated project becomes the object of curiosity. People come from afar to see those women who, despite the extenuating task, the lack of water and the heat, have retained their graceful movements and elegant silhouettes. Nevertheless, the work proposed by the Project is not a woman's work, not by far: building anti-erosion bunds covered with stones around the fields to fix the earth, planting trees on the banks of the *koris* (temporary water courses) to reinforce them, fixing the dunes with windbreak fences made of millet stalks, constructing dams across water courses to regulate the water run-off, excavating reforestation trenches on slopes to gather water and grow plants and trees. A real forced labour that, despite everything, women realize at 95%! Entire days under the sun, they gather the stones left on the subsoiled earth by the Project's tractors. [...] Thousands of villagers received agricultural inputs, credit and training: today, 10,000 women are organised in 148 [this must be a print error, as the correct number was 184 then] *groupements d'intérêt économique* and a credit and saving structure has just been established in Keita for them. (Le Sahel Dimanche 1999:6-7)

In another section of the article, a statement attributed to Renato Carotti, reads:

At the Project's inception, the recruitment of the labour force had not been easy due to the out-migration of able-bodied men. There were but 90 men, children and elderly people. We said that it would not be possible. We were discouraged. But, in the evening, four women came to see me at home. Amongst them, one could speak French. She told me, Sir, we know what you want to do, we *can* do this work. Three days later, there were 300 women on Waddey's *chantier*. They created the first groups; the battle was won. Fifteen years later, the challenge has been met, the results are there to attest it. (Le Sahel Dimanche 1999:7)

Perhaps even more influential than words, evocative pictures of Keita's women carrying rocks on their heads, digging trenches, working hard, alone and in group, are ubiquitous in publications and articles, even when these do not make explicit reference to women's participation.

In this rapid review of the national press commentaries on the '*femme de Keita*' phenomenon, the years between 1986 and 1996 are 'blank'. In fact, in this period, the '*femme de Keita*' *is* mentioned in documents produced by interested parties (e.g. Monimart 1989; PDR/ADM 1993), but does not figure as prominently as it did until 1986 in the national press. The relative silence in the press is partly accounted for by the

nature of Niger's relatively unstable and short-lived regimes which, since Kountché's death of cerebral tumor in late 1987, did not set the bases for an ideology of national development until the election of President Tandja Mahamane in 1999, who put the PDR/ADM at the core of his campaign. But the absence of the '*femme de Keita*' from magazines and newspapers signals a widespread discomfort in dealing with what had become a controversial issue. In fact, the PDR/ADM's approach toward women had received severe criticism, which the Project initially tried to appease by conceiving a few small-scale interventions for women, and eventually had to address fully by the end of the second phase.

7.4 The '*Femmes du Sahel*': Gender and Development (GAD) as a Discursive Template for a Gender Critique of the PDR/ADM

The ubiquity of the '*femme de Keita*' stimulated international interest in the PDR/ADM approach toward women and gender. It was assumed that a project famous, *inter alia*, for massive female participation in its activities, would have elaborated cutting edge approaches for dealing with women. But the 'GAD-minded' observers who visited Keita between the end of the 1980s and mid-1990s were bitterly disappointed.

Activities directed toward women were not entirely absent, as the Project had devised interventions aimed at benefiting women since its first years in Keita. As early as 1987, the Report of the First Tripartite Evaluation mission argued that the original project document had underestimated the phenomenon of male out-migration, heightened by subsequent droughts in the early eighties, and consequently had been unprepared to deal with the crucial role assumed by women in project activities (PDR/ADM 1987:9). Although women had represented primary beneficiaries in the field of health, they should have been integrated in the 'productive activities' supported by the Project and they should have benefited from *ad hoc* training on the effects of project interventions (PDR/ADM 1987: 8,9). Several consultancies focused upon the roles and status of women had been arranged and a nutrition expert carried out a detailed survey on local diet and nutrition/malnutrition levels, which were to be reflected in the promotion of food transformation and commercialisation facilities for women (Cremona 1986).

In the Project's Second Phase (1991-1996) 'women's organisation' was nominally added to the competences of the Cooperatives Division, which coordinated a number of activities seen as directly pertinent to women's productive sphere (GICO 1998). These consisted mainly in women's horticultural gardens, training for the transformation of horticultural products; and women's manioc fields. However, consistently throughout the second phase, the Project's approach toward women was harshly criticised. These critiques came from a GAD perspective.

During the First UN Decade for Women, the WID approach was found lacking in many respects (Moser 1993; Razavi and Miller 1995; Kyte 1996). The economic crisis of the 1980s stimulated reflections on the 'feminisation of poverty', highlighting that women had suffered more than proportionately, compared to other social groups, from the consequences of recession and, paradoxically, from the supposed remedies for recession, in particular structural adjustment programmes (Elson 1991; Jackson and Pearson 1998). The 1980s were also marked by a considerable growth of women's movements in the developing countries (Snyder and Tadesse 1995; Kyte 1996).

The 1985 Third UN Conference for Women in Nairobi focused on approaches which would not aim at incorporating women in development programmes and projects in an instrumental way, but which examined the relative positions of men and women in society trying to target women as a particularly vulnerable group with multiple roles and needs. The new approach, Gender and Development (GAD), sought to empower women and to transform unequal gender relations (Braidotti et al. 1994). GAD thinking exposed some problematic consequences of WID emphasis on women's productive labour. In particular, a preoccupation with the consequences of increased workloads for the health and well being of women; dissatisfaction with reform policies which redistributed assets (especially land) between households rather than within households; and a growing concern with the (symbolic and cultural as well as practical) relations between production and reproduction in sustaining unequal gender relations, would represent salient arguments in many critiques of the Project's early approaches toward rural women.

The key actors (representing Italy, the FAO, and influential 'outside observers' such as the OECD) who were going to influence the PDR/ADM's approach toward

women in the early nineties all had access to the same discourses on women/development. Having 'internalised' these discourses (Long 1989), they operationalised them with reference to the PDR/ADM specific policies toward women through 'regularized patterns of interaction' (Keeley and Scoones 1999:18), involving ad-hoc meetings, publications, and joint consultancies.

In 1989 Marie Monimart authored an OECD/Club du Sahel book on Sahelian Women (*Femmes du Sahel: La Désertification au Quotidien*). The book represents an important link between the 'Fight against Desertification' narrative and the 'Women in Development' narrative. Chapter 3, entitled '*Sur les Chantiers Ardents*' (On the Burning Worksites) discusses in depth the Integrated Rural Development Project of Keita. Here, Monimart's comments on the Project's gender approach are far from flattering:

> [Women's] participation is mainly voluntary, and their labour is exploited without substantial advantages to them. If food aid in the "food-for-work" form is an immediate answer to acute food scarcity, it does not lack perverse effects. Due to men's migration, women find themselves deprived of all resources and in charge of the family; in fact, they have no other choice but to work on the work-sites. But, then, is it really possible to talk of "voluntary participation"? Isn't it rather mobilization for recruiting temporary work at reduced price (...)? Women execute most manual tasks, as stones and water carriage. They are the ones who carry out the most demanding [*pénibles*] and least qualified jobs. These tasks result in an increment of work which might prejudice the health of the mother and of the child. [...] The tenure problem is often made more acute by land rehabilitation operations in which women participate, but which, in most cases, exclude them from the redistribution of land parcels. Women have no access whatsoever to the benefits of [development] activities: [their] access to water, to the means of agrarian production, and to trees remains limited. (Monimart 1989:106)

On 10 March 1986, the Italy-Africa Institute held a Round Table on 'Women's Participation to the Planning and the Implementation of Development Initiatives in Sub-Saharan Africa, with Particular Reference to Alimentary Self-sufficiency Problems.' Patrizia Paoletti, who gave the keynote speech at the Verona Round Table, was perhaps the actor who had the greatest influence on the PDR/ADM's 'gender affairs'. In 1984 Paoletti and Taliani had published the book 'Territorial Reality and Development Policy', the main Italian socio-anthropological background study for the PDR/ADM intervention (cf. Chapter 4). In 1986 Paoletti was in the Italy-Africa Institute's Commission for 'Women and Development' (*Atti della Tavola Rotonda Italo Africana* 1987). Between 1983 and 1996 she conducted several consultancies in Keita for the FAO, and in 1996 she coordinated the mission for the establishment of the Division for the Promotion of Women's Role. This mission also included two Nigerien consultants: Mariama Bayard and Halimata Traoré (Bayard-Paoletti-Traoré 1997).

Traoré was to become the Chief of the Women's Division in 1997. Bayard, a Nigerien feminist active on Niger's political scene, already knew the Project from previous consultancies. In the first half of the 1990s, Bayard was the President of the *Rassemblement Démocratique des Femmes du Niger*, and Traoré was the secretary of the same national organisation, which had been created through a schism within the *Association des Femmes du Niger* (AFN), wanted by a group of Nigerien 'intellectual feminists' (this is the definition given by my informants in Niamey and Keita).

The report of Bayard's individual consultancy in 1995 is a tough critique of the Project's approach toward women. Along lines similar to Monimart's critique quoted above, Bayard argued that

> Environmental rehabilitation did not have any consequence for [women's] agricultural productive activities. [...] Moreover, [women] had to cumulate their work on the project sites with their eternal domestic tasks. The result is an incredible work overload for women (*chantier* work, domestic work, traditional productive work, reproductive responsibilities) which is not accompanied by a parallel qualitative change in their living and working conditions. [...] Food-for-work rations represent a partial salary [...]. Partial because, according to the Project, Keita's inhabitants are the primary beneficiaries of the interventions. This argument is totally irrelevant when referred to women, because they have almost no access to the means of production. (1995:20)

> Despite [women's] efforts to accomplish a 'man's work' [...] it has been carefully avoided to give them access to reserved domains which lead to an increase in monetary revenues and to the promotion of their economic state. For instance, female *chefs de chantier* are non existent, and women too should have benefited of support in the form of credit for the commercialisation of their agricultural products. (1995:22)

In 1994, the recommendations of various internal reports and the critiques of external observers[64] belatedly materialized upon the PDR/ADM's implementation board. Hence, Tiemogo and Boubacar's[65] May 1994 'internal' Report on 'The Participatory Approach of the Keita Integrated Project', argues for the first time that

> in order to facilitate [women's role in rural development] it would be necessary to consider the establishment of a unit [*cellule*] for the promotion of female activities, or otherwise, of a committee for the reflection upon and coordination of [women's activities], which should gather periodically and include representatives of the women interested. (ibid:36-37)

[64] Other critiques of the PDR/ADM's approach toward women were made in the CILSS/PAC/GTZ book '*Le Sahel en Lutte contre la Desertification: Leçons d'Experiences*', authored by René Marceau Rochette, (1989: 321), and in the in-depth external consultancy for the evaluation of the PDR/ADM's first two Phases (GICO 1998:27).

[65] Dr. Boubakar was Carotti's homologue in the PDR/ADM, i.e. the National Project Manager.

In 1997 the Division for the Promotion of the Role of Women and Socio Economic Activities (DPFSE) was established in the PDR/ADM, with Traoré at its head.

7.5 The Division for the Promotion of Women's Role

In April 1997, the DPFSE took over all the women-focused operations that had already been started by the PDR/ADM, and commenced new ones. Its activity, in September 1997, had reached the following state:

- 86 *groupements féminins* had been constituted, involving a total number of 6,254 women ;
- Eight land parcels had been bought by women through a project credit and redistributed amongst the *groupement*'s members, thus giving to 551 women individual ownership of a parcel;
- 27 *groupements* (653 women) were engaged in the production of reforestation seedlings (*pépinières*), contributing to the Project's reforestation activities, and gaining a total revenue of 25,000 FCFA (approx. US $ 50) in 6 months of business ;
- 49 *groupements* had developed an economic activity linked to cereal processing at Project-supervised mills ;
- 25 *groupements* were selling sunflower oil ;
- 27 *groupements* had formed a 'committee of hygiene', and
- 19 *groupements* hosted a women-run 'village-pharmacy'.
- All of the existing *groupements* either had benefited or were benefiting from 'functional alphabetization courses', run by an *ad hoc* service within the PDR/ADM, aimed at instructing at least two members of the *groupement*'s management committee ['*comité de gestion*'] on how to fill in the forms illustrating the state of a *groupement*'s activities at any time.

By April 2000 the *groupements* were almost 200. By November 2000, *Assusun Keita*, the micro-credit structure supported by the DPFSE, counted 266 members (189 *groupements féminins, 32 groupements masculins,* and 45 individual persons who could not take loans) and had disposed of almost FCFA 40 million in deposit (approximately $60,000), of which more than 36 million came from the women's *groupements*, 2.5 millions came from men's *groupements*, and about 0.5 million were individuals' savings. Loans had already been issued for FCFA 65 million, almost 60 million of which to women's *groupements.* This relatively abrupt change in project relations toward the local society generated the discontent of those actors who felt they were 'losing out' from this new order. The most embittered were ex (male) *chefs de chantier* who had lost their job to the advantage of women.

The Project management's reply to their remonstrations highlighted that the principal beneficiaries of the bulk of PDR/ADM operations were male landowners and farmers. Once rehabilitated, the Ader Doutchi Majiya lands would sustain an increased

agricultural production and cattle raising, and it would be the men who, individually or united in state-recognized co-operatives, would gain the greatest benefits from a 'restored environment'. According to the project manager, the Italian Monitoring and Evaluation expert, and the Nigerien Chief of the Division for the Promotion of Women's role, Keita's men did not need the extra support required by women to organise themselves into producer-groups and to gain access to exclusive property of land and 'landed resources' (Riddel 1988). In 1997, project management's view' on this subject was that men relied on a pre-existing ideological substratum ideologically and practically supporting male entrepreneurial activities. Such a substratum was non-existent for women, and this is why women should receive extra support by the 'Division for the Promotion of Women and of Socio-Economic Activities' (DPFSE).

However, the installation of the DPFSE coincided in time with a major 'life crisis' in the PDR/ADM's evolution. In fact, Carotti retired from the position of project manager and was replaced by Oumarou shortly after the newly established Division had become operative. The passing over of project management to a Nigerien expert was in line with the new orientation of the Project's Third Phase, which foresaw increasing responsibility over project interventions to be passed to representatives of the recipient country. The incoming project manager graduated from the same Italian University as the previous project director. However, if there were elements of continuity in the 'technical' understanding of the PDR/ADM's intervention strategy on the territory, its 'social approach' had inevitably taken a new course, as old and new management came from different social and cultural backgrounds.

Within the DPFSE itself, some tensions emerged with a new appointment to the position of vice-responsible of the Division. Before beginning to work for the PDR/ADM, the actual responsible, Halima, had been an active member of the RDFN (*Ressemblement Democratique des Femmes du Niger*). The RDFN comprised the most anti-conformist tendencies of the AFN, and its policies were open to some 'Western' feminist issues still rather unpopular amongst feminist lobbying groups in Niger. The activities of the newly established division, under Halima's supervision, had been primarily focused towards 'women's empowerment', reaching the results presented above.

The vice-responsible, Rahmatou, a recently graduated socio-economist specialised in agricultural management, arrived at a time when men's disappointment with the 'skewed tendency' of the DPFSE was at its climax. The relations between Halima and Rahmatou were tense from the beginning: the two women had different characters and approaches to their work, and Rahmatou, also due to her relatively high social class, had a hard time accepting to take orders from Halima. Interpreting the denomination of the division as suggesting that the latter should support not 'women only' but 'women' and all local 'socio-economic activities', the Rahmatou started replicating in the villages the successful structure of the *groupement feminin,* with the only difference that this time the actors involved were men.

That the new institution should be a 'men only' prerogative was not explicitly stated, but it seemed obvious, women being already active and organised in the *groupements féminins*, presented as open strictly to women only, and because of the widespread local refusal, with a few exceptions, to form mixed *groupements*. Women resented such an initiative on the grounds that if they were to work together with men, the latter would take all decisions leaving them in a subordinate position. Men, on the other hand, emphasized a feeling of inappropriateness and 'shame' to work, and to be seen working next to women. The Hausa term used is *kunia*, but such a feeling is also expressed by Tamasheq-speaking villagers, who would use the terms *uksad* ('to fear'), or *takrakit* ('shame'), often associated with rules of sexual behaviour (cf. Nicolaisen and Nicolaisen 1997:706).

This situation gave rise to tensions and misunderstandings within the Division, heightened by the fact that Halima and Rahmatou had separate working schedules and extension teams. This started to be perceived, at a village level, as a 'two party structure' within the PDR/ADM, with 'Halima's party' advocating women's rights, and 'Rahmatou's party' supporting men's initiatives. Several factors contributed to reinforce such a vision, three of which are particularly relevant.

First, in December 1998, men's fears of seeing their position weakened were not entirely unjustified, as, at that time, they were also facing the dissolution of the USRC (*Union Sous-Regional de Cooperatives*). A local-level branch of the UNC (*Union National de Cooperatives)*, the USRC had been in charge of following the evolution of

the cooperatives of producers, entirely constituted by men, which had been at first supported by the PDR/ADM, and then passed on to the UNC public structure. Keita's producers had invested a considerable subscription-fee in joining the USRC, and were justly preoccupied not merely with the sudden lack of support its dissolution would engender for their activities, but also with the likelihood that they would not be able to recover any money entrusted to the USRC. Therefore, while their women were gaining new forms of support thanks to the intervention of the DPFSE, men could see the supporting structures on which they had relied until then crumble to pieces.

Secondly, and adding to their feeling of increased vulnerability, following the recommendations of the above mentioned Bayard-Paoletti-Traoré 1996 Report, which had laid down the premises for the constitution of the DPFSE, the PDR/ADM was considering the opening of a *Guichet de Credit aux Femmes*. Initially, arrangements were being made for the *Guichet*'s organisation to be entrusted to the RDFN, and, apparently, the majority of micro-credit operations would be carried out in favour of women only.

Thirdly, the new project manager appeared to be sensitive to men's preoccupations, and interpreted the signs of gender turmoil as a 'healthy' reaction of local society to excessive demands on the part of women, likely to undermine what he saw as the basis of Nigerien social structure, i.e. 'familial solidarity'.

On my departure from Keita in 1997, the scenario I left behind me could have developed in two directions. On the one hand, the clash within the DPFSE was being steadfastly amended, changing its denomination into '*Division pour la Promotion Féminine*' (DFD), in line with its original orientation. Moreover, after only a few months of cooperation, the clash between Halima and Rahmatou appeared to be irreparable, so the latter was moved to the Monitoring and Evaluation Division.

On the other hand, in the Project, the 'promotion of the role of women' formula was given a new 'favoured interpretation', which emphasized the 'traditional' role of women in the household, and *as* household members. The vagueness of the term 'traditional', however, makes it a formula which can be easily used instrumentally to

limit, rather than promote, women's chances to improve their own independence and self-respect.

These two immediate developments made the newly created Division appear to be moving one step forward and two steps back, in the sense that if the new denomination's focus on women only seemed to favour women's cause, the new management's approach toward the 'promotion of the role of women' formula was clearly conservative compared to the tone of the original Division document and the initial steps taken by Halima.

Leaving this situation behind me in April 1997, I thought that soon Halima would have found herself in conflict with the new management, maybe having to leave the Project, and being substituted by a more moderate and 'malleable' division chief who would have rendered women-focused interventions commensurate to the interests of locally more powerful actors, namely men and the new management. But, to my surprise, when I returned to the Project in 1999, I found Halima married to the new project manager, and, if anything, her power looked considerably strengthened. Rahmatou, instead, had eloped with the Responsible of the Monitoring and Evaluation Division, and both had found another job at the FAO headquarters in Niamey.

In the process of the Women's Division establishment, Halima emerges as a Janus-faced actor. As a Nigerien consultant and feminist activist, she was exposed to international GAD discourses and contributed, with Paoletti and Bayard, to the elaboration of a strategy to reshape the PDR/ADM's relation with local women. She then found herself at the head of the Division, having to bargain and negotiate with other project staff over the interpretation of the 'promotion of women' formula. She was able to make her perspective prevail over Rahmatou's interpretation, and the latter was moved to a different project division leaving Halima alone to manage the DFD. But, in the disagreements with the new program manager, her position was definitely weak, and she risked to see her own 'project in the Project' fail. But her marriage with the project manager strengthened her bargaining position in the Project. Her strategy was relational, and entailed cooperation, rather than conflict, with powerful men. Halima's action started in her consultancy with Paoletti and Bayard which laid the premises for the creation of the new Division. It continued in the form of 'intervention' in the Project

area, and Halima proved to be highly efficient in gaining local women's confidence and, in a short time, developing a whole range of initiatives in favour of local women. When her strategy was threatened, her marriage with the project manager at the same time transformed her private and public life and allowed her to maintain and expand her 'room for manoeuvre'.

7.6 The Women of the Ader Doutchi Majiya

This section explores local women's patterns of agency in relation to the DFD's activities. It focuses on the interface between the lives of elite and non-elite Keita women and the PDR/ADM, looking at how differently positioned local women took advantage of the opportunities offered by the PDR/ADM to pursue their own goals within their households and their local network of social relationships. Below, the case study of the *Foyer Féminin de Keita* shows how Keita's women took up Project activities in order to unfold strategies which would be useful in fields closer to them than the field of Project intervention, formally structured by international GAD approaches.

7.6.1 Aminatou: a 'project woman'

Aminatou's status is unusual by Keita's standards. Although she is now 28 years old, she lives at her parental home, surrounded by her younger siblings. With her, live her old father, a respected Keita elder, and his two wives. Aminatou's mother, who comes from a village renown as an animist stronghold, is the household's first wife and therefore holds a higher status, and she is the mother of four girls and two younger sons, Aminatou's brothers and sisters. The new wife, disliked and referred to in a derogatory way as a 'village woman' by the offspring of the first wife, gave birth to two children. Aminatou is the second oldest daughter in the family, and the only one with an unmarried status. Nevertheless, she has two children, a boy of six and a one-year old girl.

Aminatou's destiny was considerably influenced by the PDR/ADM. When she was about 16 years old, the Project had opened a training centre for Keita's young

women, the '*Foyer Féminin de Keita*' (FFK)[66], which Aminatou had attended for more than two years achieving outstanding results. Aminatou still refers to the Italian tailor who had trained her group as her master, and to herself as '*une élève de Giovanna*'. In Keita there are four professional Hausa tailors. Aminatou is one of them, maybe considered the least skilled, but she is the youngest one and the only woman, as well as the only one who learned her job thanks to project training. At completion of her first course, she followed a special course on the maintenance and repair of sewing machines, also organised by the PDR/ADM but open to few professionals only, for which she holds a certificate and which has made her a popular 'sewing machines technician' in Keita. Today she has many clients, which allows her to earn a living thanks to her own job.

Aminatou has resisted conforming to the prevailing stereotypes of female identity. As a girl, when she was attending the Project's training, she had been the fiancée of a young man, who has become an electrician at the PDR/ADM after having received *ad hoc* training sponsored by the Project. However, their love was frustrated by his parents pressures on him to marry a girl whom, due to family alliances, they perceived as the most appropriate first wife for their son[67]. This event had a profound impact upon Aminatou's life. Some years later, Aminatou's parents arranged her marriage with a wealthy man from Keita, considerably older than her. Aminatou did not love him and refused to meet him until the day of the marriage ceremony, when, as she put it, they were 'forced to sit next to each other'. When the ceremony was over, Aminatou packed up her belongings and left for Niamey with her sewing machine.

Aminatou felt strongly about women's status in her society. Although she had never been enrolled in any 'women's organisations', such as the AFN and the RDFN, she often voiced her dislike for many Hausa institutions which she saw as relegating women to an inferior role. To some extent, she was a 'project creature', and her picture as a young girl learning how to sew in the *Foyer Feminin de Keita* figured on the cover of the widely spread project brochure, exemplifying to Western readers the local young woman benefiting from project training.

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[66] *Foyer Féminin de Keita* could be translated 'Keita Women's Community Centre'.

[67] In Keita, I could observe that the choice of a person's first marriage partner is the object of lengthy and precise arrangements, whereas the second and further marriages tend to be one's individual choice (Cf. Dunbar 1991:73).

I had first met Aminatou in 1995 and we became friends, spending time together every day. In 1997, when I returned to Keita, I was hoping to find her there, but she was in Niamey. I felt bad, as I had come from Niamey and missed the chance to meet her there. Not knowing the circumstances under which Aminatou had left for Niamey, I paid a visit to her mother asking her if I could have Aminatou's address in the Capital, and was surprised to learn that she did not know where her daughter resided. However, the mother asked me to bring Aminatou a letter, were I to meet her on my trip back. I was wondering what all this could be about, and how I was supposed to find Aminatou in Niamey. It did not take long before I learned more about Aminatou's marriage from her sister and friends.

At the end of my stay, I returned to the Capital, and at the PDR/ADM's office in Niamey I found a letter from Aminatou. The letter contained her address, and I rushed to see her. I found Aminatou working as a *femme de ménage* at somebody's place. The competition for jobs was tough in Niamey, and she could not get the work permit which would allow her to practise her profession, so she was doing domestic chores in exchange for a place to stay and some food. She looked thin and untidy. Although she was visibly glad to see me, she seemed embarrassed about her appearance and received me in a small room with only a bed in it. I gave her her mother's letter and brought her news from Keita. That same night, I had to leave from Niger. When I returned to Keita for my long term fieldwork, Aminatou had gone back home, and was practising her job successfully. Everybody seemed to have forgotten about her unsuccessful marriage.

7.6.2 Keita's elite women: elections at the FFK

The *Foyer Féminin de Keita* (FFK) is a large building which had been built by the PDR/ADM for the promotion of the women of the town of Keita, and which had been fully equipped with dressmaking equipment and cooking utensils thanks to the twinning between Keita and the Italian town of Pesaro. Pesaro had also provided training modules and personnel. However, by the time of my first visit in 1995, the FFK had already assumed its present aspect. Today, its spacious rooms are empty, a thick layer of dust covering all surfaces and worthless leftover items of damaged furniture and equipment.

Everybody in Keita knows the story of the FFK, even though nobody talks about it. When the FFK became operational, an *ad hoc 'comité de gestion'* (management committee) was established to coordinate its activities. The Committee's president was Tambara, the sister of Keita's *Sarki* and one of the most influential women in Keita[68]. After about 2-3 years of normal functioning, the FFK ceased its activities, and almost all the goods it contained 'disappeared'. Some of them reappeared later in the homes of the committee's members. At the Project, these happenings are usually referred to as '*un problème de gestion*' (a management problem).

'Tambara' is not just a name. The term refers to a woman's status. Nicolas (1975) tells us that it derives from the Tamasheq term *tambari*, which means 'chief', and it is an honorary title, acquired in the course of the *kan kwarya*, a ceremony at which the aspiring 'Tambara' lavishly distributes gifts to the participants in a sort of female potlatch. On this occasion, all the present tambara dance, celebrating the glory of the tambara and the shame of their '*bugaje*' [slaves]. 'The tambara regards other women like the noble Targui regards the members of servile castes (*Bugaje,* sing. *Bouzou*) within his society' (Nicolas 1975:190). I have never witnessed a *kan kwarya* in the course of my fieldwork, and my informants said that while gift-giving is a common way to establish patron-client relations and assert oneself as a powerful person, such ceremonies are not held in Keita anymore at least since the times of Kountché. However, Nicolas suggests that the two core values expressed by this institution are female ambition, competition and status. Both of these values were evident in the relation between Tambara and women in Keita. Although my evidence suggests that Tambara was probably the most powerful woman in town, there were other influential women in Keita, who could count on a large network of social relationships. Tambara was the sister of the most powerful traditional political authority in the Canton of Keita, and, as I soon realized, this made her untouchable.

The FFK was a constant source of shame for the PDR/ADM. There it stood, on Keita's main road, abandoned, at 100 metres from the headquarters of one of the most important projects in the country. Visiting consultants would never omit to ask about it, and write in their reports that the FFK situation ought to be redressed. Also Pesaro's people wanted to see it function, as it had represented a considerable investment for

[68] The Sarki also happened to hold a honorary position in the *Comité de Jumelage*, set up to deal with

them. Several attempts to give it a new start had proved unsuccessful. However, when, in 1997, the Division for the Promotion of Women's Role was established, it seemed obvious that it would address the FFK's situation.

In November 1999, Pesaro sent the materials for making up t-shirts and other clothes, with the aim of providing employment opportunities to young women in Keita, and requesting that the FFK's structures be used for the purpose of this operation. The newly established division took the operation under its control, and gave informal permission to a group of 12 Keita girls to work in the FFK, under Aminatou's supervision. Aminatou's choice was obvious, as she was the only female tailor in Keita, and had been trained at the Project.

The FFK re-opened. Without changing anything inside it, nor cleaning it up, the small group began working with the three functioning sewing machines that remained. Aminatou allocated different tasks to her supervisees, according to skill level, and she cut the cloths and performed the most difficult tasks, in addition to giving informal training, demonstrating sewing methods, and monitoring the others' work. One could hardly notice the re-opening of FFK activities from the outside. The women were worked quietly in one room only, their younger siblings bringing them meals at midday. The only change visible to a careful observer would be the opened shutters. The women worked from 7 am to 5 pm, when light became too feeble for sewing. Electricity and water had been cut a long time before at the FFK, as bills were not being paid.

Despite her responsibility, Aminatou was not being paid more than the other women, as the deal with Pesaro was that women would be paid per-piece, even though this did not reflect the way the work had been organised. Nevertheless Aminatou seemed to welcome her new role, which increased her prestige, while providing an unexpected source of revenue. Perhaps more importantly by local standards, two of the girls working with her were her sisters, most of the others were her friends, and through this opportunity Aminatou was 'investing' in social relationships. When the operation was concluded, Aminatou was asked to keep the FFK open, for a very small remuneration (FCFA 10,000 or UK £ 10 per month),'just in case more work would

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everything relevant to the twinning with Pesaro.

come in'. And more work did come in, this time for the confection of skirts to be 'exported' to Italy.

As there seemed to be no reaction on the part of the old committee, a plan to expand the FFK activities to include the preparation of cooked foodstuff to be sold locally was developed by the DFD. But before this could be implemented, it would be necessary to obtain the *nihil obstat* of the *Comité de Jumellage* [Twinning Committee of Keita and Pesaro], i.e. to visit the Sarki at his court. The delegation comprised Aminatou, other young women, and a representative of the DFD. The plan was exposed to the Sarki, who listened carefully to the ideas and goals being presented. At the end of the women's speech, he said: 'Pesaro has given the FFK to us and the Project has got nothing to do with it. We are not going to put the structure to any use, if we don't want to, but if anyone tries to use it without our agreement and benefit, we will prevent them to do so'. The delegation left, frustrated but powerless. Aminatou's comment, with which everyone agreed, was 'that thing [the FFK] is a problem-thing' [*Wannan abu, tana da matsalalolin*], meaning that whatever one tried to do with it, it would cause him/her problems. However, this was not the last attempt to 'resuscitate' the FFK.

A few weeks later, the DFD opted for an 'official' way to change things, and a reunion with all 'interested' women in Keita was convened at the FFK to elect a new committee, after what was presented as the *de facto* dissolution, due to inactivity, of the old one. The reunion would culminate in popular 'democratic elections' of the FFK's new committee. As the DFD was responsible for women's activities in the area of project intervention, no one could object that this did not fall into its competences. The members of the old committee and a few other directly interested persons were expressly informed; otherwise the notice was spread in town through the public cryer.

At 4 pm on 4 December 1999, about 50 women gathered on the FFK's veranda. Halima, as chief of the DFD, made an introductory speech, clarifying the history and the purposes of the FFK structure. Tambara and most of the members of the old committee were present, but no mention was made of the consequences of their management. Before the elections, it was suggested that a committee including mostly young women would have been more active and consonant to the spirit of the operation. The standing candidates for the posts of president, treasurer and secretary were asked to present

themselves. The old committee stood there, motionless, and did not put itself forward. There were 7 candidates for the three posts, 4 of whom stood for the presidency. Aminatou was one of them, even though she did not present herself personally, but her name had been added to the list, as she was the one person currently most active in the FFK.

The women were asked to vote raising their hands. At this point a woman in her 40s spoke with energy from the crowd: 'I suggest that we re-elect Tambara as president of the FFK'. Everybody agreed and raised their hand. Then the other members were elected. The secretary belonged to the old committee, too, whereas the treasurer was a new member. When we left the place, Aminatou told me '*On ne pouvait rien faire*' (there was nothing we could do). Later, I heard the same comment from the DFD Chief.

Although Aminatou had been active in the Project since she was a girl and, on this occasion, she was supported by the Project Division, and although Keita's women knew about the ex-committee's previous behaviour, status differential was determinant in re-confirming power and control to those at the top. Aminatou's achievements within the development project and her status as a 'project creature' did not change the outcome of the elections. Women's choice can be seen as an 'investment' in social capital: they gained more from their alliance with Tambara than from allying with Aminatou. On this occasion, also the PDR/ADM people could not challenge Tambara's influence, because they could not afford not to have her support: '*elle est trop puissante*', I was told, '*c'est la soeur du Sarki*' ('She is too powerful: she is the Sarki's sister').

As in the Tinkirana case discussed in Chapter 6, despite project intentions to alter gender relations in favour of women through this operation, it is not for its impact on gender relations that it came to be relevant in Keita. Actors involved in the FFK case were 'playing status' within spaces opened in the name of 'gender'. It is as the sister of the highest ranking (male) traditional authority in the Canton that Tambara was able to reassert her position in Keita, and women's criterion in re-electing her was more an investment in social relations than an attempt to improve the status of women *vis à vis* that of men.

7.7 Conclusion

The peculiar spatial, structural, and cultural characteristics of the field of development intervention allow different categories of actors to find room for manoeuvre for their respective projects along the PDR/ADM gender axis. With Long and Villarreal, this is because 'different categories of actors accord different social meanings and visualize different trajectories for the project' (Long and Villarreal 1989:103).

The wider implications of this chapter for the relations between different actor categories within the field of development are that the relations between different sets of actors engaged in the Keita Project are not characterised by openness and an effort to achieve mutual understanding. Development 'macro' actors 'construct' knowledge about the women of Keita and use the *'femme de Keita'* and the *'femmes du Sahel'* instrumentally to carry out their respective agendas (knowledge of the other 'as a tool'). The *femme de Keita* and *femmes du Sahel* are tropes which tell us something about the values, interests and goals of their sources or authors, respectively, the WID approach and Koutché's regime; and the GAD approach. On the other hand, Keita's women try to manipulate the situations made available by the new emphasis on women's role to unfold their own projects. These projects, even in the case of project staff in the Women Division, are influenced more by forces close to the everyday life of local actors than by the Project's explicit objectives.

The *femme de Keita,* i.e. the poor woman who, despite the harsh working conditions, in cooperation with the national government and an international project, took the challenge of fighting against the adverse odds of a hostile nature symbolizes popular participation; women's involvement in development; and trust in the leading forces of change. This trope partly reflects the undeniable efforts of thousands of poor women in the Project intervention area, but it is also useful to many actors, such as the FAO, donors, and Niger's government, as it displays their success in achieving their respective agendas. Massive popular participation sanctions their policy choices and actions.

The *Femmes du Sahel* symbolise a different type of women, victimised workers under the burden of productive and reproductive chores, forced by their own destitution

and lack of alternatives to accept a deal (*chantier* work) which increases the demands on their health and bodies. However, this image calls for more 'intervention', and is therefore instrumental to GAD objectives, leading to the creation of the DPFSE. The DPFSE was the outcome of the strategies of an actor network of policy elite women (Monimart, Paoletti, Bayard, Halima Traoré), who operationalised GAD narratives into the 'intervention' of the new women's Division.

Village women in the project intervention area had no direct access to macro-level narratives. However, international and national approaches to rural women's participation in development actions provided new spaces for strategic action for different categories of rural women who found themselves willingly or unwillingly exposed to them. Their strategies did not coincide with explicit development approaches. The strategy of women like Tambara and Halima was to rely upon networks of allegiance with powerful local actors, in most cases men, from which they derived prestige. Tambara's power is clearly 'relational', in that it is rooted in her kinship 'positioning' within a hierarchical social structure (she is the sister of the Sarki). Halima has achieved a considerable control over resources and people, and relative security within the Project, thanks to her marriage with the project manager. The assembly of Keita women who elected Tambara was more concerned to 'invest' in a relation from which they could derive support and benefits in the future, than to sustain the Project's initiative of the *Foyer Feminin de Keita*, aimed supposedly at benefiting them in the first place. Aminatou has tried to maintain control over her labour, returns to labour, and body, by rejecting the 'married' status and 'repositioning' herself within the local gender system. Partly, it has been the economic independence achieved through her own job, an external opportunity, which allowed her to remain independent. Her choice maximizes her autonomy, but decreases her security: indeed, Aminatou's conditions in Niamey were harsh, and things could have turned badly for her.

This chapter also contributes to our understanding of the dynamics between development projects and local gender relations, complementing the conclusions reached by other anthropologists. In her ethnography of the bee-keepers of Ayuquila (Mexico), Villarreal (cf. Long and Villarreal 1989; Arce, Villarreal and de Vries 1994), documents different women's strategies to enhance their room for manoeuvre within the spaces opened by a project. Villarreal notes that, in her example, 'autonomy can be a

misleading concept [...]. We have found the women of Ayuquila renewing their bonds with their menfolk, not breaking them unless it is really necessary, while at the same time working to build their other networks and creating new ones' (Arce, Villarreal and De Vries 1994:169). Making room for manoeuvre may in fact involve consent with established gender hierarchies and a degree of dependence on others, including men. With Aminatou's exception, all the examples provided above confirm this interpretation, which is also suggested by Tinkirana women's choice to side with their men at the meeting organised by the gender consultancy, in order to put pressure on the Project for the construction of a new dam (cf. Chapter 6). However, this seems to happen because, in Villarreal's example as well as in the cases illustrated in this chapter, project activities did not create acute tensions between men and women or within households.

The bee-keeping initiative started by Ayuquila women did not threaten men's role and status, and Ayuquila women expressly adopted strategies to minimize potential conflicts with men. In Keita, the outbreak of gender conflicts was contained by the interruption of the Project's land redistribution policy as soon as it became evident that this initiative was creating tensions which the Project was not going to be able to control, and by the fact that, due to male seasonal migration, men and women did not compete over labour opportunities offered by the Project. In these cases, women have only to gain from obtaining men's support, and men have nothing to lose from women's participation in project activities. When these conditions do not obtain, conflicts over control of time, labour and property is likely to arise between genders and within households (see Chapter 9).

Carney and Watts' description of gender dynamics in the Jahaly Pacharr Irrigation Project in the Gambia illustrates a different situation (Carney and Watts 1990; Watts 1993). In Jahaly Pacharr, the Project interfered with land and labour relations within the household, animating struggles between men and women over access to land. These struggles were primarily 'over meaning' (Carney and Watts 1990:211), i.e. over re-defining gender identities and thereby granting or denying access to resources to men and women. In the case illustrated by Carney and Watts, the Jahaly Pacharr Project upset the norms regulating men and women's relative access to and control over resources. On several occasions, the Keita Project risked giving rise to similar tensions.

We have seen that the newly opened Division for the promotion of Women's Role in Keita initially stirred external tensions between women and men (especially ex *chefs de chantier*), and internal conflicts over the interpretation of women's role within the Project. These conflicts were partly solved through the Division Chief's marriage with the project manager and by a partial redefinition of the Division's objectives. Also in the Project's first phase, as mentioned in Chapter 3 and above, the redistribution of rights upon lands to male household heads provoked the remonstrations of groups of women who had been providing the labour for the rehabilitation, but did not benefit from the redistribution. In this case, the end of the redistribution policy concluded the potential conflict between men and women. This suggests that the main opportunities which were made available by the Keita Project to local women, such as working on the *chantiers* for food rations, or participating in *groupement* activities and the *Foyer Féminin de Keita* did not constitute real challenges to local gender relations, but that otherwise conflict may have risen.

The following chapter compares the practices and perceptions of different categories of actors (planners, consultants, local authorities, men and women) *vis à vis* the application of new participatory approaches to the Keita Project. In contrast to the introduction of gender/development rationales to the PDR/ADM's programme, new participatory trends involved a thorough restructuring of the Project's intervention strategies, giving rise to interest conflicts between 'macro', 'meso' and 'micro' actors in the field of project intervention.

8. THE PARADOX OF PARTICIPATION: DEVELOPMENT POLICY MAKING AND PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES IN KEITA

8.1 Introduction

In the 2000, seventeen years since the beginning of PDR/ADM upon the bases set by the Italian Initiative to Fight against Desertification in the Sahel, Italy prepared a new umbrella 'Programme to Fight against Desertification for the Reduction of Poverty in the Sahel'. The new Programme was inspired by the international modishness of 'participatory', and 'bottom-up' development and, through it, Italy aimed at inserting itself in the World Bank–led Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers.

The New Programme was inspired by wider trends in international development, and its approach was unsurprisingly different from the approach which had characterised the Keita Project over the previous sebenteen years. The Keita Project's management style had been centralised and relatively 'top-down', especially in the Project's main component, that of environmental rehabilitation and the fight against desertification.

But Italian actors in the development aid Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs felt that change in Italian development policy in the Sahel had to be reflected in Italy's most famous Project in that region, Keita. It would not make sense, according to Italian officials responsible for the coordination of the New Programme, for the most important Italian Project in the area to run counter to new Italian approaches in development. Accordingly, a 'mission' was sent to Keita to rearrange the project's approach in line with the New Programme in April 2000. Keita was then entering its Fourth and final phase. The same Mission had to identify the main strategic axes along which the Project was going to function during its last five years of work in the region.

The coordinators of Italy's New Programme wanted the Keita Project to become an example of the New Programme's approaches and asked the mission to consider ways to operate this 'adaptation'. However, in Niger it became evident that various parties involved in the Project were anxious to see the Project take other problems on board in its Final Phase.

Nigerien State authorities, and Niger's President himself, wanted the Project to focus on environmental rehabilitation and common property resource management. Project Staff emphasised that, in its final stage the Project had to direct its efforts toward ensuring the 'sustainability' of the Project's past interventions and the 'responsabilisation' of 'the peasant'. Keita's traditional authorities, village chiefs, and local inhabitants all wanted the Project to complete and/or continue its environmental rehabilitation activities.

The priorities of all these different categories of actors, and primarily of the men and women living in the Project intervention area, were reflected in the report prepared by the Mission at completion of its stay in Keita. The report also argued that the Project's adaptation to Italy's New Programme had to be gradual and to take into account the Project's history and the delicate stage at which it found itself. A few months later, a New Mission was organised, this time led by the technical coordinator of Italy's New Programme, which enforced the New Programme's priorities onto Keita's approach. Paradoxically, this highly 'top-down' change was implemented in the name of 'bottom-up' participatory approaches, which, by the 2000, had become ubiquitous in the field of planned development.

This chapter discusses an extended case study of the negotiations which characterised the introduction of Italy's New Programme in the Keita Project. It took five 'missions', composed by interdisciplinary groups of Italian and Nigerien consultants, to come up with a project for the Fourth Phase, which, in the Italian planners' intentions, should lead to the 'rebirth' of the Keita Project upon 'participatory' premises. It was likely that the Fourth Phase would be the final phase of the Project, and different categories of actors held strong views about priority problems which the Project would have to unravel before its completion. Most of the evidence presented in this chapter derives from happenings which took place in the third of the five 'missions', in which I participated as the anthropology consultant.

The case study shows that 'distant' categories of actors had different priorities for the Project's final phase. However, some actors have a greater influence upon the course taken by events (or upon the configuration of the field at any given time) and,

with Scoones and Holmes, 'the construction of [development][69] policy is, to a large extent, dominated by the decisions of elite groups of policy makers' (Holmes and Scoones 2000:7). Ultimately, as argued in Chapter 1, the room for manoeuvre available to meso and micro actors (Mouzelis 1995) can be limited considerably by the decisions of macro actors. These decisions are based more on political pressures to conform to international development trends, than on an attempt to 'see the justification for the other's point of view' (Gadamer 1986:152), and make informed choices to improve the living conditions of the 'target population'.

8.2 The New 'Programme to Fight against Desertification for the Reduction of Poverty in the Sahel'

The New Programme represented a 'manifesto' of Italian policy in the Sahel, and the planners responsible for implementation of the Programme in the Ministry were under pressure to make existing Italian Projects in the area conform to the new standards. According to the 'expert' who had taken care of the redaction of the Programme (Dr.[70] Corsi), the main difference between the Italian Initiative and the New Programme was the greater emphasis which the latter put on the notion of participation. Dr. Corsi explained the original idea of starting the New Programme in the following terms:

> 'They said, beyond all the ruins that exist in the Italian Cooperation, we have a positive experience in this domain: we have Aghrymet, we have Keita, we have done a few things... from all this we can find a way to insert ourselves in the international debate of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers'.

Because the Keita Project is highly visible and stands as an example of its kind, according to Italian officials it could not be allowed to run counter to the new approaches. As the main coordinator (Dr. Parini) for the Programme's implementation argued,

> 'Keita should now become a reference point for a forthcoming series of new experiences in the Sahel along the lines of the new Programme'.

This was easier said than done. Fitting Keita into the guidelines set by the New Programme would have entailed drastic transformations to a project which had been

[69] The original sentence reads: 'the construction of environmental policy is, to a large extent, dominated by the decisions of elite groups of policy makers' (Holmes and Scoones 2000:7).

working for almost 20 years upon entirely different premises. Keita's management style had been characterised by the *dirigiste* approach of its first manager, Dr. Carotti, who energetically 'ran' the Project since its beginnings in 1983 until 1998, when the national project manager replaced him. Commenting on the 'Keita phenomenon', Dr. Corsi said:

> 'Carotti took the Project in his hands and began working [*comincia a realizzare*], overcoming enormous difficulties: the bureaucracy, the garage, machines, contracts... it was he, with incredible sacrifices and organisational skill, who surmounted all difficulties, but at the same time, he became, as it often happens, a kind of satrap of the Project. There was a dialogue between Carotti and the prefect, who at the time was the number two of [Kountché's dictatorial] regime, and probably [Carotti] was in contact with Kountché himself. All decisions passed from the authoritarian channel which had the prefect at the top'.

Keita had always been a project in which decision making was highly centralised. Activities were planned at the top and, even though they were undeniably influenced by continuous formal and informal consultations with representatives of the local population, the criteria for intervention were based upon 'scientific' observations and 'technical' objectives. This was especially so in the Project's main component, that of environmental rehabilitation of sub-catchment areas.

Keita had represented an example in the field of anti-desertification projects for almost 20 years. Now, the 'example Keita' had to change clothes, because it had become unfashionable on the international development scene, and could not be proudly displayed to the public unless it underwent an effective 'lifting'. This change was not compelled by observations of problems risen 'on the field' in Keita, but rather by the necessity to show that Italy's interventions were up to date and coherent with international development trends. Ironically, this highly 'top-down' change was operated in the name of 'bottom-up' and 'participatory' ideals.

8.3 In Rome: the Briefing with the Italian Coordinator of the Programme to Fight Desertification for the Reduction of Poverty in the Sahel.

A briefing with Dr. Parini, the main coordinator of the New Programme and a *homo novus* in the Ministry (the only one not familiar with Keita), was organised for the consultants before their departure to Niger. In the meeting, he supported the view that the Project had to change from a project that managed preconceived activities to one

[70] In Italy, the title 'Dr.' (*Dottore*) is attributed to anyone who has achieved the first (undergraduate) degree (*Laurea*).

that aimed at providing services to the local community, for activities selected by the community itself. Dr. Parini wanted the Project to put an end to its top-down approach:

> we are not going to define a list of specified activities, we are not going to set aside 100 millions for papaya and 150 millions for ant-breeding! Local people will have the opportunity to obtain loans, getting a chance to realize their objectives. They are the ones who know best what is the most profitable investment in their context. This way, it will be the people of Keita who will decide what is the best way to make use of the Project.

One consultant who had been working in Keita for almost 15 years, residing there for 8 years, and myself, aware of the importance attached to hydraulic and rehabilitation works by Keita's villagers, anticipated some of the problems that they would have faced once in Keita at the reunion with Dr. Parini. But he argued:

> if we start with this attitude we'll never end. I understand that it is important for the Project to 'make works', but now the priority is to change the Project's approach and methodology. In this phase, even if not a single work was realised, I would not worry. The only works that should be done are with the aim of testing the new approach.

It was clear from the meeting that for the Italian actors involved in the New Programme's coordination, the absolute priority was to make the Keita Project suit the approach presented in the new Programme. The Project had to stop its work programme, redefine its strategies, rearrange its structure, renew its methodology and approach, and then, perhaps, it could go back to its normal functioning. It is noteworthy that the strongest supporter of Keita's changes, Dr. Parini, had never been to Keita, and knew little, if anything, of the local reality. However, in this circumstance, he happened to be the most influential actor in relation to Keita's destiny. He was coordinating a Programme which could reposition Italy within the international development scenario. He was part of an elite network in the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs which pushed for Italian projects to be consistent with the New Programme. Had it been otherwise, Italy's image would have suffered *vis à vis* other donor countries.

8.4 In Niamey: Meetings with the Minister and with the Pilot Committee.

Once in Niger, the 'mission' was accompanied for the first five days by Mr. Fini, a representative of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Mr. Fini had followed closely the activities of Keita since its inception and had been to Keita on several occasions. The main reason for his presence at the beginning of the 'Mission', was to meet the

Nigerien Minister of Agriculture and to make the opening speech at the Project's Pilot Committee [*Comité de Pilotage*] meeting.

The Minister delivered a message from Niger's Head of State to the 'Mission'. The message outlined Niger's priorities for the Project's future agenda, and it expressed the President's wish to

> see the experience of the PDR/ADM extended to other districts.

He expressed Niger's goal in the field of 'environmental development' as 'the control [*maîtrise*] of surface waters', in which, in his words, 'Keita stood as an unparalleled example'. The Minister noted that focusing on the management of surface waters was a more logical option than spending a lot of money on agricultural inputs. The President also wished the tenure question and the management of common property resources in the Project area to be taken into serious consideration.

The President of Niger, Tandja Mahamane, had been closely connected to the Project and its manager in the mid 1980s, when he held the post of Tahoua's Prefect. The Project's methodology in the 'environmental rehabilitation' field was well known to him, as he had followed the Project's activities and results for some years. A replication of Keita's environmental approach in other regions of Niger had been one of Tandjà's objectives in his presidential campaign.

Mr. Fini did not fail to mention the connection between Keita and the President at the Pilot Group meeting, which was held the day following the Mission's visit to the Minister. Mr. Fini began his speech acknowledging that the Fourth Phase of the Project had an ambitious objective, namely, the transfer of competences and responsibilities to local populations who, at the Project's end, would have to manage the resources created and improved by the Project. But, he added, 'decision power is associated with responsibility'. This meant that Keita's 'beneficiaries' had to endorse responsibility for the management of structures installed by the Project. According to Mr. Fini, the Project had identified methods appropriate to Sahel's problems. The Keita Project had demonstrated that it was not profitable to stock waters downstream catchment areas without carrying out preliminary protective actions upstream.

> Two great persons: your President of the Republic and Dr. Carotti, against all experts and trends, decided to intervene [*amenager*] from upstream to downstream. Today, no one would dare saying that a different method should be adopted. Now, strategic resource management options must be found. The Mission will consider this issue in detail.

When it was the national project manager's turn to speak, he reminded the audience that project Staff had already started preparing for the Fourth Phase, sometimes referred to as 'disengagement phase'. To the Manager, 'disengagement' entailed

> progressively remitting responsibility toward the management of natural resources and infrastructures to the local inhabitants.

He went on to describe the options taken by project staff in order to achieve this goal, which he saw as the fundamental objective of the Project at this advanced stage. It is noteworthy that persons better acquainted with Keita focused on concrete problems which they could envisage taking place in the PDR/ADM in the future, rather than on abstract 'approaches'. At the meeting with the Pilot Committee, Italy's New Programme was not even mentioned. Having completed their 'official' meetings in the capital, the consultants moved to Keita, where they were to remain for about three weeks.

8.5 In Keita: *'Kaman An Fara Gine, Sai an Karye Shi'* (It Is Like When You Start Constructing a Building: You Have to Complete It).

project staff had started introducing the idea of the Project's potential conclusion to the people of various villages. This was done in order to prepare local villagers to take charge of the infrastructures and resources which had been continuously supervised by the Project.

At a meeting including the representatives of approximately 15 women's groups from different villages and the respective village chiefs, the project manager announced: 'The Project is like a boy. It has reached the age of 17 now, and it is ready to get married'. The people were disappointed, and openly expressed the wish that the Project would stay. One village chief reacted worriedly:

> The village of MKG has been waiting for the Project to take its water problems into consideration for years and years. Is the Project going to leave without completing its task?

Another chief argued:

For the women, the groups are very important, and they confide only in the Keita Project. Other projects have tried to contact them, and the women themselves have chased them away. They said that if it was not the Keita Project, they wouldn't collaborate with any other structure.

One woman stood up and expanded on the event mentioned by the Chief. The field-agents of an international project had reached their village in a moto-cross, and presented to a group of women casually assembled what cooperation with their project could offer them. But the village women had chased them away, and the agents ran so fast that they forgot some files in their village! This comment made the people at the meeting laugh. Soon the meeting was concluded.

I remained in the village to visit some people while the rest of the party made its way back to Keita. I went to greet Salifou, a man in his mid forties, who had worked as a site leader on project intervention sites. I related to Salifou the discussion which had taken place at the meeting. He thought that there was still a lot to do for the Project in the region, and commented evocatively:

Kaman an fara gine: sai an karye shi
(it is like when you start constructing a building: you have to complete it)

Also Malam Issouf Kombo, a Keita elder, commented in a concerned way:

If the Project were to leave for good it would be the catastrophe here. (original in French)

In the course of my stay in Keita, I visited many villages. I wanted to find out different local groups' understanding of the Project's intervention strategies and methods. After the Project's departure, the region's inhabitants would be fully responsible for the maintenance of the infrastructures built by the Project. I prioritised meeting those people who had worked for the Project on the intervention sites near their villages. My sample included many women, as they represented the bulk of the Project's labour force. The majority of women I met could describe very accurately several categories of project intervention. They all insisted that the Project should stay and carry out more works close to their village. Some of them explicitly said that they wanted to work for the Project in order to obtain food-for-work rations. A woman in Garadawa said that it had been two years now that the Project had not come to do some work in her village: no new trenches had been made, and old trenches had not been

maintained. 'We want work' (*muna son aiki*), she said. 'What kind of work?' I asked. '*Aikin doutchi*' (stones work) she replied. Fewer women mentioned the impact of the activities on the environment, mainly for granting them access to water. Some women argued they had thought the Project would never leave and said that if the Project was going to leave, no one would help their villages anymore.

The environmental impact of project activities was more appreciated by village elders and men in general (cf. Chapter 6). In every village, the elders and the chiefs had a list of 'desiderata' which they wanted the project to assist them with. They consistently argued that the Project should have stayed as long as possible. In more than 20 villages, the villagers, coordinated by village chiefs, had piled up heaps of stones. This was one of the first steps required for building hydraulic structures. The Project normally distributed food rations to workers who engaged in stone carrying. But some villages had done so spontaneously to demonstrate their willingness to cooperate, and as a way to attract the Project's attention to the acuteness of their problems.

8.6 The Official Visit to the Sarki: Finish What You Have Started or Go Away

Also in Keita, the Mission had a number of 'official visits' on its agenda. Perhaps the most important one was with the Sarki, the most influential traditional authority in the District of Keita. Keita's Chef du Canton has a strong personality and has always claimed his right to have a say on the Project's activities in the region falling under his influence. Carotti used to consult him before starting a new type of activity, and, in general, it was customary for official missions to pay him a visit and report upon the mission's objectives. The Sarki addressed the consultants with a severe tone. Having listened carefully to the mission's reasons for being in Keita, he replied:

> Finish what you have started, or go away. All other donors have abandoned us because of your presence here. Because we hosted the famous Project Keita, we haven't got an NGO either. Now, you tell us that you might leave. You go away without even completing here. And in the last years of your stay here you want to concentrate on some little game with the population. Many villages in Keita's Valley are not self sufficient [for food production] : you must complete your work. If what has been done in Loudou had been done everywhere! The village chiefs come in reunion with the Sarki [i.e. himself]: here are our villagers, they wait and wait... Now, if you want to stay here doing some little activity, then go away directly, because you are just impeding others to come.

His speech, delivered publicly in front of his 'court', stimulated a choir of agreement from the village chiefs, elders, and dignitaries present. There was no doubt

that different categories of villagers in the project intervention area not only wanted the Project to stay, but wanted it primarily to continue its standard 'land rehabilitation' interventions without, as they put it, 'losing time' adopting new approaches. As Hajiya, an old woman with a long standing association with the Project for her participation on the working sites commented:

> what new approaches can there be? The people here always communicated with the Project! (*Mutane kullum suna yi magana da Projé*!) That's why *you* know what people want: we want dams, we want work, right? We want food-for-work (*muna son tabki, muna son aiki, korrei, muna son taimakon abinci!*)

8.7 The Meeting with the Project Staff and the World Food Programme Expert: 'a Problem of Mentality [*Mentalité*]'

Even though local people appeared to know the technical details of project infrastructures, as well as the function of different intervention types, the majority of people did not seem to have understood the relation between various types of interventions at a subcatchment level. The Project's appraised method had emphasised the necessity to 'treat' subcatchment areas as an integrated whole: the functioning of a dam downstream depended upon the series of hydraulic structures built upstream.

Maintenance of this system of interrelated works at the subcatchment level required cooperation between villages having a common interest in the subcatchment as a whole. However, it appeared from my own inquiries and project staff meetings in various villages that cooperation between neighbouring villages would have been difficult to achieve when these had a past history of antagonism and conflict. The management of common property resources at a subcatchment level was going to be a problematic issue. Many villages were clearly unwilling to cooperate with their historical enemies. Whether they lived in the same subcatchment or not, did not seem to be a sufficient stimulus to induce a pooling of efforts for the maintenance of infrastructures from which they derived a collective benefit.

This question was what most preoccupied the project staff. They felt that it was already too 'late' to start worrying about how the local population would deal with the Project's inheritance, and they were clearly alarmed by the difficulties they could foresee. At a reunion organised by the mission nearing the conclusion of its stay, these

preoccupations were brought to the fore. One member of staff argued that the Project's primary task now consisted in

> transforming the mentality [*mentalité*] of the populations and making villagers responsible [*responsabiliser*] for the management of their own territory.

Another staff member agreed:

> we have to focalise all our energies on changing mentalities. In this zone mentalities are hard, we'll have to sensitize [*sensibiliser*]. If the Project closes today, there are going to be problems: the villager [*paysan*] has not understood the sense of the interventions [*realisations*].

Another staff member argued that in Burkina 'mentalities' were different; people were ready to accept considerable sacrifices because they had a sense of common interest. On the same lines, the Project Manager argued that at this stage one single resource management committee (*comité de gestion du terroir villageois*) was worth ten dams. The main problem in the area was

> a problem of mentality: people are still talking of the 'project dam', the 'project trees'... they have not realised that everything returns to them... they have to assume responsibility for the management of their resources, it is necessary for local villagers to become aware (*prise de conscience*) of their own role.

During the last week of work in Keita, the Mission had been joined by a World Food Programme 'expert' (Dr. Sarner), who had to assess the food-for-work situation within the Project's activities. The WFP expert was also worried by what he believed to be a serious 'dependency syndrome' developed by local inhabitants with regards to food rations. He was struck by the finding that,

> after 17 years of project intervention, some women I have met on my visits are still asking for food rations.

He believed that the Project should have stopped this 'distribution' policy, and asked local people not only to volunteer on the work sites, but to contribute financially to the interventions. According to Dr. Sarner, this was the only way in which the 'beneficiaries' would have 'built ownership' of the infrastructures and resources. He believed that urgent measures ought to be taken to ensure the 'sustainability' of project interventions:

Send armies of sociologists', he argued '*Le génie rural est plus facile que le génie social!*

Even in this short exposition of the views of different actor categories we can see that the actor's status and position with respect to the Project influenced his/her expectations from project activities in the Fourth Phase. Niger's State authorities focused on how the Project might contribute to the National 'anti-desertification' strategies; project staff worried about the so-called 'sustainability' of project infrastructures: would local people follow up and maintain the resources improved by the Project? Local men and women of different status wanted the Project to carry on its activities for different reasons. Some were mainly interested in the potential environmental impact upon the lands surrounding their villages; others, mainly women, wanted more opportunities to obtain food rations; the Sarki and the chiefs of villages severely hit by erosion and drought, wanted the Project to complete its work in areas, within the project intervention area, where it had not carried out substantial interventions so far.

8.8 Back in Rome: The Mission's Conclusion and the Programme's Coordinator's Comments

The conclusion reached at the end of the mission was that the Project should have focused on three main axes:

- Finalisation of interventions in the environmental domain according to defined criteria.
- Income generating activities mainly in the field of agriculture and horticulture.
- Other measures, which included the organisation of local resource management institutions responsible, *inter alia*, for the maintenance of hydraulic structures and for the supervision of reforestation sites.

In emphasising these objectives in their reports, the consultants believed they were reflecting the priorities of different categories of stakeholders, which had become evident in the course of their mission. Instead, they had found it difficult, in the light of the sets of problems which had become evident during their stay, to introduce the changes required to make the Project fit into the New Italian Programme. Keita's past could not be brushed away, and the Mission's Report argued that adaptation to the new Programme should have taken place in a gradual way.

However, the report's conclusions were not particularly welcomed by the Italian Official responsible for the New Programme's organisation (Dr. Parini). At a meeting

organised to discuss the report's findings and recommendations, he told myself and other consultants in an altered tone:

> *You* say we have to build dams. Fine. We can hang your plans on the wall. But *what do the people* want? What if they wanted a PVC firm? The Project has to be participatory. I don't care if Keita stops making dams altogether.

His preconceived association of 'dam building' with 'hard', top-down development, and of other 'participatory approaches' with 'soft', 'pro-people' development, made it almost inconceivable to him that what local people in fact wanted were 'dams'. But he was also disappointed to see that his own priority, transforming Keita into an example of Italy's new Programme, did not figure as an urgent measure in the consultants' report. He argued that the problem with sending experts who are familiar with a project is that they are conditioned by their previous knowledge of the Project. According to Dr. Parini, it would have been better to send new people, people with no emotional involvement in the Project. In other terms, people who, having no familiarity with local men and women, would have been more efficient at executing tasks emanating from the top. A few months later, when the New Programme had reached a more advanced stage, the technical coordinator of the New Programme was sent to Keita, to re-arrange the Project's formula according to the New Programme's priorities. And the Project interrupted its activities for some months. I don't know, at present, if they have re-started.

8.9 Conclusion: Some Personal Remarks

In the example presented above, the New Programme Coordinators appropriated international discourses of 'participation' and imposed them on the Project's programme, despite the different view expressed in the Mission's report, and against the priorities articulated by various Nigerien actors. The hierarchical nature of bargaining and negotiations over development discourses is well recognised by persons differently situated within the development apparatus. Commenting upon Italy's adoption of participatory approaches, Dr. Corsi (see section 8.2) explained:

> This is how bureaucracies work: first they check if you are wearing the uniform and then they listen to you. That's why there is such a tendency for everyone to say the same things in the same way. Because otherwise you are excluded from this hierarchy that is supported by bureaucracies: these aren't universities... this is a clash of perspectives at work, these are hierarchies that give you, or do not give you, the imprimatur.

From a different perspective, a mechanic at the Keita Project made a similar point:

> We, the small-ones, there's nothing we can do. The internationals [referring to the consultants] who are in the shadow of wealth should tell the great patrons up there not to close down the Project. [*Nous, les petits, on ne peut rien. Il faut que les internationaux qui sont a l'ombre de la richesse disent aux grands patrons la-bas de ne pas fermer le Projet!*]

The views of Dr. Corsi and of Keita's mechanic seem to agree that the construction of development policy is dominated by the decisions of elite groups of policy makers (cf. Holmes and Scoones 2000:7). The above mentioned 'mission' was the last occasion I had to visit Keita. Soon after this consultancy, an old time Keita 'expert' and myself decided to put an end to our collaboration with the Ministry, finding it useless and professionally compromising. Those who choose to remain are willing to accept the compromises and, in turn, conform to development discourses. Maybe in the future the Keita Project will decrease its 'anti-desertification' activities and re-direct funds to PRAs ('send armies of sociologists!') and 'sensitisation', and local labour may be asked to work for free, as a step toward 'building ownership of the interventions' and 'making them responsible for their own development'. Resistance, or retaliation, may be the reaction of men and women in the Project intervention area, maybe hoping that another, more useful project may follow Keita ('finish what you have started or go away'). Or they may pretend to comply while trying to reap some benefit from 'intervention' for their own purposes.

Despite its 'bottom-up' rhetoric, Italy's New Programme was parachuted on Keita from the top. Rather than trying to understand what, in Keita, had achieved the support of the 'target population', Italy responded to pressures to conform to international trends. In Dr. Corsi's words, 'first they check if you are wearing the uniform, then they listen to you'. This is not because bureaucrats are incompetent, but because this is how the system to which they belong works, because the pressure to conform is 'closer' to them than the pressure of geographically, culturally, and socially 'distant' villages in the Ader Doutchi Majiya. Indeed, many Italian officers were passionate about Keita, and had done all they could to obtain funds to keep it alive. But, in the year 2000, keeping Keita going was possible only if Keita conformed to the 'new [participatory] orthodoxy in the world of development that is shared by a majority of

practitioners involved in the bilateral, multilateral or non-governmental sectors of the development industry' (Stirrat and Henkel 2001:168). In the following chapter, I try to draw some reflections on what can be learned about 'development' from Keita's case.

9. CONCLUSION

This conclusion summarises the main findings of the thesis and discusses their implications for development practice and anthropological involvement in it. As this study is an analysis of the different perspectives of the actors involved in the Keita Project, the first section below is a review of the interpretations of the Project advanced by different categories of actors by virtue of their role and position in it. This leads me to a discussion of what constitutes 'success' and 'failure' in development, first with reference to the ideas of various parties about the pros and contras of the Keita Project, and then by comparing Keita to other studies and ethnographies of development projects (Carney and Watts 1990; Porter Allen and Thompson 1991; Uphoff 1992; Watts 1993; Akrich 1993; Harrison 1995; Ferguson 1996; Crewe and Harrison 1998). I conclude the thesis by positioning myself with respect to a question raised by Ferguson (1996), namely, 'what is to be done about all the poverty, sickness and hunger in the Third World?' I should state at the outset that I do not, I could not, have an answer to this question, but I advance some working hypotheses on what, on the basis of the findings of this thesis, I believe to be a constructive approach to address this question from an anthropological perspective. This approach challenges both 'development's' self perpetrating strategy to look for ever better projects and new trends to replace countless failures; and some anthropologists' populist refusal to include the State in their visions of what should be done about poverty in the South. It follows Robertson's insight (Robertson 1984) to pay more attention than anthropologists have been prepared to do to the role of the State, its external relations with other states, and its internal relations with different categories of citizens.

9.1 Interpretations of the Keita Project

A particular interpretation of the Keita Project's 'intervention' depends on the position of the actors in question in the Project itself, and is related to an (individual or collective) actor's specific 'projects in the Project'. The forms of intersubjectivity established between actors reflect the negotiations carried out in order to advance the chances of one's project's success, including attempts to manipulate or 'enrol' others in one's project (cf. Long 1992:23). Strategies are unfolded in the multi-sited structure of the field of project intervention, in which some categories of actors ('macro' actors)

have greater influence than others. Below I summarise the ways in which this framework applies to the story told in this thesis, looking at how different sets of actors interpreted the Keita Project and 'used' it to advance their strategies.

Confronted with drought in the Sahel, international 'desertification' narratives called for external intervention in the form of integrated rural development projects. Arguing that 'equilibrium' between society and the environment had been 'lost', they prescribed 'change' for Sahelian producers, and 'fighting against desertification' through Integrated Rural Development Projects (cf. Chapter 4). The Italian Cooperation, which for many reasons perceived itself as 'young' and lacking a 'culture of cooperation', needed to legitimise its role in the donors' community. Urged by Roman based UN agencies to increase its financial support to their functioning, and under pressure to distinguish itself in the CILSS-Club du Sahel institutions, it conceived the First Italian Initiative, which set the premises for the Keita Project. The Project began under Kountché's populist regime, which placed the 'fight against desertification' at the top of the Development Society's agenda. Kountché's view of a 'Nigerien' path to development required the will of the people of Niger to merge with the will of the Nation, legitimising his power and dispersing the divisive forces characteristic of a stratified and multi-ethnic newly independent nation.

The 'projects within the Project' of international development institutions, the Italian Cooperation, and Niger's authorities converged to a remarkable extent, as they all needed a (development) Project which 'worked', showing that the desert *could* be fought against in the ways prescribed by their respective programmatic statements. At the same time, they had to 'enrol' the 'target population', without whose participation and (at least nominal) support, their 'intervention' could not be justified. The *femme de Keita*, digging the earth under the sun, enthusiastically supporting the Keita Project, was the icon of this 'enrolment'. The Keita Project's impressive results, boasting more than 40 water retinues in the arid rocks of the Ader Doutchi Majiya, were displayed in expensive project brochures and proudly presented at meetings and seminars. It is often the case in development, that the interests of 'macro' and 'micro' actors are at odds. This was not the case in Keita, where the Project accommodated the 'projects' of the men and women of the Ader Doutchi Majiya at the same time as it satisfied more powerful actors.

In the ADM, the Keita Project contributed to various patterns of trajectories envisaged by different categories of actors. The project increased the productivity of natural resources (agricultural lands, fodder, wood, trees) and created new water resources in an area characterised by severe water scarcity. The benefits resulting from its environmental activities were recognised by farmers and herders alike, and more so by men than by women, as the former controlled a greater stake of local valuable productive resources (cf. Chapter 6). Women welcomed particularly slack season employment opportunities in the form of food-for-work, as a compensation for their work on the work-sites. Food-for-work rations contributed to the household's consumption needs, but the components which could be sold also provided a minimal revenue to women. Women's involvement in food transactions was culturally accepted, and this new 'project revenue' did not create any remarkable gender and/or intrahousehold tension. *Chantier* work represented a unique slack season employment opportunity for the poorest people in the most marginal villages and had no externalities on the local 'job market', as dry season occupations were sought almost exclusively by men and mostly outside the ADM. In its first phase, the Project made available land titles to impoverished people who were willing to work in the Project's rehabilitation schemes. This was done in support to Kountché's 'land to the tiller' policy, and hence it was backed by Niger's state apparatus. When it became evident that this operation was creating potential conflicts, and that the actors responsible for dealing with these problems (i.e. the local administrative authorities) were not, for many reasons, going to deal with them effectively, the operation was stopped. Finally, the PDR/ADM created what, by local standards, are well remunerated jobs in the village of Keita, providing advanced training for some professional categories (e.g. mechanics, electricians).

In different ways, men and women, elites and common people, found the above mentioned project activities mostly beneficial to them, and implemented diverse strategies to attract new operations to their villages. These included written requests to the Project for new 'interventions' (cf. figures 2 and 3), and stratagems to 'enrol' project staff in their own projects in the Project. Hence, the reunion in Tinkirana Tounga described in Chapter 6 shows that, when the villagers couldn't convince project staff and consultants to build a second dam near their village, they accepted to become involved in another type of operation, only because they hoped that it would increase

their chances to obtain what they really wanted, a dam. In the case of the *Foyer Féminin de Keita* (FFK) discussed in Chapter 7, the women who elected Tambara 'used' the Project to strengthen their alliance with Tambara, in spite of the Women's Division plan to re-launch the *Foyer* upon new premises, and frustrating Aminatou's chances to expand her business and increase her status.

The project staff's role is to operationalise development discourses and 'enrol' the 'beneficiaries' in the Project's activities and rationales. They occupy an interface position between the planners and the 'target population', and function as 'brokers' between these groups. We have seen some examples of how the Keita Project allowed some of these specialised development workers to operationalise their individual 'projects'. Carotti wanted to conclude his career with an experience which would 'seal' years of work in tropical agriculture and development. To him, Keita was a professional and human challenge. He interpreted what different actors expected from the Project and orchestrated the 'intervention' in a rather arbitrary, yet flexible, way, conceiving of the Project as an ongoing experiment. His successor was also challenged by Keita, but was confronted with a different set of factors. He had the difficult task to prove that his management was as efficient as Carotti's and that the 'nationalisation' of the Project would not coincide with its failure. At the same time, as a national project director, he was vulnerable to the pressures of powerful compatriots, who could represent useful allies, or dangerous enemies, in his future career. The Women Division's chief, managed to 'enrol' thousands of women in her Nigerien feminist project, and, through marriage, also the project manager, achieving considerable room for manoeuvre and getting rid of others who posed obstacles to her 'project'.

Anthropologists and consultants, like everyone else, occupy a position in the field of project intervention. The Keita Project offered me a chance to develop my own unfinished project, of which this thesis is one result, to study the phenomenon of 'aid' to Africa, and to enquire into the policy relevant question of equity between North and South. I am guilty of my own version of populism. Attempting to support what I understood to be Keita's men and women's priorities, which had become anachronistic in contemporary development trends, I tried to negotiate with the planners a solution which would incorporate those aspects of project intervention that seemed to make a positive difference to the conditions of the Ader Doutchi Majiya and its inhabitants.

Macro actors could easily dismiss the arguments of micro and 'meso' actors, including myself, and conform to the new participatory policies as a condition to participate in new international development policy, of which the World Bank Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers are a case in point. One can adopt an actor-oriented perspective, and focus on the negotiations between actors, arguing that Italian planners accepted to be enrolled by International development institutions, and refused to be enrolled by a disparate set of actors, including the Sarki, the women of the Ader Doutchi Majiya, myself and some other consultants. Or one can see the field of project intervention as dominated by the decisions of 'macro' actors, who are responsible, to a greater extent than less powerful actors, for the configuration of the structure of this field: the forms of rationality which prevail and the regimes of practices which are implemented, with important consequences for the so-called 'target population'. The following section considers the most influential arguments in favour and against the Keita Project.

9.2 Different Perspectives on the Pros and Cons of the Keita Project

Above I have summarised the strategies and the 'projects in the Project' of various actors in relation to the Keita Project's 'intervention'. In this section I will present the most influential arguments in favour and against the Project as they figured at meetings and in evaluation reports. Arguments in favour and against must also be understood as part of the strategies of their supporters: seeing Keita as a 'success' implies an interest in the continuation of a certain type of activities and structure of the Project, whereas most of the critiques were raised in order to introduce changes and adapt the Project to new 'development trends'.

The Keita Project was criticised on various grounds. The most persistent and recurrent critique, raised by development workers, portrays the Project as 'top-down', and 'unsustainable'. A minimalist definition of the Keita Project represents it as a 'technological fix', as the activities which granted Keita its fame relied on the use of heavy machines (tractors, graders, etc). Local villagers would never be able to raise the funds needed to carry out the same works by themselves (and they may find it hard to maintain them) and the selection of sites and strategies for 'intervention' was based more on 'technical' criteria and 'expert knowledge' than on consultation with the 'beneficiaries' and 'local knowledge'.

A related critique holds that local people have become 'dependent' upon food-for-work, and did not develop a sense of ownership of the infrastructures built by the Project. The supporters of this argument argue in favour of the interruption of food-for-work and the transition to voluntary work. Some believe that the 'beneficiaries' ought to contribute financially to the works which were done for them, as an 'ownership building' strategy. The project staff's self critique also expresses the worry that 'the peasant has not been 'responsibilised'' or 'has not achieved consciousness', meaning that the local population is not ready to 'assume responsibility' for the management of natural resources and infrastructures at the Project's conclusion.

The last order of critiques claims that the funds invested in Keita are not justified by the potential results which even the most successful project could achieve in a context like the Ader Doutchi Majiya. The same amount of money, invested in a more productive and more densely populated area could have achieved a greater social and environmental impact and long lasting results. But, this argument goes, why spend money in a region which is always under the Damocles' sword of impending droughts and famines (which could regress the Project's results back to the situation found at project inception) and whose relatively few inhabitants had themselves resorted to cyclical migration rather than investing in local resources? I will address this last type of criticism, namely, the argument that the Keita Project should have been done 'elsewhere' or should not have been done at all, later in this conclusion, and below I will discuss the arguments of Keita's supporters with respect to the critiques mentioned above.

As we have seen, the first strand of critiques (the Keita Project as top-down and unsustainable) was perhaps the most influential, underpinning the 'participatory' arguments of Italy's New Programme. As there is no systematic ideology underlying the participatory orthodoxy (cf. Stirrat and Henkel 2001:169), different people use its arguments differently and it is often unclear what they imply in practice. With reference to the Keita case, the arguments of various supporters of the 'participatory critique' can be summarised as follows: project activities should be the result of initiatives expressed by local people, not of the management's planning and criteria. The most effective way to stimulate local initiative may be through the introduction of credit schemes. The Project's structure should consist not of compartmentalised sectors of technicians

(Divisions: public works; environment; agronomy; etc.), but of a flexible managerial team who administers funding and support for local initiatives. It is not important 'what' the Project does (building dams, 'papaya or ant breeding' – cf. Chapter 8), but how things are done. It is important to know more about local people's ideas and needs (e.g. through PRAs) and local people have to be stimulated (e.g. by sociologists or NGOs) to cooperate among themselves and find arrangements to make their management of resources and infrastructure sustainable in the future ('send armies of sociologists!'). Supporters of this critique in the Italian Cooperation argued that the Project ought to conform to new international participatory policies. The pressure to conform was explained clearly by Dr. Corsi in his account of why Italy 'had to' adapt Keita to new development trends: 'This is how bureaucracies work: first they check if you are wearing the uniform and then they listen to you. That's why there is such a tendency for everyone to say the same things in the same way. Because otherwise you are excluded from this hierarchy that is supported by bureaucracies.'

Other actors perceived the original Keita approaches as a 'success'. The President of Niger, Tandjà Mahamane, supported the replication of the 'Keita model' in other regions of the country during his election campaign, and villages which had not been targeted by project activities within and outside the intervention area insisted that the Project did not leave without dealing with their problems. The 'recipient government' and the 'target population' expressed their appreciation primarily for the system of water retinues and its impact on local livelihoods. The presence of the Project also created employment opportunities in Niamey, in the village of Keita, and, through food-for-work, in the villages of the intervention area. Keita's Sarki explicitly invited the Project to leave, if it was going to stop implementing those activities which he, and the people who recognised his authority, perceived as 'successful.'

Against those who saw the Project as a 'non-participatory' and 'unsustainable' 'technological fix', its supporters mentioned the massive contribution of the local population. ADM men and women had been involved in all project operations – weaving and installing the gabion weirs for the hydraulic structures, and constructing all the anti-desertification works. The Project had created, among the 'beneficiaries' of anti-desertification operations, a real expertise about how these infrastructures worked and how they had to be built and eventually repaired. In this sense, the 'intervention'

was 'sustainable'. On the other hand, Keita's supporters would argue, 'total sustainability' is a myth. In all 'rich' countries, the construction and maintenance of public infrastructures is financed by governments, who dispose of the funds necessary for these works though taxation. One cannot expect the citizens of one of the poorest countries in the world to work for free for the construction of a public good (e.g. a dam). Nor could the ADM villagers be expected to replace engineers and specialists who had the training and the instruments needed to specify the right site and the right dimensions and technical characteristics of infrastructures like dams and roads.

According to the Italian hydraulic engineer who adapted and followed up Keita's water retinue system, Keita's dikes and dams had been built so as to maximise their resistance to stress. The experience achieved working for the Project would allow 'the people of Keita', in an eventual future without the Project, to carry out ordinary maintenance tasks (e.g. fixing a broken gabion, re-planting dead trees in reforestation trenches, etc.). Extraordinary maintenance works represented a more dangerous threat to the longevity of the Project's results. In the unlikely event of a dam's breakdown, extraordinary maintenance works would entail the purchase of the right type of wire (available in the District centre of Tahoua) and, in some villages, carrying stones from distant sites. Following Carotti's 'pace theory' (cf. Chapter 5), the Project had used bull-dozers and machines in order to achieve meaningful results in a relatively short time. It is likely that Carotti was right when he argued that 'the dam of Seyté' (one of the biggest dams built by the PDR/ADM) could not have been built with donkeys and charts, and maybe even important maintenance works would be hard to carry out without access to machines, fuel, expert drivers, wire, and the funds necessary to obtain all this.

Perhaps the greatest difficulty, identified by members of project staff who worked in close contact with the population and by myself, consisted in achieving collaboration between the villages belonging to the same 'UTE' (*Unité Territoriale Elémentaire*) for the management and maintenance of the infrastructure falling in the UTE, what is usually referred to as the question of the management of common property resources. The Project's strategy had consisted in treating sub-catchment systems (UTEs) as integrated wholes, whose parts are interdependent from the perspective of environmental rehabilitation. However, in many instances, at least some

of the villages 'tied together' by the Project criterion of belonging to the same UTE, had a history of mutual strife and hostility. They may have formed upon the splitting of an original village due to internal fights between sections, or they may be involved in ongoing disputes over the exploitation of resources. For many reasons, project extensionists' enquiries and my own data demonstrated that at least some villages in almost each UTE were not willing to collaborate, even when they understood that maintenance of infrastructures upstream was vital to the functioning of infrastructures downstream and that there were many interdependencies between single project works. Paradoxically, this issue did not seem to preoccupy the supporters of Keita's 'participatory turn' too much. But it did preoccupy project staff, who had carried out the activities which risked being criticised as 'unsustainable'. The perceived 'need' for the 'target population' to 'assume responsibility' and develop a sense of 'ownership' of the resources and infrastructures created by the Project corresponds to a strategy to shift responsibility for the medium- and long-term consequences of the Project unto the 'beneficiaries'. By attributing responsibility to local people, this position avoids taking into consideration the political issue of Niger's incapacity to provide the means necessary for the maintenance of public infrastructures. The argument that local people did not develop ownership and responsibility with regards to the Project's 'interventions' calls for more 'sensitisation', and 'armies of sociologists', functioning as one of development's self-reproducing strategies.

In this section I have discussed the rationales behind arguments in favour and against the Project. Arguments in favour and against should be seen as part of a struggle over the interpretation of project activities between actors who occupy different positions in the project intervention field (cf. Carney and Watts 1990). However, I will argue below that this type of analysis does not necessarily lead to moral relativism. Understanding the rationales behind competing arguments exposes their relative coherence with regards to the stated objectives of an operation, in this case a development project supposedly aimed at improving the living conditions of the 'target population.' The following section examines a number of comparative examples of development projects, trying to situate the Keita Project in the wider field of development 'interventions' and to consider its outcomes with respect to external standards.

9.3 Comparative Examples

Every development project is unique, the result of unrepeatable historical and cultural circumstances. However, in this section I will generalize from the analysis of a few cases, which I believe to be representative of the possible outcomes of development 'interventions', in order to situate Keita within a selection of situations that can be generated by the workings of development projects. In the light of what we have seen about 'internal' perspectives on Keita, this comparative analysis contextualises Keita's outcomes, and perceptions thereof, within the broader range of what 'development can do' and of how it can be experienced.

9.3.1 The development-centric project

The Jahaly Pacharr Project studied by Carney and Watts (Carney and Watts 1990; Watts 1993) started in 1984, and was funded primarily by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Gambian government. The Project involved over 2,000 rural households from 70 villages in a largely Mandinka region of the Gambia, and its main objective consisted in increasing the productivity of the intervention area while securing the access of local households to productive resources. The Project 'absorbed' previous ('traditional') tenancy arrangements, centralising the control of land through a 30 years state appropriation and subsequently redistributing use rights to the growers in the form of long-term tenancies through sharecropping contracts stipulated by the Project (cf. Carney and Watts 1990:215). Carney and Watts focus on the consequences of the Project (mostly unacknowledged or misunderstood by the planners) for local gender relations, in particular intrahousehold contests over property and labour.

The Gambia is an ex-colonial export enclave in which groundnuts account for 95% of export revenues. Among the Mandinka, groundnuts are exclusively a male crop, whereas women dominate rice production (cf. Carney and Watts 1990:209). Men and women gain access to land through membership in a patrilineal extended family group. There are two main types of land rights: *maruo* rights, over communal family land, and *kamanyango* usufructuary individual rights. Consumption and/or sale of crops from '*maruo* lands' are dominated by male household heads, whereas *kamanyango* property rights provide discretionary income to family members. Despite the donor's intention

that women be primary beneficiaries of the Project, when the Project began, less than one third of the plots were registered in women's names because men opposed women's ownership on the grounds that divorce would alienate land from household control (cf. Carney and Watts 1990:224). During the first cropping season under the production regime introduced by the Project, all the pumped plots were considered *maruo*. Women provided most of the labour, but household heads refused to grant them customary *kamanyango* rights (cf. Watts 1993:180). Absorption of pre-existing individual and household fields into the scheme meant that women's entitlement to their crop depended upon their access to project plots. 'Unless their property rights were protected, Mandinka women had no alternative income-earning plots in the area and no protection from household claims on their labour' (Carney and Watts 1990:224). Confronted with this situation, IFAD sent a mission to the Gambia, which succeeded in re-registering project plots in women's names. In practice, however, men had already achieved *de facto* control over the plots reallocated by the Project, and project management and land committees concurred with the men that the (male dominated) household had final rights on project plots. Because the Project's and the government's principal interest was increasing productivity, and *maruo* provided the classificatory category to make claims on the intensification of family labour, the issue of women's individual rights was not pursued further by IFAD. In the end, women lost rights on their swamp fields and did not gain new rights over irrigated fields, but their workload increased. Overall, the Project exacerbated gender relations and harmed women's interests. Both men and women strategically negotiated to maintain control over valuable resources and labour (their own and/or their household members'). This negotiation consisted in bargaining for project plots to be classified as governed by '*maruo*' (men's project) or '*kamanyango*' rights (women's project). Men's higher status and the partial coincidence, in this respect, of their interests with the planners' goal to maximise productivity ultimately worked against women's interests. The Jahaly Pacharr Project initiated a process that the 'developers' could not control, and were largely unaware of, disrupting pre-existent dynamics, and worsening, rather than improving, the lot of Mandinka women, whom it had originally set out to support.

The Thaba Tseka Project (Ferguson 1996), funded chiefly by the World Bank and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), was a 'mountain area development project' centred on agriculture and livestock development and supporting

'decentralisation' of Lesotho's administration. The Project included many components (cf. Ferguson 1996:88-100), but here I shall only discuss its activities concerning livestock development, focusing on how these activities contrasted with Basotho practices and beliefs concerning livestock. Ferguson refers to Basotho livestock ideology as the 'Bovine mystique', i.e. a system of thought in which 'livestock is constituted as a special domain of property in Lesotho by cultural rules, the most important of which establishes a "one way barrier" between the domains of money and livestock' (1996:146). The Bovine Mystique functions so as to differentiate livestock from money, which are a 'contested resource' subject to the claims of all household members. Livestock is divided into men's animals (the grazing animals) and women's animals (pigs and fowl). Men's animals are also classed, liked money, as 'household property', but they do not constitute a 'domain of contestation' in the way 'household money' does. Men's animals are kept out from the domain of contestation through a barrier that restricts their conversion to cash: 'if a man comes home with M[71] 300 in his pocket, the money will be set upon by his dependents; his wife may present him with a demand to buy her a new dress or furniture for the house, the children may need new blankets. If, on the other hand, he comes home with an ox purchased with that M 300, the question will not arise' (1996:151). Livestock plays several functions in the sphere of men's status and livelihood strategies. By loaning their animals, livestock owners can take advantage of distant pastures and establish relations of *clientage* with the recipients of the loaned animals. A man wealthy in livestock, called '*morui*', becomes a 'big man' through the establishment of patron-client relations and the display of his animal wealth in the village and beyond. Hence, livestock is both a social and economic resource for men (cf. 1996:152). It is used as a form of investment, in what Ferguson calls the 'livestock-migrant labour complex', referring to the purchase of animals with funds from migrant labour (cf. 1996:155); it serves as an 'insurance', as it is purchased in good times and can be sold in bad times (cf. 1996:154); and, being less subject to familial claims than other resources, it works as a male 'retirement fund'. Finally, cattle is a preferred currency for bridewealth, and the bridewealth-receiving generation has an interest in valorising the domain of livestock, because they have strong claims on their in-laws' wealth in cattle, stronger than the claims they can set on cash (cf. 1996:163).

[71] M stando for Maloti, Lesotho's currency.

The livestock development component of the Thaba Tseka Project failed to take into consideration the role played by livestock in the Basotho society, planning and implementing initiatives which were in contrast with the productive and prestige strategies of local livestock owners. The Project promoted the establishment of a Grazing Association for owners of small stock on 1,500 hectares near the town of Thaba Tseka, which was aimed at 'restricting grazing within an allocated area to the stock of progressive, commercially minded farmers who would be willing to keep fewer but better quality animals on well managed rangeland' (1996:172). The conditions for membership would oblige the owners to sell off poor animals to buy improved ones, ending up perhaps with half as many animals. The Grazing Association, prescribing the exclusion of non-members from good and abundant pastures, was in contrast with the value placed on the generosity of a *morui.* Monthly auctions were organised as part of a livestock marketing operation, on the assumption that local owners did not sell animals because they were marginalized from the cash economy. Not only was this assumption wrong, but, in line with the Bovine Mystique, the sale of stock represented the admission of a man's destitution, and was perceived as a humiliating necessity rather than an advantageous economic opportunity. Finally, improved stock and fodder production were part of the Project's objective to introduce a commercial, businesslike attitude into livestock keeping practices. This implied the adoption of improved stock, which needed to be fed with good quality, home-grown fodder. Also this activity met with resistance by the part of stock owners, who argued that improved animals were less hardy than local animals: they got sick and died more easily, and were vulnerable when fodder got scarce. Fodder had to be grown at the expense of badly needed food, as there was no surplus arable land (cf. 1996:185). In the context in question 'quantity' mattered more than 'quality' – more poor animals were better than few good ones, when it came to establishing prestige, paying bridewealth, or forming ploughing teams. The type of animals that the Project tried to introduce were animals 'for selling', animals from which it would be easier to obtain a cash return, and this ran against the above mentioned barrier between livestock and money which underpinned men's prestige and long-term security. If men were opposed to the Project interpretation of what animals are for, women sided with the Project for their own agendas:

> 'women often attempted to break down the barrier that kept livestock, as men's property, distinct and not freely interconvertible with money and the "domain of contestation" within the household. The arguments of the Thaba Tseka experts were seized upon by women as proof that

men who insisted on the Mystique were foolish and old-fashioned, as they had argued all along' (1990:187).

Also in this case, the Project unknowingly functioned as a catalyst for gender conflicts over the interpretation of the role and uses of livestock. Its operations failed to achieve the expected results, and the developers' 'project' did not overlap with livestock owners' strategies. It did overlap, to some extent, with women's attempt to increase their control over valuable resources, which were not accessible to them as long as they were not converted in cash. But women's 'project in the Project' and the developers' objective coincided only superficially, and in fact both parties were 'using' each other 'as a tool' to advance their strategies, rather than trying to understand their respective arguments from the other's point of view.

A characteristic trait of both Jahaly Pacharr and Thaba Tseka is their 'development-centric' bias, i.e. they dismiss the forces and dynamics at play in the context where they 'intervene', and impose their rationalities, supposedly 'in the interest of the beneficiaries'. While these projects recurrently fail to achieve their explicit objectives, because they are 'sabotaged' and put to other uses by different groups of the 'target population', they are not without consequences. In fact, they 'tinker' with the interests of various groups, often creating or exacerbating tensions which, once released, they cannot control. 'Development-centric' projects are usually only marginally useful (if at all) to the 'target population', because of their failure to 'understand' its system of production, cultural values and functioning rules. Keita differs from these examples because it did not attempt to change the local system of production, nor did it interfere in any meaningful way with the sexual division of labour and the Ader Doutchi Majiya's social organisation. The majority of its interventions made resources and infrastructures available without altering in a substantial way local livelihood strategies. The type of infrastructures it established in the intervention area were positively valued by different groups of 'beneficiaries', because they increased the productivity of local resources and made water available close to the villages. In other cases, the results of a project's activities may have negative consequences for the intended 'beneficiaries', or may be irrelevant to them.

9.3.2 The perceived 'failure'

The Magarini Settlement Project, financed mainly by the Australian Development Assistance Bureau (AIDAB), began in 1974 (Porter, Allen and Thompson 1991) and was to become Australia's largest aid project to Africa.

> 'The Project aimed to settle 4,000 families on 13-ha plots within an initial acquisition area of 60,000 hectares To support settlement, an extensive road network was to be provided, with groundwater reticulation taking water to within 500 m of every plot. Agricultural assistance [...] was to replace the bush fallowing practices with a sedentary mix of subsistence and cash crops and livestock'. (1991:1)

'Resettlement' on land they believed they already owned had a number of adverse effects for the Giriama people, and when the first signs of problems became manifest, the 'doers were over-optimistic' (1991:60). The Magarini Project failed to produce sufficient groundwater to meet the needs of the settlers. Only 76 families had been settled by 1980 and by September 1983 only 1,075 families out of a target of 4000 had been allocated plots (cf. 1991:68). 'A proportion of Giriama allocated plots either never moved to their plots, or having moved for a period, moved off again' (1991:68). Giriama farmers, who previously took advantage of different soil qualities by living in one place and cultivating in two or three other places, were now restricted to 13 ha plots. Scrub clearing was largely unsuccessful, roots remained in the ground after having been chopped by project machines, increased in number, and retained their ability to regenerate (cf. 1991:73). Moreover, machine-cleared areas lost much of the fertile topsoil in the clearing process (cf. 1991:77). Project agronomic research could not find a crop rotation pattern which would maintain soil fertility (cf. 1991:75). By 1983, the 1,075 families of settlers faced severe falls in yields and severe food shortages were experienced as a consequence of drought (cf. 1991:77). The 'beneficiaries' perception of the Project is clearly conveyed by the comment of one settler:

> 'Long ago here there was rice, sorghum, cowpeas, greengrams, much food. I had two fields and many goats. If people were hungry they came here. Now we have to leave here to seek food elsewhere. [...] The Project destroyed all my 40 hives. They were in the trees. Now there are no trees left. They came with the bulldozers and knocked them all down. It is just grass here now. No trees, not even for shade. It is terrible' (1991:123).

Porter, Allen and Thompson claim that their analysis reveals that 'many of the interventions worked against the real interests of the intended beneficiaries' (1991:197), a statement that can be summarised with the formula 'anti-people project'. The Giriama

did not have the power to oppose the 'projects' of 'macro' actors: 'Magarini initially existed only as a desire of a the Australian Whitlam Labour Government for a "project somewhere in Africa"'(1991:4); and '[t]he definition of Magarini as a *settlement* project denotes its relationship to *the* compelling political force in Kenya, control over land' (1991:4). Somehow, the combination of macro actors' 'projects' and of badly conceived 'intervention strategies' ensued catastrophic consequences for the Giriama's capacity to manage their livelihoods. The Project was not simply 'irrelevant' or 'mistargeted' with respect to Giriama strategies, but it compromised their system of production, and proved largely impossible to manipulate.

The Buena Vista Project was part of a long-term programme of cooperation between France, through the AFME (*Agence Française pour la Maîtrise de l'Enérgie*), and Central American countries (Akrich 1993). The OAS (Organization of American States) was responsible for liaison between the programme's various host countries. The regional Programme had two aims:

> 'to enable information pooling between various Central American countries by establishing channels for exchange such as by organizing joint seminars, [and] to find a wide audience for the pilot projects carried out in a particular country, since this would facilitate their transfer to neighbouring countries and make it easier to obtain funding from international banks' (1993:291).

Akrich looks at one specific pilot project within this scheme, implemented in the village of Buena Vista in Costa Rica with the aim of experimenting with a gazogene in the context of rural electrification. In March 1985 the gazogene bought for Buena Vista by the AFME was sent to Costa Rica. The parties involved in this project were the AFME, the OAS, the Buena Vista villagers represented by a local 'Association for Integral Development' (AID), the gazogene manufacturer, and the members of a commission set up to monitor the Project, including the Costa Rican Electricity Institute (CREI), the Forestry Commission (FC), and the Regional Energy Secretariat (RES). In short, the gazogene never functioned correctly, and the article is a reconstruction of the interpretations of the parties to this project, and their arguments to discharge responsibility for the Project's failure. The two main possible interpretations consisted in blaming the technology ('the gazogene itself could not work at all or was not fit to work in Buena Vista'), or blaming the people ('various parties were unable or unwilling to make the gazogene work'). Interpretations of the gazogene's failure varied according to the position of the interpreting actors. The village wanted to keep the exchange

process going despite the failure of the gazogene. The manufacturer 'wanted to withdraw his name from the annals of Buena Vista's history' (cf. Akrich 1993:326) and accused all the other parties for failing to make his machine work. AFME blamed (its own) choice of this manufacturer. The CREI denounced village passivity and blamed the lack of theoretical tools which other parties should have put at its disposition. AID blamed the CREI, which had to carry out the heavy maintenance of the plant, whereas average everyday tasks related to the gazogene normal functioning had to be carried out by an AID agent.

Buena Vista and Magarini are comparable for the common 'failure' to reach their intended objectives. However, Buena Vista's field of intervention was circumscribed and did not act upon existing practices of the intended 'beneficiaries', but only tried (unsuccessfully) to make a new resource available. Had the gazogene worked efficiently, it could have proved useful to all or some of Buena Vista's population. But its failure to work did not do much harm. The villagers' willingness to maintain the exchange process going despite the malfunctioning of the gazogene suggests that some groups envisaged potential 'side effects' of the Project's presence in their village. But the Project turned out to be 'largely irrelevant', and perhaps its most concrete result consisted in providing salaries and various forms of remuneration to all the 'experts' and parties involved in it, an outcome which, it may be argued, does not justify the Project's (unknown) budget.

A similar example is provided by Harrison's study of a project promoting fish farming in the Luapula Province of Zambia, as part of a regional FAO programme called 'Aquaculture for Local Community Development' - ALCOM (cf. Harrison 1995; Harrison and Crewe 1998). ALCOM's focus was on research and the establishment of pilot projects throughout the Africa region, through which the Project would assist governments to test methods for aquaculture development (cf. Crewe and Harrison 1998:9). The Project approach was 'participatory' and 'bottom-up'. Within ALCOM, the emphasis of the Luapula Project fell on small holders food security and rural income increase, and the strengthening of the local Department of Fisheries (DoF). The authors note that 'the programme as a whole is an example of the expenditure of large amounts of money with little evidence that the supposed beneficiaries were benefiting' (Crewe and Harrison 1998:10), and a review of the Luapula Pilot Project concluded that the

Project's main objectives had not been achieved: 'the impact on farming practices had been minimal and pre-existing weaknesses in the department had not been improved' (1998:10). If anything, Harrison suggests that relations between the Project and the DoF had been tense. The DoF's main objective was the 'maximisation of fish production through rational exploitation of fish stocking' (1998:80), and Luapula's Provincial Fisheries Development Officer (PFDO) expressed frustration for the Project's 'small scale' orientation, its failure to contribute to the functioning of the resource poor Luapula DoF, and its unwillingness to support and give loans to a few richer, semi urban fish-farmers. The PFDO perspective was that there was no reason for a project that did not seem to 'deliver goods', nor to have a measurable impact on the fish production of Luapula fish farmers or on the efficiency of the DoF (e.g. through providing vehicles or *per diem* for DoF extensionists).

The Project does not seem to have played an important role in the economy of the so-called 'beneficiaries' (cf. Crewe and Harrison 1998:114). Although fish farming had the potential to fulfil seasonal relish gaps, the role of fish in household food consumption was relatively minor (cf. 1998:122). Farmers mentioned 'business' as one of the reasons which induced them to dig ponds. However, the authors suggest that most farmers did not have a clear idea of the likely gains they could derive from this 'business'; that they often entertained unrealistic expectations (cf. 1998:120); and that farmers who spoke of business did so in order to identify themselves as part of a supposedly 'progressive development culture' (cf. 1998:122). Despite the Project's 'failure' to achieve its stated objectives, some 'side-effects' of the activities promoted by the Project seemed to be valued by fish farmers. As rules of access to wetlands were unclear, digging fish ponds on an area was a way to secure one's rights upon it, marking it for present and future 'exploitation' against potential contestations (cf. 1998:124). Fish ponds provided a source of water for irrigating vegetable fields, in which case fish production was only an accidental benefit; and they contributed to security, as they could be emptied in the case of emergencies or unexpected expenses, such as a funeral, or buying school uniforms for children (cf. 1998:125).

Like the Buena Vista Project, the Luapula Project did not make a remarkable difference to the life of the intended beneficiaries, but, on the other hand, it accommodated a greater number of local 'projects in the Project'. In the authors' words,

its impact on fish farming practices was 'minimal' (1998:10), it may have provided insights for research purposes, and it accommodated 'lateral projects' of several categories of actors involved in it. It was, maybe, somewhat 'less irrelevant' than the gazogene 'operation', but the authors suggest that its results did not justify the amounts of money spent on it (cf. 1998:10). The main difference between these three projects and Keita is the appreciation of the intended 'beneficiaries' for their respective results. In contrast to these examples, men and women in Keita's 'intervention area' valued project results, mostly not for their side-effects, but for the intended purposes of the 'interventions' (cf. Chapter 6).

9.3.3 The perceived 'success'

The last case discussed here is that of Gal Oya (Uphoff 1992). The Gal Oya Project, financed by USAID, and executed in cooperation with Sri Lanka's Agrarian Research and Training Institute (ARTI) and Cornell University, was aimed at the physical and social rehabilitation of 'the largest and most complex' irrigation system in the country, covering 125,000 acres (cf. 1992:5). It had been Sri Lanka's government policy in the 1950s to bring large families in Gal Oya for settlement, thereby creating population pressures which made managing the system more difficult (cf. 1992:5). Conflicts among farmers over the scarce supply of water contributed to lack of maintenance and the breakdown of structures (cf. 1992:10). These conflicts had an ethnic dimension, as upstream areas were controlled by Sinhala speaking families and downstream allotments were controlled by Tamil speaking families. Despite these difficult premises, the author notes that 'what looked as an impossible task at the start became [...] a promising process praised by practically everyone who visited Gal Oya in the following years. More important, farmers and officials themselves spoke highly of the programme's benefits' (1992:8). Uphoff provides a very detailed chronographic ethnography of project events, but does not discuss the position of different categories of actors with regards to the Project, nor does he describe the 'target population's' livelihood strategies and social organisation. However, it can be evinced from his description that irrigated rice (and other crops) cultivation had been the most important aspect of the local system of production for centuries. Within five years of project intervention, water use efficiency had almost doubled in the Left Bank system (cf. 1992:9), and collaboration increased between Sinhalese and Tamil farmers, and between farmers and government officials. For farmers, more reliable and adequate supply of

water translated into greater production and income, and contributed to a better quality of life. Satisfaction with the Project's results was also expressed by project staff, especially agents working with the farmers. An Institutional Organizer's answer to the question 'how long would she like to do such work?', was 'as long as we are here' (1992:115). From Uphoff's description, it seems that the Gal Oya Project was able to achieve concrete results in domains crucial to the local production system, without attempting to revolutionise the way the system worked (cf. 1992:10). Different groups of farmers appear to have been willing to become involved in a project which dealt efficiently with some of their means of production and could make a difference to their livelihoods. Uphoff interprets the 'Project's success' as a consequence of the 'learning process approach' (1992:11) which characterised project management style and of the importance accorded to 'human potential' with respect to the involvement of different stakeholders in the Project. According to Uphoff, the Project stimulated a 'catalytic process in which people brought out the best in each other and in themselves' (1992:12).

Uphoff was directly involved in Gal Oya's conception and organisation, and it is difficult to distinguish, in his account, the personal dimension of his experience from the ways in which the Project intertwined with pre-existing local and national dynamics. But the evidence provided in the form of detailed reports of everyday events and meetings within the spaces opened by the Project suggest that Gal Oya can be seen as a good example of 'relevant' project. I think also Keita falls in this category.

9.3.4 Learning from Keita

It has been argued that different categories of actors have distinct interpretations of what constitutes a 'success' or a 'failure' in development (cf. Crewe and Harrison 1998:10); and that these interpretations depend, to a large extent, upon their position within the 'field of project intervention' and upon the extent to which a project contributes to the advance of their own 'projects in the Project'. While the approach of this thesis has emphasised the positioned perspectives of different actors *vis à vis* development 'intervention', it does not take an extreme relativist stance with regards to the question: 'what is to be done about all the poverty, sickness and hunger in the Third World?' (Ferguson 1996:297). I do not think that this question should simply be answered 'different people will want to do different things', because I believe, and

Keita and Gal Oya's experiences confirm, that there are measures that can be taken to improve the living conditions of those who, like many people in the Ader Doutchi Majiya, recurrently suffer from hunger and disease, and see their children and relatives die because they haven't got the (material, cultural, and symbolic) means to help them.

We can compare policies and practices which attempt to provide answers to the question 'what is to be done about all the poverty, sickness and hunger in the Third World?' in respect to at least three main factors: the 'relevance' of their objectives to the life of the 'target group'; their efficacy in achieving the objectives they set out to reach; and the coherence of the means and strategies adopted to deal with contextual facets of 'poverty, sickness and hunger'. It seems to me that 'success' is attributed to Keita and Gal Oya by different groups of people on the grounds that they dealt with problems (e.g. management of irrigation canals in Gal Oya, reduction of the erosion process and availability of water in Keita) which were extremely 'relevant' to the system of production and livelihoods of the 'target population'. This was manifest in the support achieved by these projects among the intended 'beneficiaries', the latter's availability to collaborate with the Project, and their requests to the Project to address their problems. This support followed from the recognition, by the part of various categories of 'beneficiaries', that, for different reasons, project activities were more effective than other attempts (including their own) to cope with their problems.

Keita and Gal Oya were 'relevant' because official project objectives and strategies overlapped with those of different categories of the population, and did not stimulate tensions and conflicts within it. They were effective because, on the practical count, their strategies 'worked'. On the other hand, Magarini may have been 'relevant' to the political concerns of Australia and Kenya, but was irrelevant to the Giriama, who never wished to be 'resettled' on lands they believed they owned. Its operations harmed, rather than improved, the Giriama's system of production. The Buena Vista Project may have been relevant, but the gazogene never worked. The ALCOM Project in Luapula was 'largely irrelevant' to the fish farming activities of the 'target population', but opened spaces for the unfolding of different 'projects in the Project' which reflected the room for manoeuvre of some people in Luapula. Thaba Tseka and Jahaly Pacharr 'misunderstood' or dismissed the forces at play in the social contexts upon which they 'encroached', and followed their 'development-centric' objectives *in spite of* the

perspectives of some groups within the 'target population'. 'Livestock' and 'rice production' were relevant to, respectively, Jahaly Pacharr and Thaba Tseka societies, but not in the ways and for the reasons envisaged by the 'developers'. As a consequence, project 'intervention' resulted into a complex interplay of mutual misunderstanding and manipulation, and, at least in Thaba Tseka, the Project ultimately failed to achieve the stated objectives of its livestock component, because of the resistance of livestock owners. The question that remains to be considered is if, in the light of this analysis, development projects should be seen as a coherent measure to deal with contextual facets of poverty, sickness and hunger, and if few perceived development 'successes' justify the deployment of 'projects' as a strategy to address these conditions.

The following section challenges the entrenched idea that the failure of 'bad development projects' can be solved by introducing 'good development projects'. This way of thinking has characterised the history of 'aid', which is marked by a sequence of 'fashions' of which participatory and bottom-up approaches represent, at the time of writing, the latest trend. This thesis documents the replacement of the 'fight against desertification' paradigm (Chapter 4) with the new emphasis on poverty and participation (Chapter 8). However, as shown in Chapter 8, these 'fashions' are not developed from an analysis of the relevance of certain measures to the 'target population' in specific local, national and regional contexts. They are, instead, conceived at the top for reasons relevant to the planners' political concerns and prescribed indiscriminately as cures to all diseases and remedies to all evils. This is particularly paradoxical in the case of 'participatory' and 'bottom-up' approaches, which end up being parachuted from above. The following section draws upon the 'lessons learned' from Keita to consider their implications for development practice.

9.4 Implications for Development Practice and Anthropological Involvement in It

Ferguson is correct in highlighting that

> 'in development [...] "problems" and calls for reform are necessary to the functioning of the machine. Pointing out errors and suggesting improvements is an integral part of the process of justifying and legitimating "development" interventions. Such an activity may indeed have beneficial or mitigating effects, but it does not change the fundamental character of those interventions.'(1996:285)

It is with this proviso in mind that I shall suggest, here, that 'learning from Keita' does not mean reproducing a myriad of other Keitas – or the aspects of it which were perceived as successful - in the 'developing world'. Instead, I will suggest that what Keita, and to some extent Gal Oya, have to teach, is that the answer to poverty, hunger and sickness, should be sought outside the 'bad development leads to good development' cycle. Good 'development', in the original sense of the word, can only be the one that leads to its own demise, bringing about changes sought by the actors who manifest a wish to 'develop' in a particular direction. These actors are different categories of people who are *already* 'participating' to change, in ways appropriate to their circumstances, through a continuous process of negotiations aimed, *inter alia*, at improving their living conditions. In Keita, the Project opened spaces within which different categories of actors could unfold their strategies to improve their life chances. This should not lead us to the conclusion that the Keita Project was the most coherent measure to deal with the problems which affected the society of the Ader Doutchi Majiya without first considering the viability of alternative solutions, which are not necessarily other types of 'projects' or international development initiatives.

Today, one of the most influential and widespread ways to deal with the question of hunger, sickness and poverty is through the kind of institutions discussed in this thesis. A plethora of uncoordinated development projects and programmes, some relevant to the lives of their intended 'beneficiaries', some irrelevant, some effective at the activities they carry out, some ineffective, constitute the self reproducing mechanism in place to deal, supposedly, with the destitution, disease and starvation of large numbers of people concentrated in some countries of the world. Most international development projects are conceived by 'distant' planners worried more by factors close to their everyday work constraints than about understanding the dynamics at play among the 'target population', and producing knowledge about this population that legitimises 'intervention'. In turn, the 'target population' uses its knowledge of the 'developers' language and rationales' as a tool to manipulate 'intervention' and make it serve other purposes. Although the 'intervention's' objectives and approaches are largely determined by the donors, in most cases responsibility for the outcomes of 'intervention' falls upon the so-called 'beneficiaries' and the recipient governments. This tendency is strengthened by 'participatory' and 'ownership building' approaches: 'one of the attractions of the participatory approach to the development industry is that

it shifts responsibility for the consequences of these projects away from the agencies and the development workers onto the participating people' (Stirrat and Henkel 2001:183).

I am not the first anthropologist to highlight the shortcomings of 'development'. As remarked by Robertson, the position of anthropologists has often consisted in taking an anti-state populist stance (Robertson 1984). This is the case of some anthropologists who have chosen to express their position *vis à vis* development practice (Galjart 1981; Pottier 1992; Ferguson 1996). Ferguson, asking *who* should do something about the question of poverty, sickness and hunger in the Third World, rules out the state in the following terms: 'there is little point in asking what [governmental elites] should do to empower the poor. Their own structural position makes it clear that they would be the last ones to undertake such a project. If the governing classes ask the advice of experts, it is for their own purposes, and these normally have little to do with advancing the interests of the famous downtrodden masses' (1996:281). Galjart's 'counter-development' is the clearest statement of this position. 'Counterdevelopment' entails the mobilization of disadvantaged people in a locality by the part of an 'outside actor or change agency' which should moderate 'small scale enterprises' [the example provided is 'small technical improvements of available tools and machinery' (1981:90)] supported through internal financing (cf. 1981:84). The main function of the external change agency is to support local counter-tendencies opposed to governmental policies and mechanisms which affect local groups adversely (cf. Galjart 1981:88). 'Less state' tends to come together with 'small scale enterprises', 'locally governed and financed initiatives' and 'more anthropology/sociology.' (cf. Clastres 1977; Pottier 1992)

But the origins of anthropology's populism are to be traced in the cultural and social backgrounds of the anthropologists themselves (cf. Robertson 1984; Stirrat and Henkel 2001; Stone 1999) and should not be confused with the priorities of the 'developed'. What Keita teaches us is that the people of the Ader Doutchi Majiya did not ask for small scale improvements of existing technology; nor did they ask for more 'participation' (cf. Chapter 8); nor for more anthropologists and sociologists. They asked for infrastructures and services which, in the countries from which most anthropologists come from, are provided by the State.

The context in which the people of the Ader Doutchi Majiya live, is characterised by the lack of local employment opportunities; food deficit and the need to integrate local cereal production through external revenues; acute problems raised by water scarcity for herders or farmer-herders who are becoming increasingly sedentary and whose possibility for movement are always more limited due to the expansion of agriculture (cf. Chapter 5). In these circumstances, it should come as no surprise that Keita's men and women wanted *chantier* 'jobs' and dams, and engineers who could make these work, much more than they wanted sociologists and anthropologists to do an ethnography of the project, or PRA in their villages, or 'sensitization' (cf. Chapter 8). In countries wealthier than Niger, the services and opportunities demanded by the Ader Doutchi Majiya people are provided by the state. Works to create employment and make available services and infrastructures which may improve the lot of the population are financed through taxation, like the maintenance of so called public goods. Keita and Gal Oya 'worked' because they provided services and infrastructures which are recognised as key to the well being of the citizens of all countries, which are claimed by the citizens of all countries, and which wealthier countries provide, more or less justly and efficiently, to their citizens through taxation systems and *ad hoc* institutions.

'Solutions' to widespread poverty in the 'Third World' which do not take into account the role of the State are shifting the attention away from where, in my opinion, lies the root of the issues being analysed (cf. Robertson 1984). Undoubtedly, with Galjart and Ferguson, most Third World governments are afflicted by many problems. Indeed, they are a substantial part of the problem. But this is not a reason to dismiss the state as an actor in the process of finding an answer to the question of poverty, hunger and disease in the 'Third World'. The 'success' of Keita and Gal Oya poses a set of questions in which the role of the state is central: were Keita and Gal Oya, as international development projects, better suited than Niger's and Sri Lanka's governments to deal with the problems they addressed through their 'intervention'? What are the problems posed by the fact that these 'external interventions' would one day leave, and states and 'beneficiaries' would inherit the resources left behind by these projects? Why did Niger's and Sri Lanka's governments depend on these external projects for activities that would normally pertain to them? What conditions would lead states like Niger and Sri Lanka to programme and implement their own 'development' and assume responsibility for the poverty, hunger, and sickness of their citizens? Rather

than dismissing the state as an actor, it has to be seen both as part of the problem and of the solutions. This perspective is not incompatible with the initiatives of benevolent scholars, technocrates, volunteers, and missionaries willing to give useful suggestions on how to solve minor (or major) problems and to 'put the last first'. It does not rule out the possibility, and indeed the utility, of self financed small scale projects which mobilise some sectors of society and help them to improve their living conditions. But these strategies have to be seen as circumscribed experiments and/or acts of good will, that will not have a significant impact on the increasing gap between living standards in the North and in the South.

The argument here is that, because the state in Niger could not, with its own resources, provide the services and infrastructures which would contribute to the well being of its society, the Keita Project was perceived as a 'success' by its intended 'beneficiaries' in its first three phases. I am not suggesting that the complex phenomenon of 'poverty' can be 'fixed' with a few dams or the management of some irrigation channels. But only that Keita's 'success' cannot be distinguished from Niger's 'failure'. It is to the dynamics involved in this 'failure' that it may be worth dedicating our attention, rather than dismissing the state, as if 'the people of the Ader Doutchi Majiya', differently from the anthropologists themselves, existed in an institutional and historical vacuum. It is on the dynamics involved in this 'failure' that policy elites engaged in 'international cooperation' should focus, rather than continuing to produce development projects that function as uncoordinated islands of fortune (or, in the majority of cases, misfortune), controlled by outside actors which refuse to be held accountable for their decisions. Of course, these observations run against deeply entrenched interests, in the North, in maintaining the development apparatus and its present way of functioning (cf. Raffer and Singer 1996). But making explicit these interests and the workings of the order of discourse which they contribute to maintain is one of the challenges that an anthropology of development has to face.

The proposition resulting from this argument is that a worthwhile path to contribute to finding an answer to Ferguson's question 'what is to be done about all the poverty, sickness and hunger in the Third World?' may involve both a breach of self evidence in the self perpetuating mechanisms of the 'development machine', and a close examination of (rather than a refusal to deal with) the role of the state. This examination

could follow two broad lines of enquiry, namely: (1) the relations between rich and poor states, and (2) the relations between states and different categories of citizens. Attempts to address this order of questions should be the fruit of an interdisciplinary effort, as the interlocking dynamics that account for the lack of equity which characterises today's North-South relations cannot be analysed by one disciplinary or analytical framework alone.

In the first chapter of this thesis I have quoted Gadamer's insight that dialogue does not stem from assertiveness and self-certainty, but from questioning one's own assumptions, and trying to comprehend the other's message from the other's perspective. This process entails 'putting oneself at risk' (Gadamer 1975:324). Attempting to understand the messages of different categories of people from their own perspectives, this study has reached what is, after all, a hardly surprising conclusion: that different sets of actors of the Ader Doutchi Majiya, faced with poverty, hunger and disease, valued concrete interventions which could help them to improve the resource base and infrastructures on which their system of production depends. The implications of this finding are hard to accept because they put some people's positions at risk. If taken seriously, they involve, for anthropologists, the abandonment of romanticising images of exotic communitarian societies (cf. Robertson 1984:297), and direct their attention to the contemporary forces and institutions in which the subjects of their research are integrated. And for international policy, to consider strategies better suited than development projects and programmes to assist Southern States in providing for the well being of their citizens.

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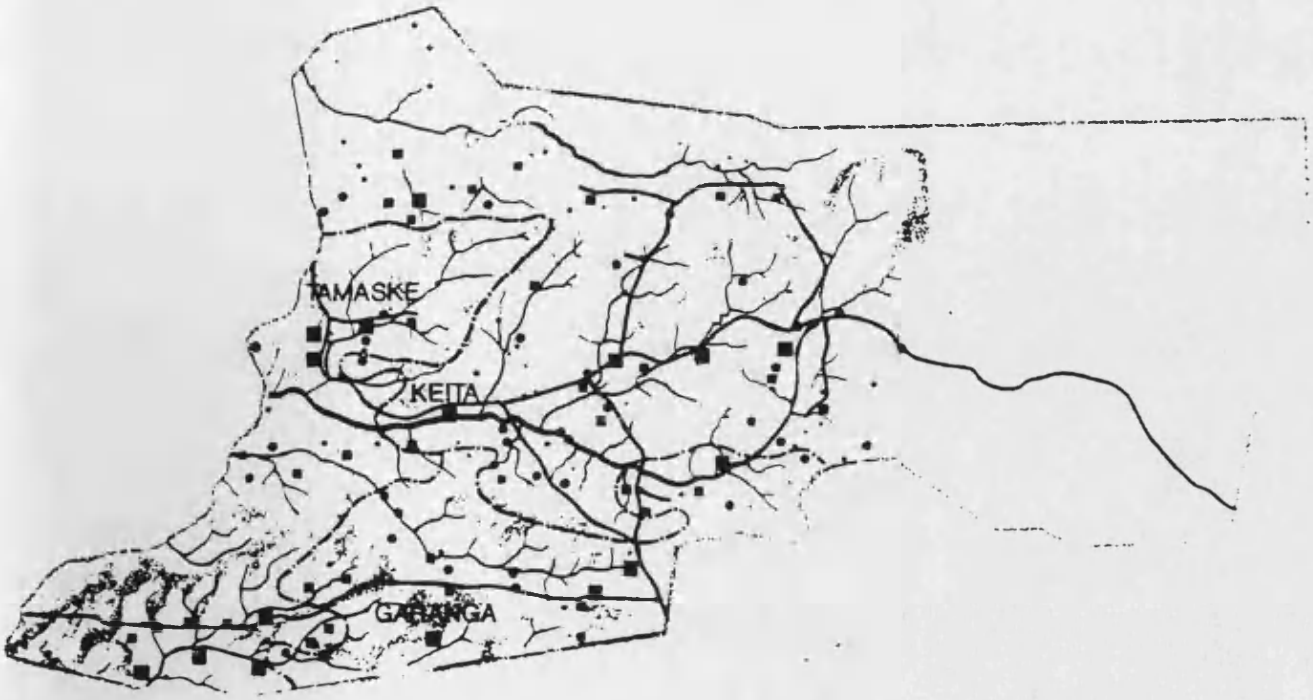
APPENDICES

APPENDICES

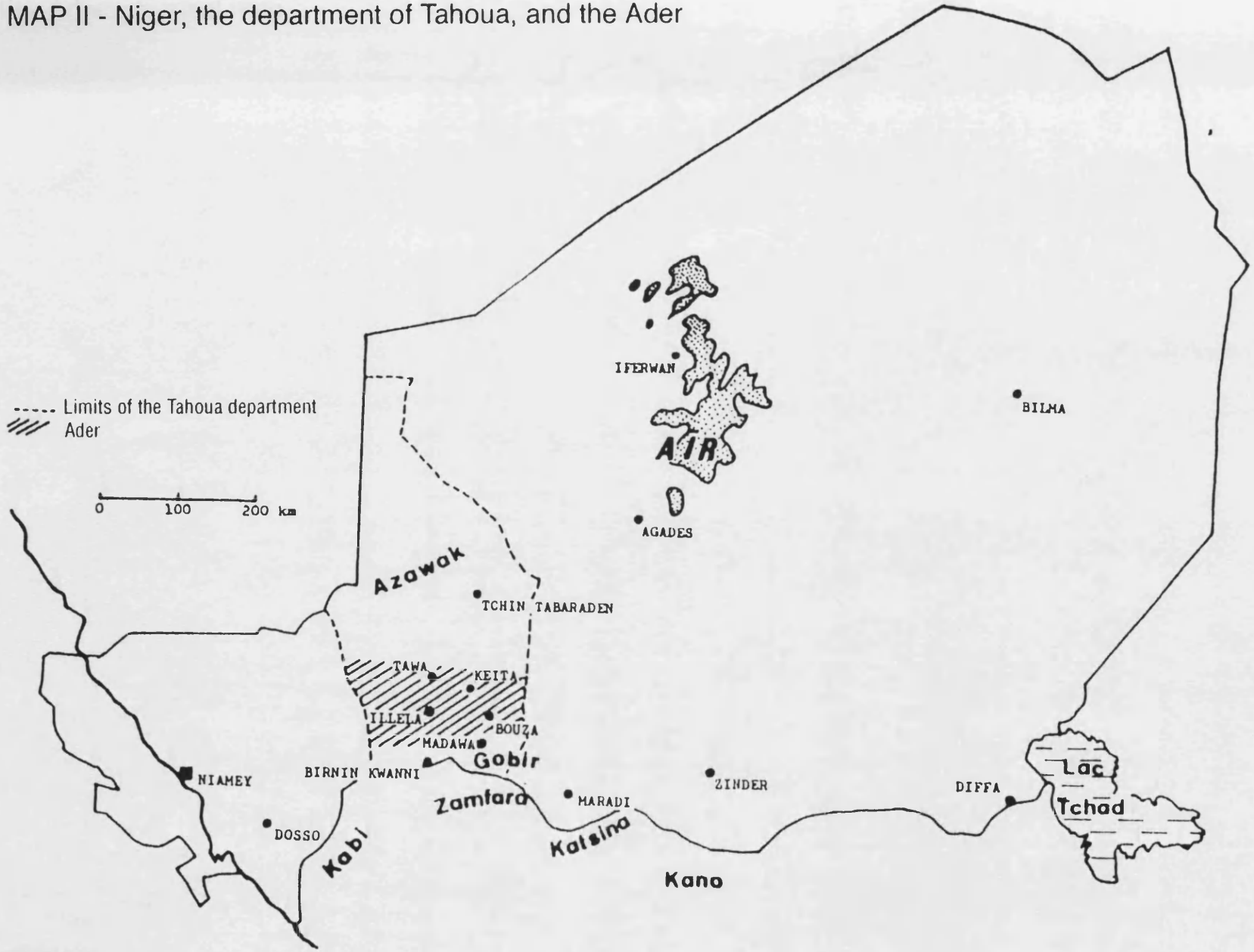
APPENDIX 1: MAPS

MAP I - Niger and the Project intervention area



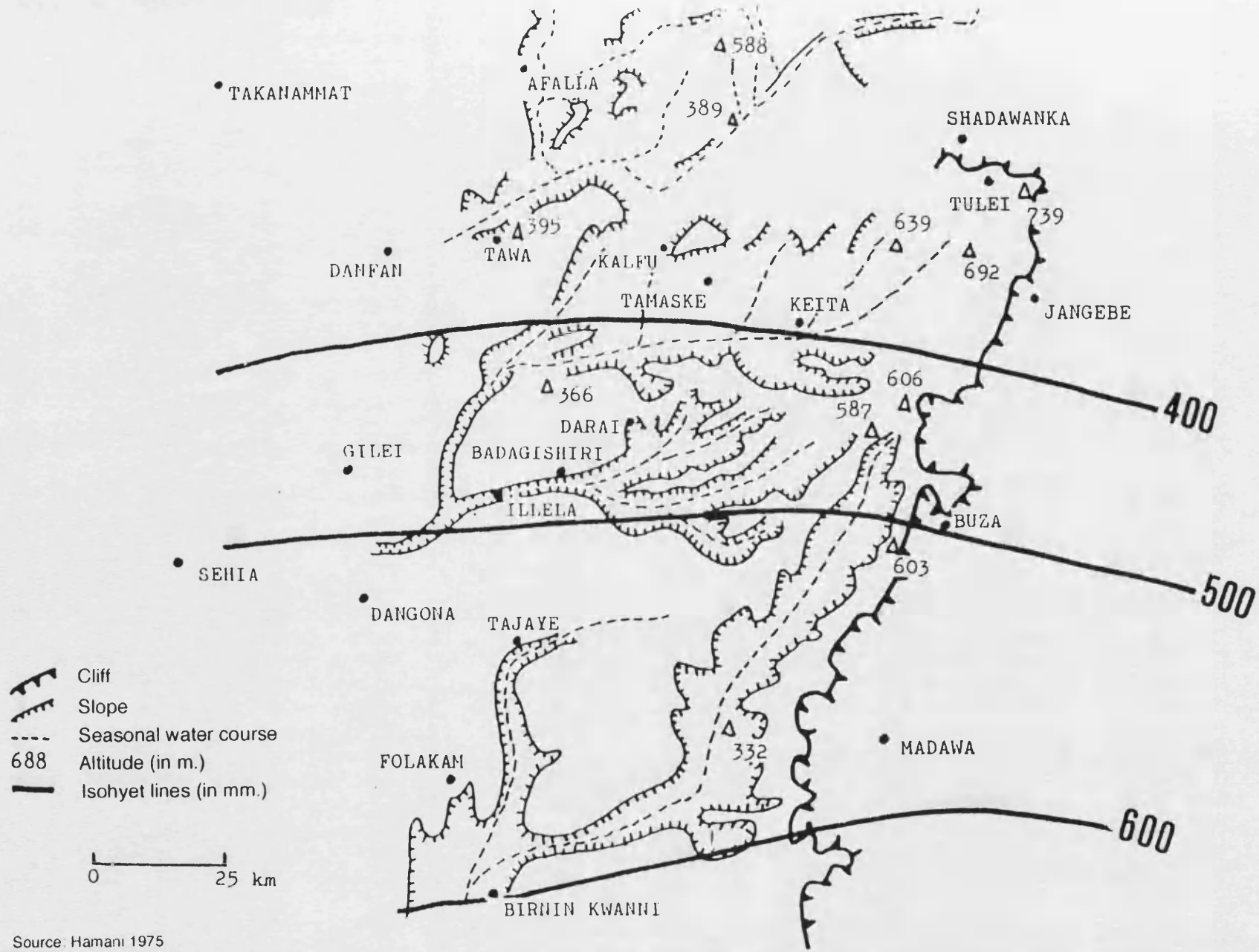
Source: FAO 1995

MAP II - Niger, the department of Tahoua, and the Ader



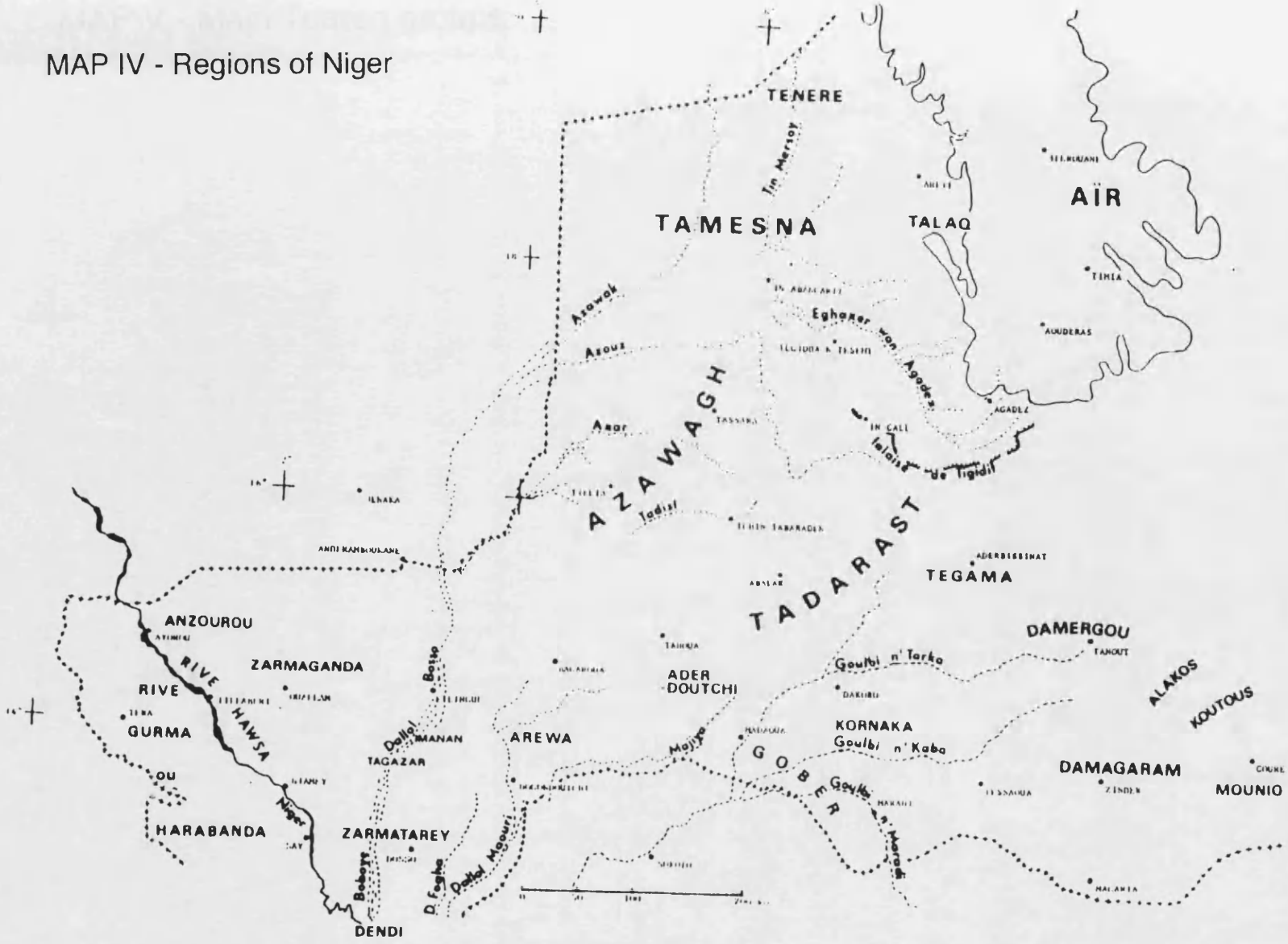
Source: Hamani 1975

MAP III - Ader: physical map



Source: Hamani 1975

MAP IV - Regions of Niger

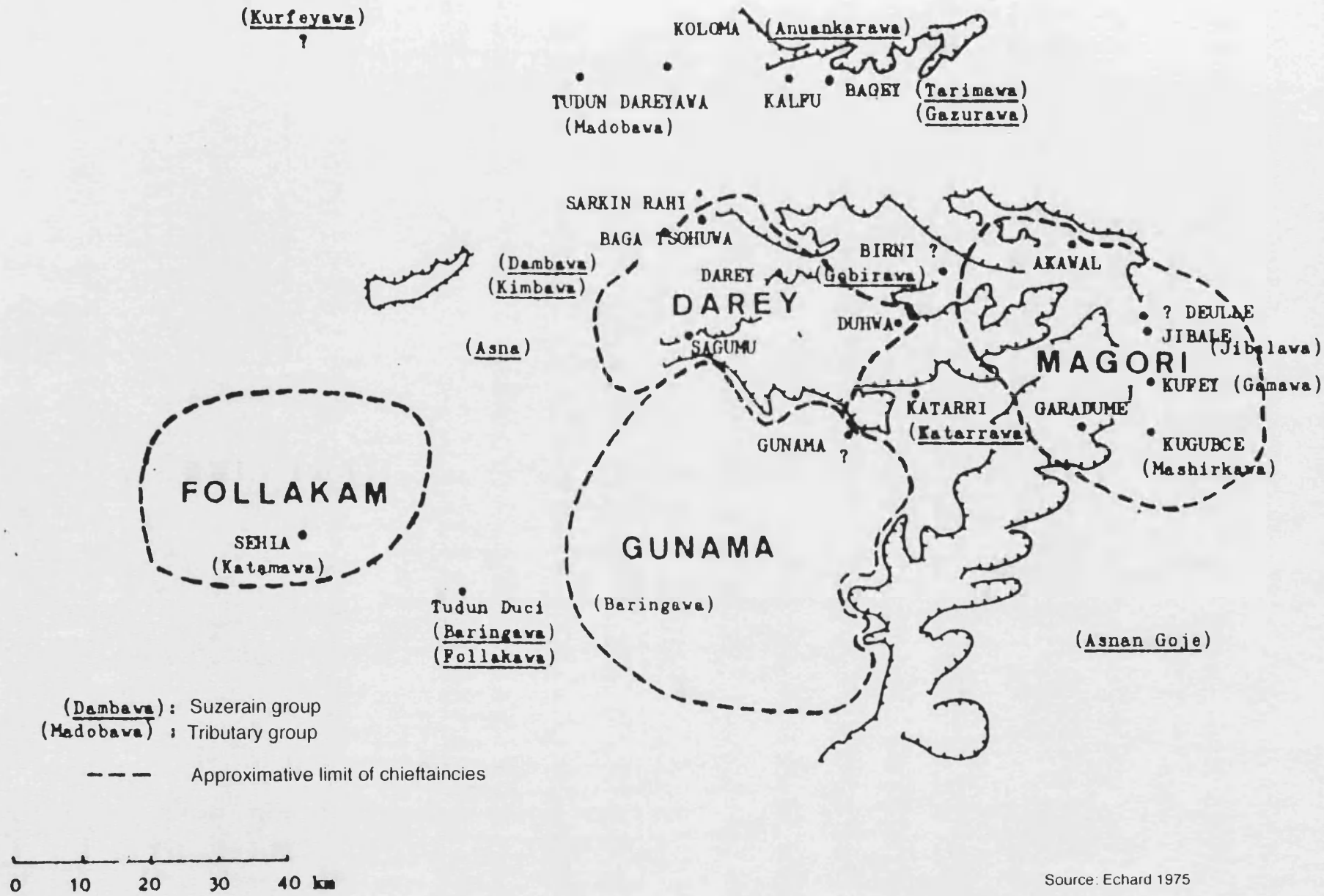


Source: Bernus 1981

MAP V - Main Tuareg groups

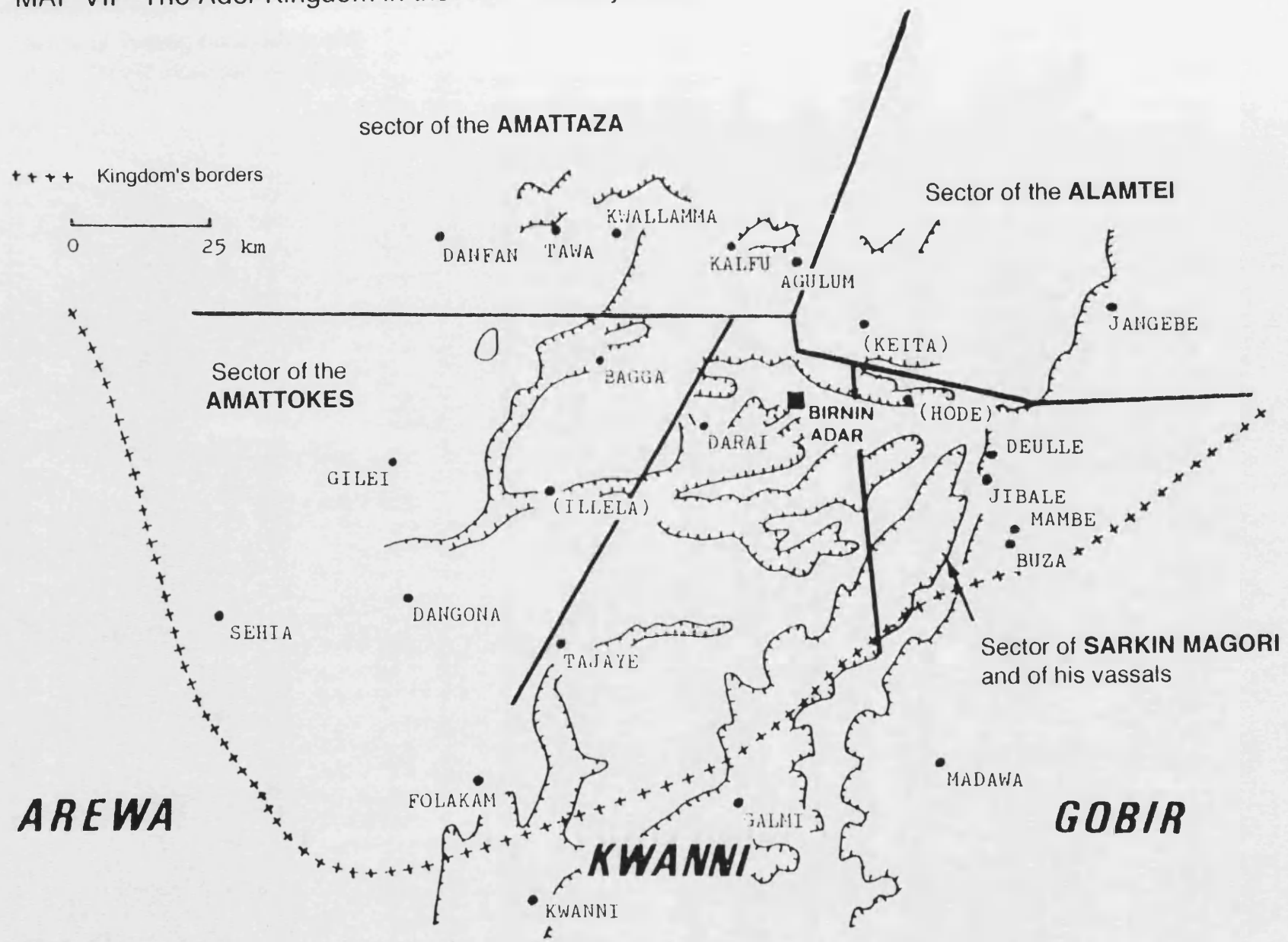
Source: Bernus 1981

MAP VI - The Ader at the end of the XVII Century



Source: Echard 1975

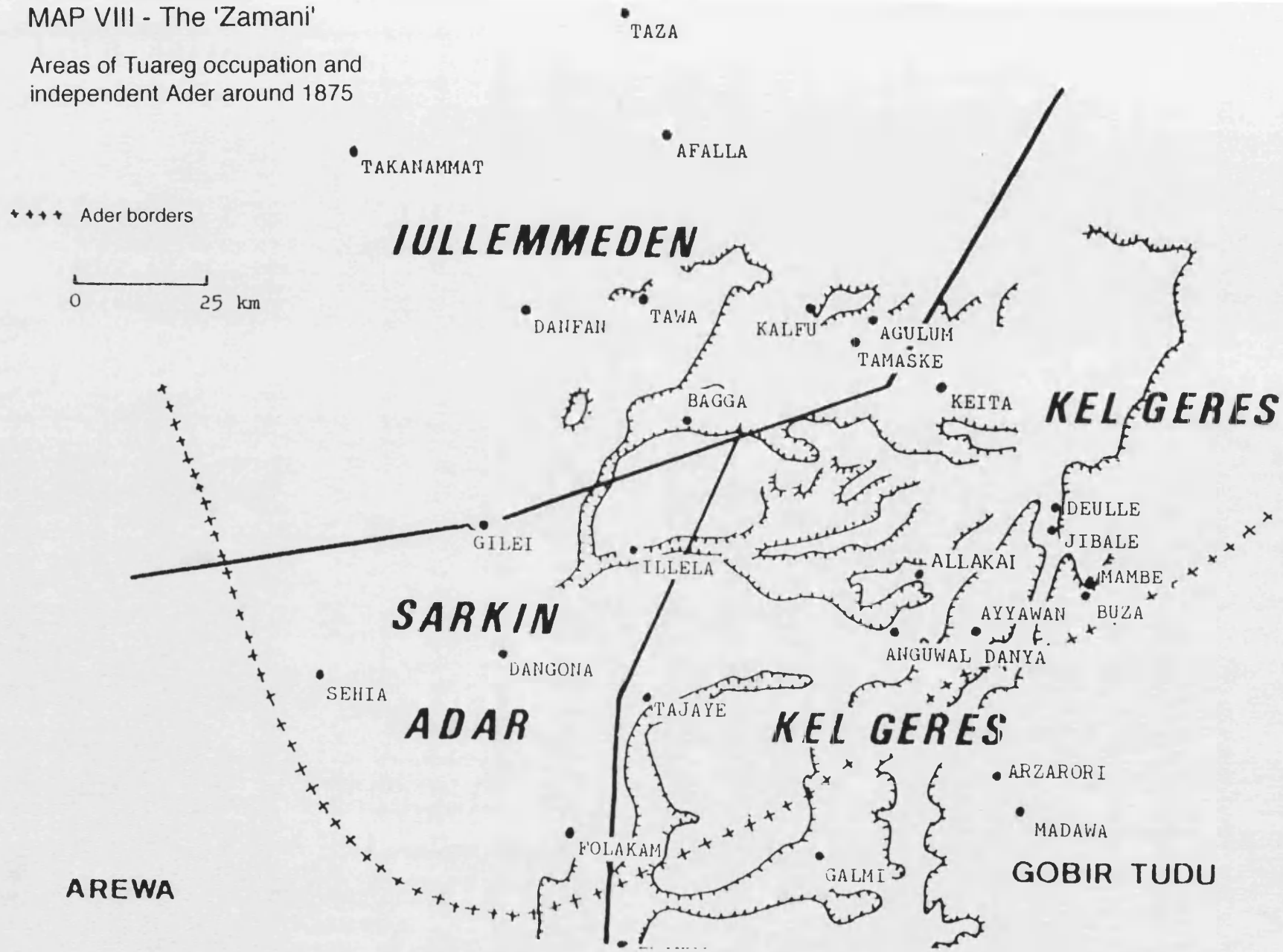
MAP VII - The Ader Kingdom in the XVIII Century



Source: Hamani 1975

MAP VIII - The 'Zamani'

Areas of Tuareg occupation and independent Ader around 1875



Source: Hamani 1975

APPENDIX 2: TABLES

TABLE 1 - PDR/ADM 1990 ORGANIZATION CHART (Direction and Divisions)

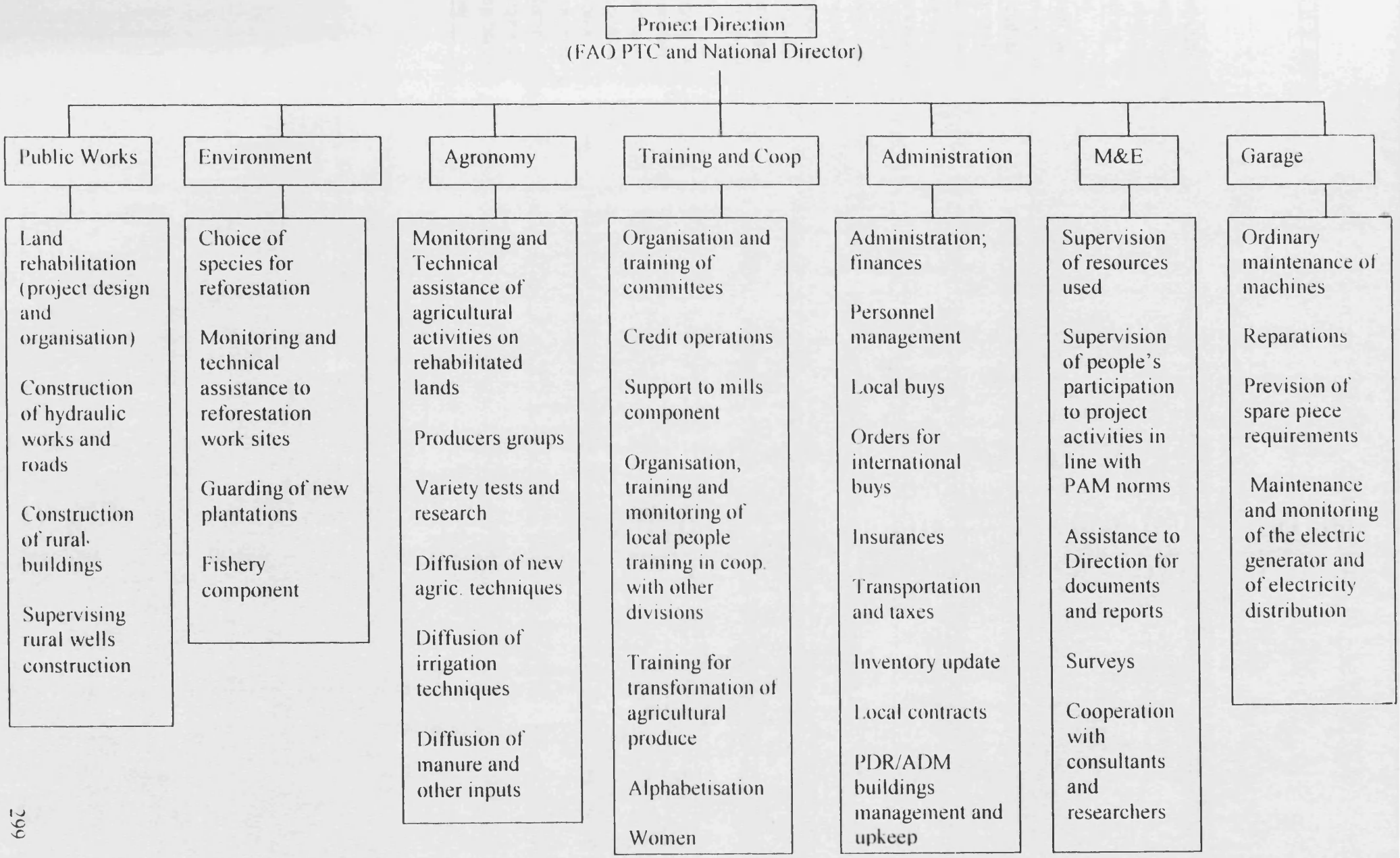


TABLE 2: PROJECT RESULTS (FIRST THREE PHASES)					
		I phase	II phase	III phase	**TOTAL**
Rehabilitation glacis	ha	4593	814	1053	**6460**
Rehabilitation plateaux	ha	1807	928	140	**2875**
Rehabilitation slopes	ha	435	148	0	**583**
Trenches	number	1141287	1652600	1163776	**3957663**
Dikes	number				**19**
Earthfill dams	number				**41**
Extension dams	number			0	**2**
Artificial lakes	nombre	9	31	10	**50**
Reforestation seedlings	nombre	9158000	4544367	2549771	**16,252,138**
Wind Break	ha	6536	0	0	**6,536**
Dune fixation	ha	287	39	14	**340**
Reforestation on river sides	km	766	0	8	**774**
Animal traction units	number	190	71	0	**261**
Donkey carts	number	0	18	0	**18**
Women fields	number	21	0	0	**21**
Irrigation wells	number	1	0	0	**1**
Gabion-weir workshops	number	3	0	0	**3**
Ironmongers workshops	number	3	0	0	**3**
Store houses	number	51	16	0	**67**
Mills	number	44	13	0	**57**
Village shops	number	0	14	0	**14**
Foyers féminins	number	1	0	0	**1**
Veterinary posts	number	3	0	0	**3**
Vaccination parcs	number	4	0	0	**4**
Schools	number	27	13	0	**40**
Infirmaries	number	2	1	1	**4**
Maternity centres	number	3	0	0	**3**
Village wells	number	41	22	2	**65**
Deep bores	number	4	0	0	**4**
Other	m2	0	0	0	**0**

TABLE 3 - VARIATION OF THE PRICE OF A KG OF MILLET AT THE MARKET OF IBOHAMANE

IN 1999

Mois	**Prix/Kg (Fcfa)**	**Variation %**
Janvier	93	-
Février	93	0%
Mars	95	+2%
Avril	95	0%
Mai	99	+4%
Juin	106	+6%
Juillet	116	+9%
Août	107	-8%
Septembre	96	-10%
Octobre	91	-7%
Novembre	89	-2%
Décembre	99	+10%

(Source : *Service d'Arrondissement du Plan*)

APPENDIX 3: FIGURES

Fig. 1 - The Basic Territorial Unit (BTU or UTE)

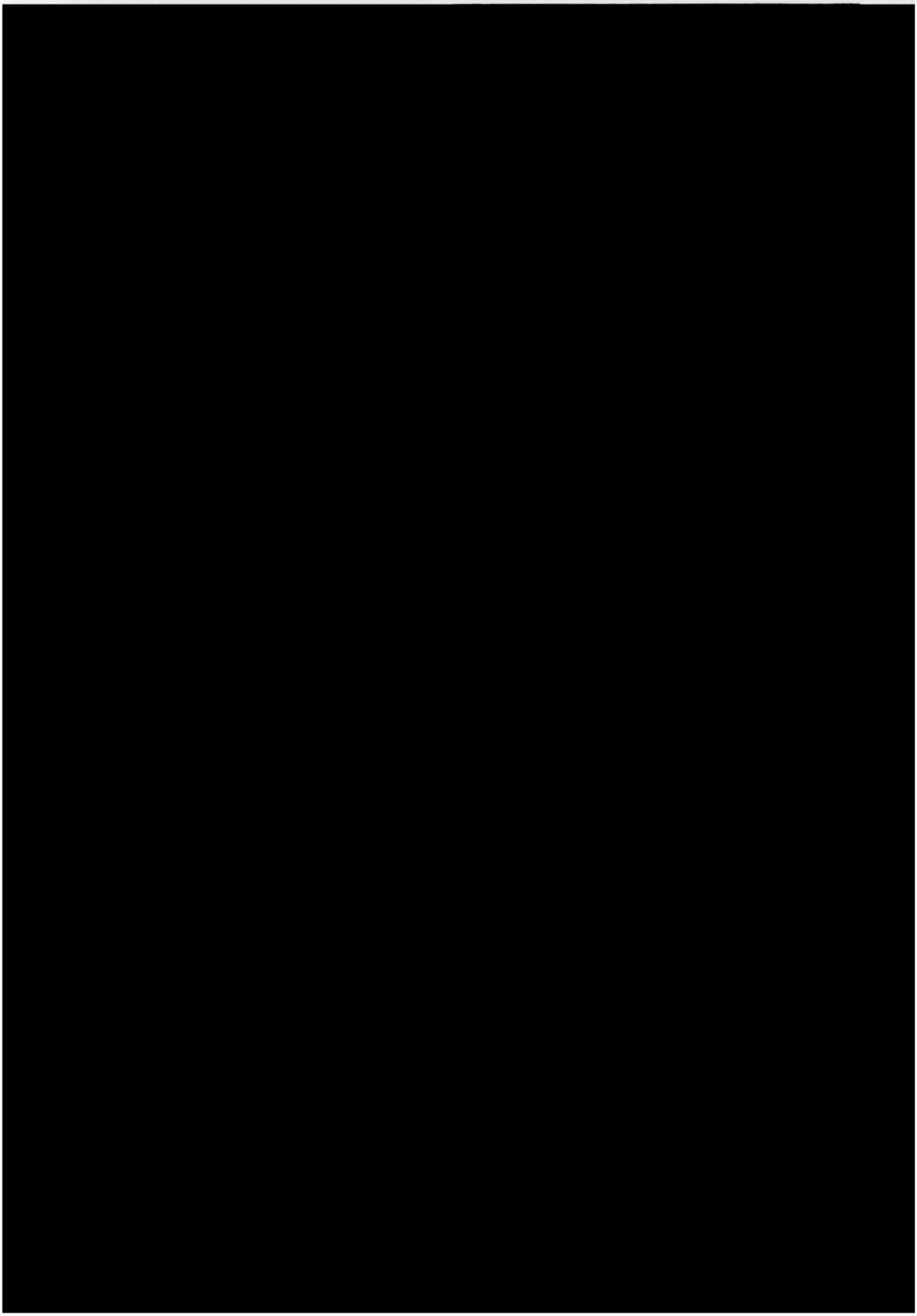


Fig. 2 - Request for the building of a dam

Madame la responsable de Division
Promotion de la femme socio-economique

objet : demande d'un barrage

J'ai l'honneur de solliciter auprès de votre haute bienveillance l'octroi d'un barrage dans notre village.

Dans l'attente d'une suite favorable, veuillez agreer mes salutations les plus distinguées

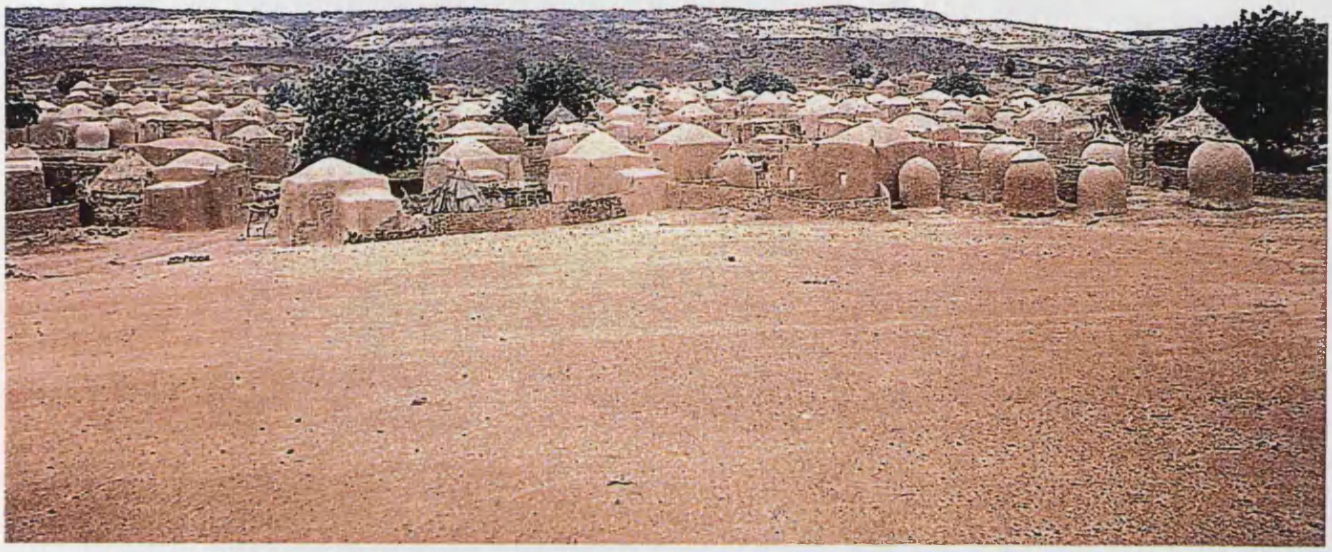
Fait à Loubé, le 20/12/97

signature de la Presidente

signature du chef de village

Le chef de Canton de Laoulé

APPENDIX 4: PICTURES



Picture 1 - View of a village of the Ader Doutchi Majiya.

Picture 2 - A compound *(gida)*.

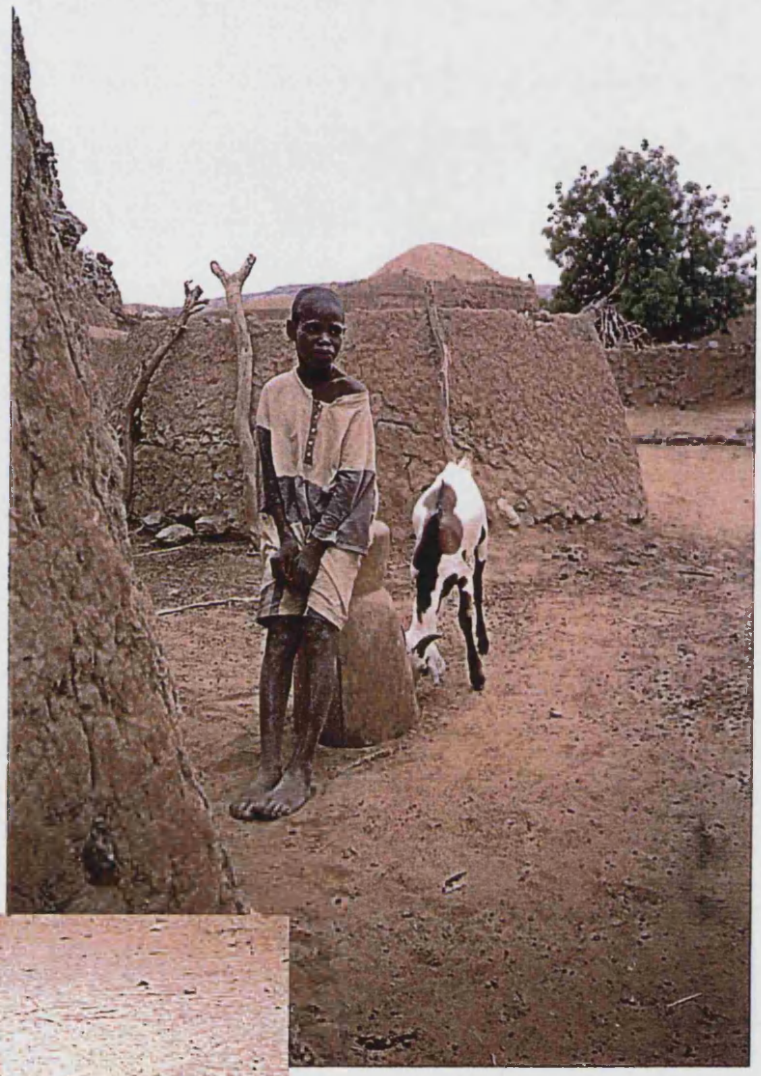
Picture 3 - Project headquarters in Keita.

Picture 4 - Project headquarters' interior.

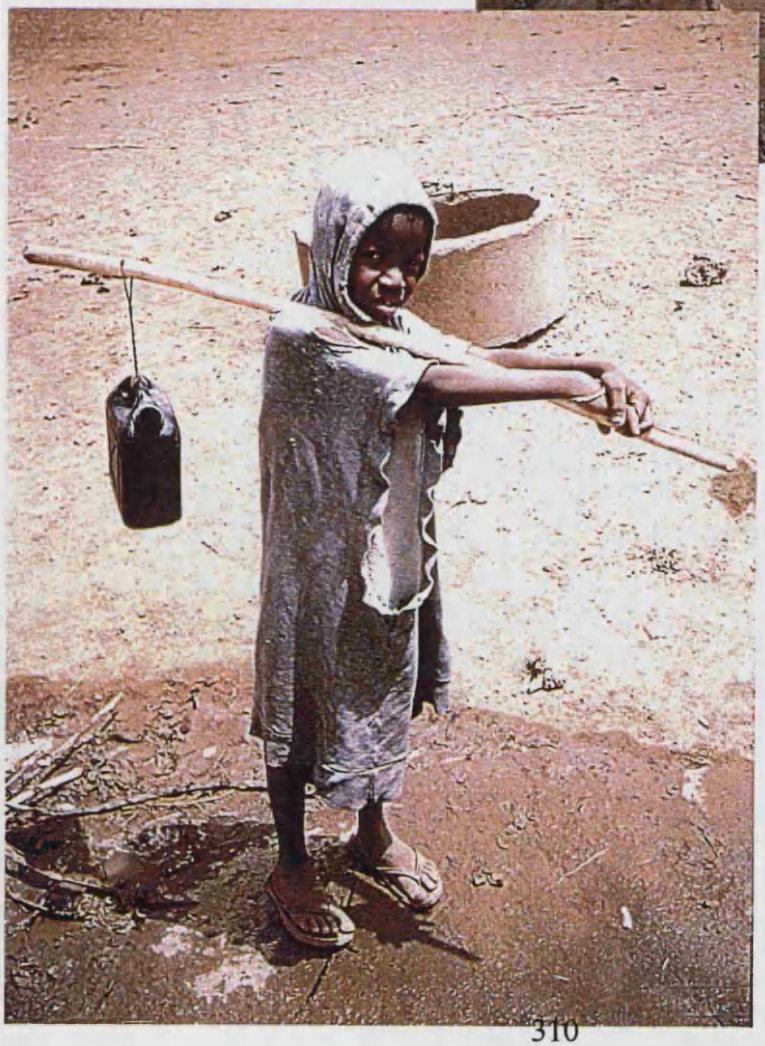
Picture 5 - Tinkirana Tounga farmer.

Picture 6 - Village chief.

Picture 7 - Young Bouzou shepherd.

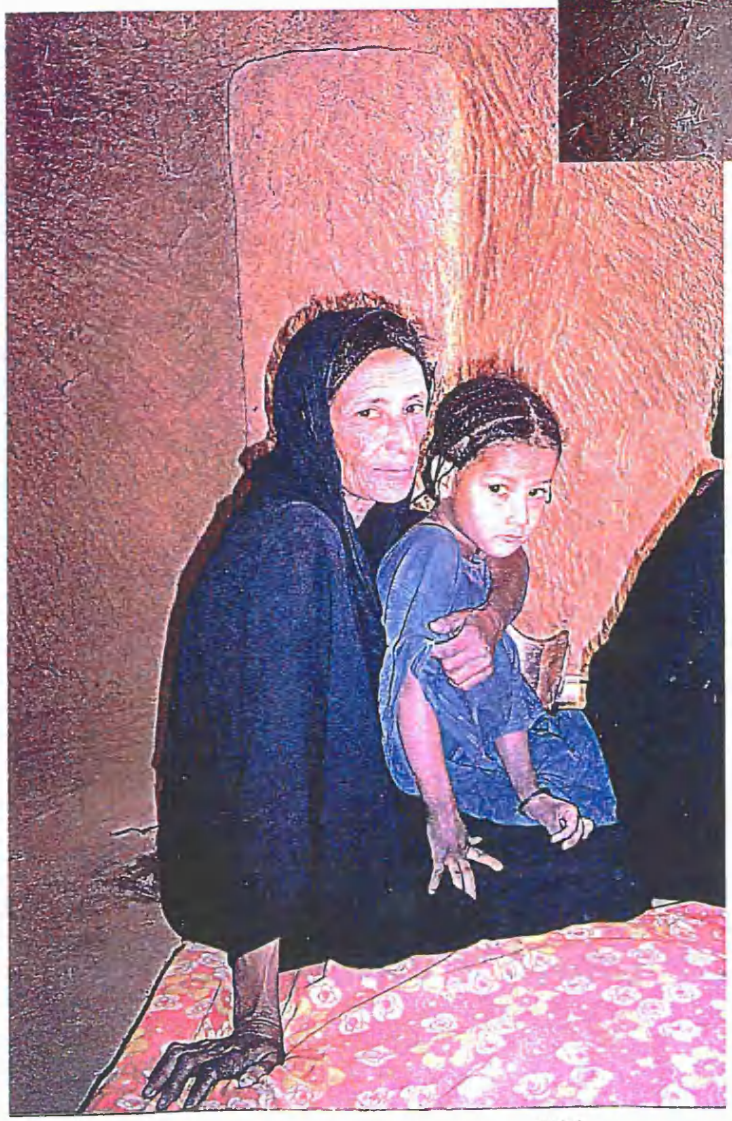


Picture 8 - Little Fulani shepherd boy.



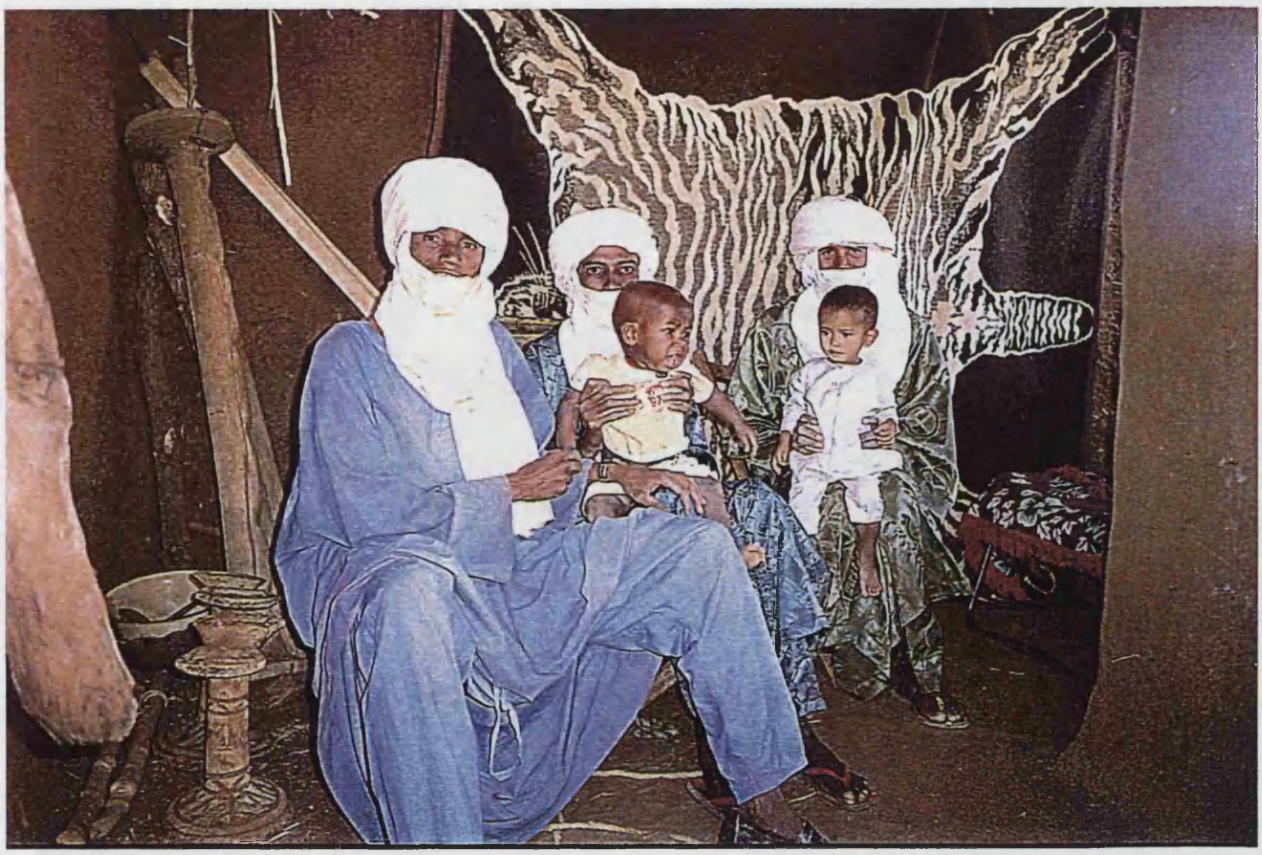
Picture 9 - Bouzou elder.

Picture 10 - Tuareg woman with grandchild.



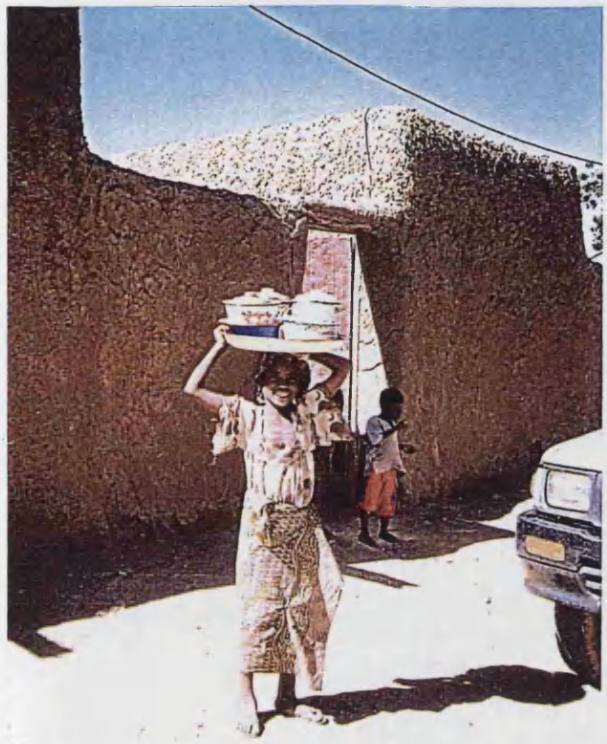
Picture 11 - Tuareg women of Kossongo.

Picture 12 - Tuareg men of Kossongo.

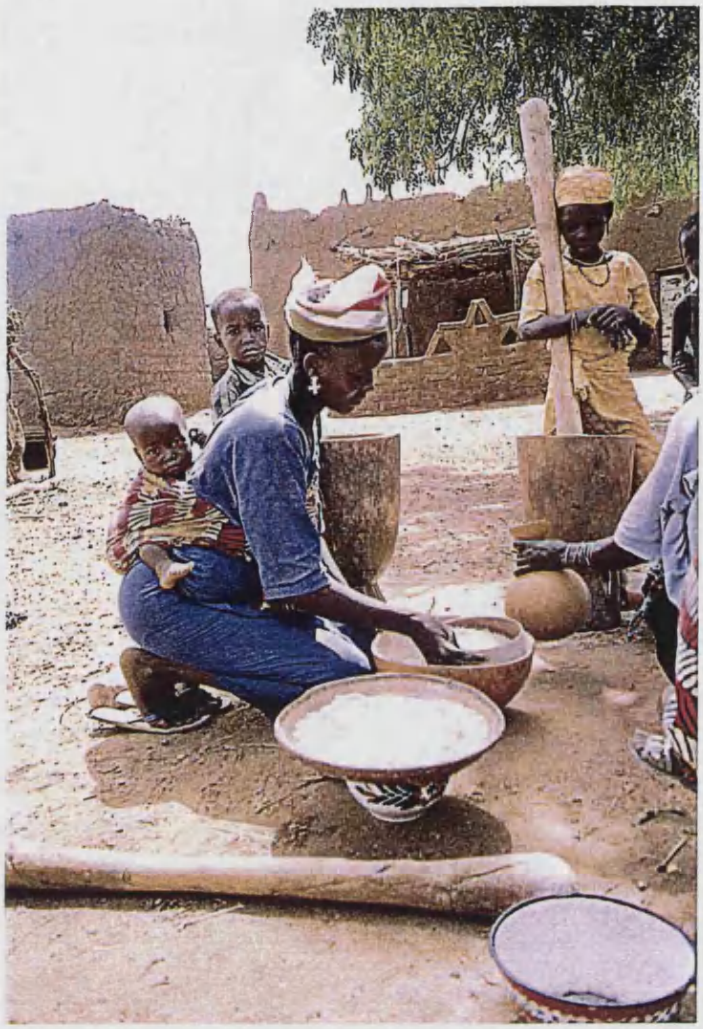


Picture 13 - Communal pounding site at the outskirts of Tinkirana Tounga.

Picture 14 - Hausa women preparing food for a marriage.

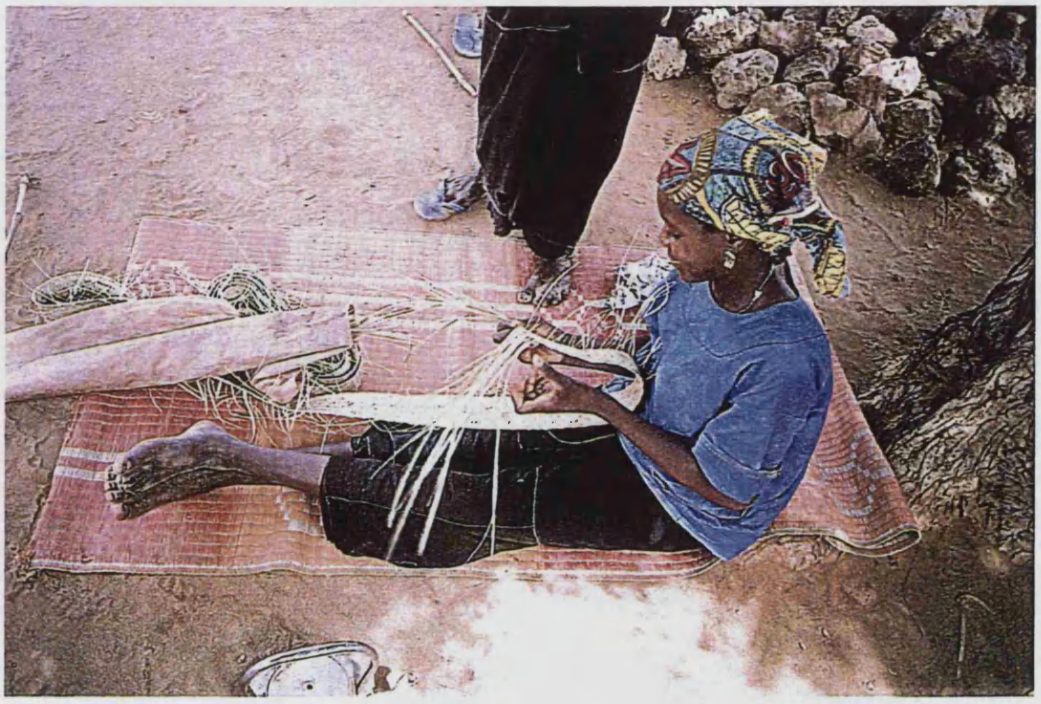


Picture 15 - Hausa girl selling foods prepared by her secluded mother.



Picture 16 - Woman preparing food in Tinkirana Tounga.

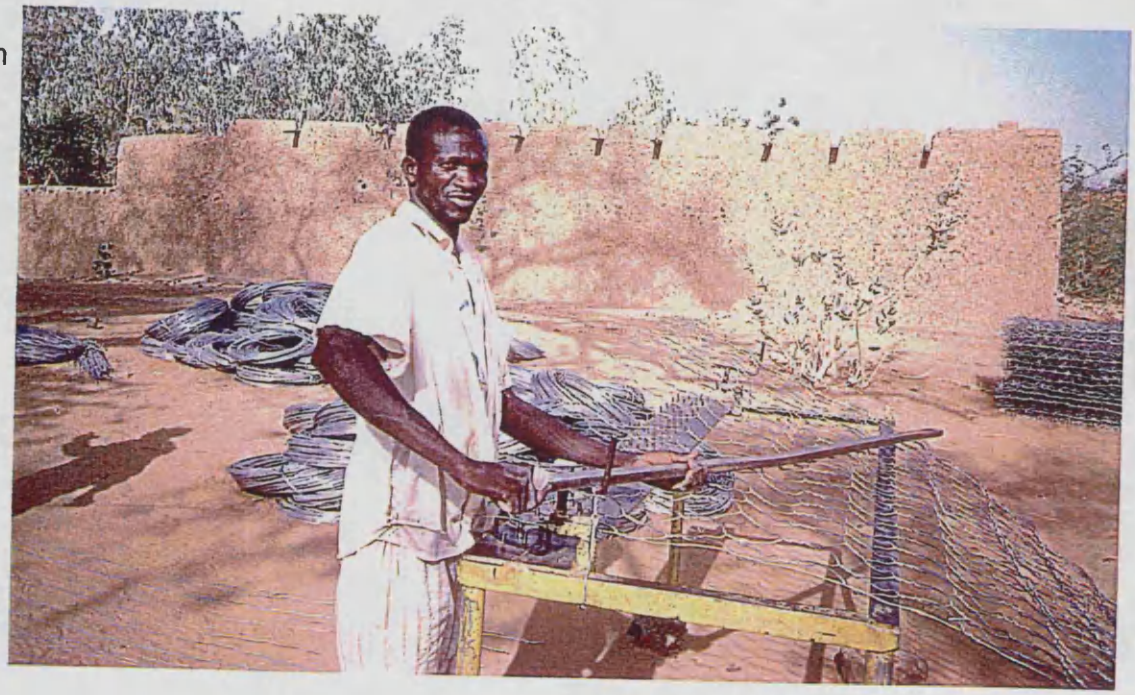
Picture 17 - Girl weaving a mat.



Picture 18 - Italian engineer and Project mechanic.

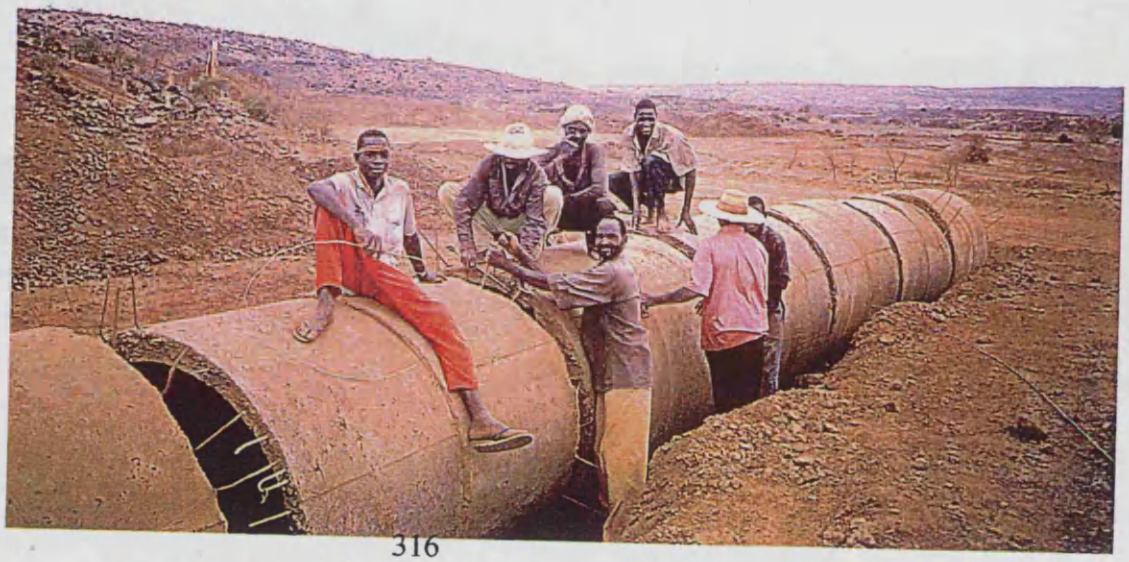
Picture 19 - Project tractors.

Picture 20 - Man weaving a gabion weir.



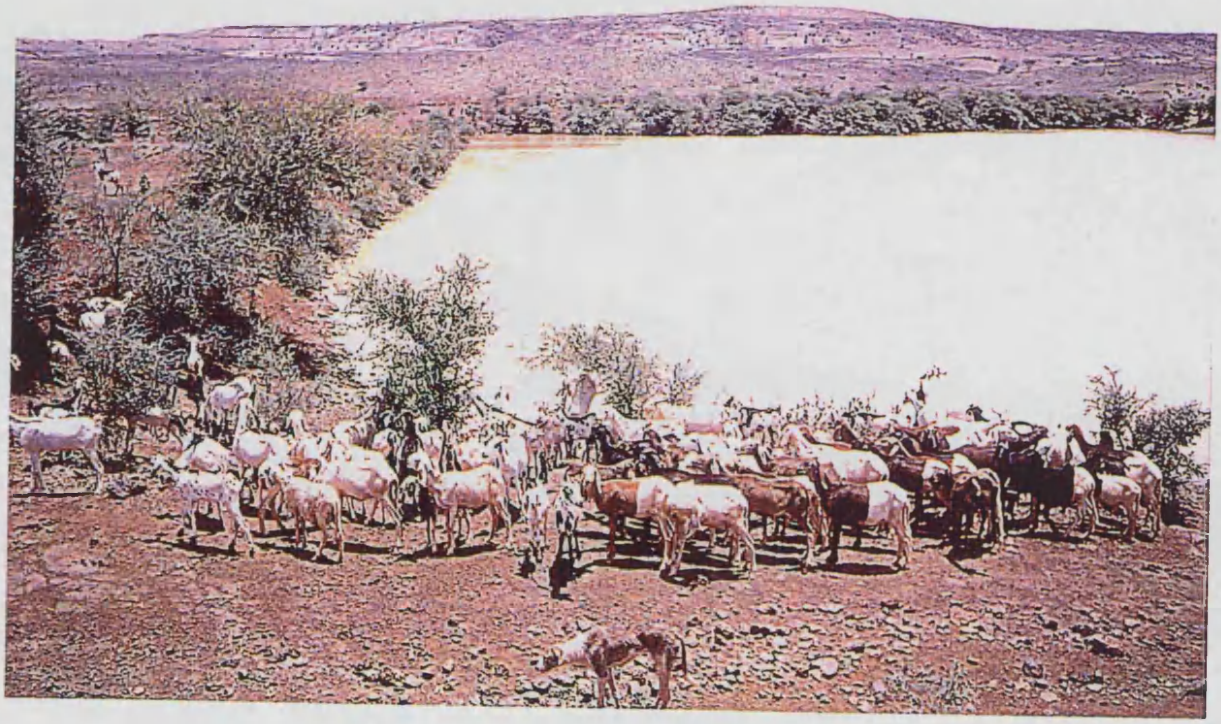
Picture 21 - Workers installing the gabions during the construction of a dike.

Picture 22 - Workers assembling the spillway of an earthfill dam.



Picture 23 - Nomad Fulani women watering donkeys at the Project dam of Seyté.

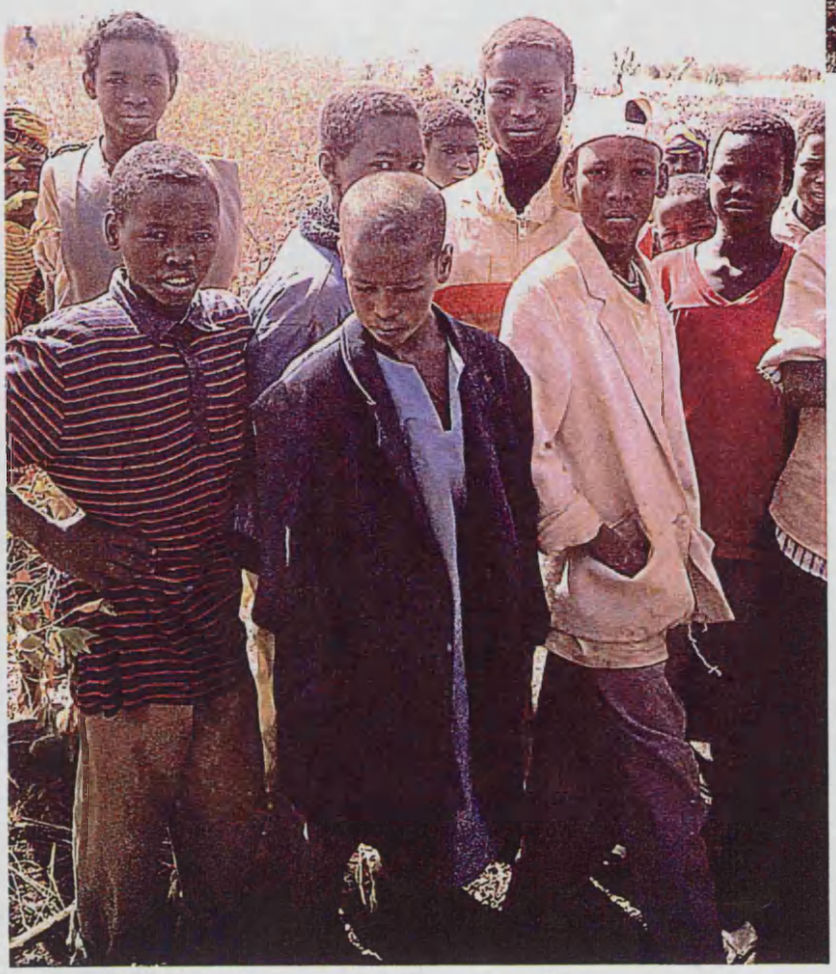
Picture 24 - Livestock watering at the Tabotaki dam.



Pictures 25 and 26 - *Femmes de Keita* digging reforestation trenches.

Picture 27 - 'Stones work' *(aikin doutchi)* in the worksites *(chantiers)*.

Picture 28 - Youths working at Project worksites .



Picture 32 - Women watering reforestation seedlings.

Picture 33 - Girls sewing skirts in the *Foyer Féminin de Keita*.

Picture 34 - Author in the school of Tinkirana Tounga.

Picture 35 - Author's house in Keita.

Picture 36 - Author's house in Tinkirana Tounga.