

# **Milk, Millet and Mannerisms**

## **Gendered Production Among Pastoral and Agropastoral Fulbe Households in Northern Burkina Faso**

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## **Abstract**

Over the last two decades increasing numbers of studies have focused on African pastoral livelihoods in the light of drought, environmental and economic change. Studies discussing gender issues in pastoral societies have suggested that women are progressively losing out as a result of impoverishment, growing commercialisation and through cultural ideals that often discriminate against women.

This study aims to contribute to an understanding of how gender, commercialisation, impoverishment and cultural ideals, all interact in Fulbe production, particularly agricultural and pastoral. The study is based mainly on participant observation and multi-round socio-economic surveys among 39 pastoral and agropastoral Fulbe Djelgobe, Gaobe and Liptako households in the north-eastern part of Burkina Faso.

In terms of pastoral production, almost half of the study households had fewer than ten cattle, only three had a hundred or more. Women were found to be disadvantaged in accessing livestock, especially in poor households and among sedentary agro-pastoralists.

Whereas Fulbe men had, with impoverishment, diversified their income strategies considerably, women had not. This was partly because of women's own interpretation of cultural ideals and men's obligation to provide millet for the household.

Men's engagement in agriculture was essential for most households to secure livelihoods. For women agriculture lowered their social standing vis-à-vis other women and hence participation was limited to sowing and thinning.

Fulbe women's only source of monetary income was through the selling of milk. Proceeds were spent as they wished, mostly on personal needs. Although milk yields were in general low, there was no simple link between impoverishment or commercialisation and milk selling behaviour. The determinants of milk selling were far more complex and involved age, parity, location on transhumance, ethnicity and potential to adhere to cultural ideals of seclusion.

The thesis reveals that while cultural ideals do indeed restrict Fulbe women from diversifying their income sources, they also secure their status and provide them with a relatively strong bargaining position within the household despite the effects of impoverishment and commercialisation.

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## Abbreviations

AEU	Adult Equivalent Unit
CILLS	Comité Inter-état de la Lutte Contre la Sécheresse au Sahel
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Health Organisation
GTZ	Gesellschaft für technische Zusammenarbeit
GV	Groupement Villageois
GVF	Groupement Villageois Feminin
GVM	Groupement Villageois Masculin
IDR	Institut de Developpement Rurale
ILCA	International Livestock Centre for Africa
IRBET	Institut de Recherche Ecologie et Biologie Tropicale
M.AGRI-R.A.	Ministère de l'Agriculture et des Ressources Animales
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
PAE	Projet Agro-Ecologique
PATECORE	Projet Aménagement des Terroirs et Conservation des Ressources dans le Plateau Central
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PSB	Projet Sahel Burkinabe
PSB GTZ	Projet Sahel Burkinabe funded by GTZ in Dori
PSB Pays-Bas	Projet Sahel Burkinabe funded by the Netherlands in Gorom Gorom
RAF	Réorganisation Agraire et Foncière
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
SD	Standard Deviation of the sample mean
SPA	Service Provincial Agriculture
SPE	Service Provincial Elevage
TLU	Tropical Livestock Unit
UCL	University College London
UNHCR	United Nation High Commission for Refugees

## Explanatory note on usage of Fulfulde, maps and names

The people this thesis is about are known by various names. They call themselves *Fulbe*, (sing. *Pullo*). *Fulbe* is also the term used in German literature. French researchers commonly refer to them with the Wolof term *Peul* (or sometimes *Peulh*). In English literature they are often referred to as *Fulani*, deriving from Hausa terminology. I will use the term they use themselves, *Fulbe*. When the term *Fulbe* is used, I do not include *Rimaibe*, their former slaves.

The language the Fulbe speak is called *Fulfulde*. In the research area virtually all the Fulbe, especially the men, speak at least one other language in addition to Fulfulde, usually Tamasheq and/or Songhai. Lacking a formal education, none of the Fulbe in the research sample speak French, the official language of Burkina Faso. In this thesis Fulfulde terms will be used and explained where necessary, mostly when the English translations of the terms would not be appropriate or may be misleading. A glossary of the Fulfulde terms used is provided. The Fulfulde of the three different sub-ethnic groups, Djelgobe, Gaobe and Liptako, differs slightly. Where necessary, differences are noted.

The implosives ‘b’ and ‘d’ are transcribed with capital letters, with a few exceptions: the correct spelling of Fulbe and Rimaibe would be *FulBe* and *RimaiBe*. Further, Djelgobe and Gaobe need to be spelled *DjelgoBe*; and *GaoBe*. However, because I use these terms as ethnic names rather than as Fulfulde terminology, I do not transcribe their implosives. Likewise, throughout the thesis I use the words *Djelgobe* and *Gaobe* for both plural and singular, although in principle they each only indicate a plural.

All maps presented in the thesis have been prepared for the convenience of the reader. They do not imply any judgement of the legal status of the boundaries drawn. The spelling of the names of villages and towns may vary from other maps of the same area. The spellings used are largely taken from maps published by the Institut Géographique National (Paris) and the Centre en Afrique Occidentale (Dakar).

To protect the identity of the people in the research villages, the names of any individuals mentioned in the text have been changed.

## Glossary of foreign terms

### *Fulfulde*

<i>Baade</i> (pl. <i>baadeji</i> )	Compound of one or more huts in sedentary Fulbe villages (Liptako); translated in this thesis as household
<i>Babaade</i>	Term that is translated here as household head; a male person who is usually married and in charge of at least some production and consumption within the household
<i>Bolaaje</i>	Loamy soils
<i>Boogu</i>	Working invitation
<i>Caalol</i>	Small seasonally waterlogged valley bottoms ( <i>bas-fonds</i> )
<i>Ceedu</i>	Hot dry season
<i>Ceekol</i>	Large seasonally waterlogged valley bottoms ( <i>bas-fonds</i> )
<i>Copal</i>	Dish with millet, water and sour milk - sugar is added if available
<i>Dabbunde</i>	Cold dry season
<i>Darao</i>	Long-handled agricultural tool used for weeding
<i>DimaaJo</i> (pl. <i>RimaiBe</i> )	Enfranchised slaves or serf cultivators
<i>Dimo</i> (pl. <i>rimBe</i> )	Freeman; freeborn Fulbe
<i>Eggi lausi</i>	To go on transhumance alone, without wife and children
<i>Fedo</i>	Mat used for making the Fulbe tent
<i>Ferro</i>	Rangeland; sandy and clay soils; tiger bush
<i>Futte</i>	Bride wealth given by groom or his relative to the bride or her relatives
<i>Gapal</i>	Dish with millet, water and sour milk, sugar is added if available
<i>Garibu</i>	Islamic scholars
<i>Gataaje</i>	Transition period between ceedu and ndunngu
<i>Habbanaajji</i>	Animal loans in WoDaaBe society
<i>Halfinde</i>	Herding animals for someone else
<i>Hokkude</i>	To give
<i>Hoore yamde</i>	Time before harvest
<i>Inndeeri</i>	Naming ceremony
<i>Innde</i>	Name
<i>Japeho</i>	Longest mat used for making the Fulbe tent; put vertically over the wooden scaffolding
<i>Jom suudu</i>	Translated here as the mistress of the house; the household head's wife

<i>Jom wuro</i>	Translated here as the head of the household
<i>Joobu</i>	First weeding
<i>Juptugol</i>	To loan an animal
<i>KaaDo</i> (pl. <i>HaaBe</i> )	Non-Fulbe
<i>Kalifa</i>	Animals herded but not owned by Fulbe
<i>Kollade</i>	Infertile laterite lands; little vegetation; degraded land
<i>Korsol</i>	Transition period between <i>ceedu</i> and <i>ndunngu</i>
<i>Laawol</i>	Way
<i>Ladde</i>	The bush, uncultivated space, opposed to <i>wuro</i>
<i>Lenyol</i>	Lineage
<i>MaccuDo</i> (pl. <i>MaccuBe</i> )	Slave(s)
<i>Maitu</i>	Second weeding
<i>Mbedu</i> (pl. <i>mbedi</i> )	Calabash lid
<i>Miskiine</i>	Being poor and helpless
<i>MooDiBo</i> (pl. <i>MoDdiBaaBe</i> )	<i>Marabout</i> (French) : Islamic teacher, literate to varying degrees; who is often believed to have the power to heal and combat evil. He may be responsible for performing the first sacrifice at feasts and naming ceremonies, conducting the marriage ceremony, leading the funeral prayers, and may know (to varying degrees) parts of the Koran.
<i>Ndunngu</i>	Rainy season
<i>Nyiri</i>	Millet porridge
<i>Pulaaku</i>	Cultural code of Fulbe
<i>Pullo</i> (pl. <i>FulBe</i> )	‘Noble’ or ‘freeborn’ person
<i>Secco</i> (pl. <i>cekke</i> )	Mat made of grain stalks
<i>Seende</i>	Degraded <i>seeno</i> with gravel on the surface
<i>Seeno</i>	Sandy soils; susceptible to erosion; low water holding capacity; high infiltration of water
<i>Soodugol</i>	To buy
<i>Suka</i>	Child
<i>Sukude</i>	Gift of livestock to a child on his or her naming ceremony
<i>Sutiyo</i>	Mat used for making the Fulbe tent; put horizontally over the wooden scaffolding
<i>Suudu</i> (pl. <i>cuudi</i> )	Hut; house; tent
<i>Suudu lofal</i>	House made of mud-bricks
<i>Suudu tabermao</i>	Fulbe tent
<i>Talkaajo</i> (pl. <i>talkaBe</i> )	Poor person
<i>Talka</i>	Being poor

<i>Tampi</i>	Tired
<i>Tampirire</i>	In the context used in this thesis: gift of millet given to women for their contribution in cultivation
<i>Walde</i>	Cattle coral, metaphor for age groups
<i>Winde</i>	Empty space were the tents of transhuming Fulbe have been and probably will return to
<i>Wuro</i> (pl. <i>gure</i> )	One or more huts or tents in Gaobe or Djelgobe villages, translated in this thesis as household; village as opposed to <i>ladde</i> , the bush
<i>Yaage</i>	Shame
<i>Yamde</i>	Harvest
<i>Zaka</i>	Islamic charity
<b>Arab</b>	
<i>Sadaaki</i>	Bridewealth in Islamic tradition given to the bride by the groom
<i>Zakat</i>	Obligatory alms for charitable purposes given to the Islamic leaders to be distributed among the poor to purify the giver's sins
<b>French</b>	
<i>Bas-fond</i>	Waterlogged valley bottom, pan
<i>Tontine</i>	Money syndicate

**Author's Note:** The views and opinions expressed and the conclusions reached in the thesis are those of the author alone and do not necessarily represent the individual or collective views of any supporting or funding organisation.

# 1

## INTRODUCTION

### Introduction

Over the last two decades an increasing number of studies have focused on African pastoral livelihoods in the light of recent droughts, environmental and economic change (e.g. Benoit 1984; Simpson & Evangelou 1984; Horowitz 1986; Homewood & Rodgers 1987, 1994; McCabe 1990; Behnke & Scoones 1992; Behnke *et al.* 1993; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1994, 1995). In these studies, pastoralists are generally perceived as becoming more economically, politically and socially marginalised (cf. NOPA 1992:16; UNSO 1994:1) while at the same time frequently adapting to the changes by shifting to other livelihood strategies formerly not pursued. The few gender studies of pastoral societies that emerged in the 80s and 90s have mostly found that pastoral women are increasingly disadvantaged and progressively losing out as a consequence of these changes in production strategies. This is most specifically a consequence of cultural patterns, growing commercialisation and widespread impoverishment (cf. Dyson-Hudson & Dyson-Hudson 1980; Dahl 1987a, b; Talle 1988; Mitzlaff 1988; Jowkar & Horowitz 1991:viii; Bruggeman 1994; Little 1994; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995; Curry 1996; de Bruijn 1997).

This thesis aims to contribute to an understanding of the patterns and mechanisms that influence gender issues in one particular agropastoral and pastoral group, namely the Fulbe<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Although this thesis is a separate entity in its own right, it is nevertheless embedded within the broader scheme of a research project involving partners from UCL, the University of Amsterdam, University of Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) and Benin and IRBET in Burkina Faso. The title of the research project was 'Land use, livelihood and migration in the Sahel' (Homewood 1997). Fred Zaal (1998) and Kate Hampshire (1998) worked in the same research area, focusing on markets and migration respectively. 'Gender' was the required focus of my own study in this respect.

The study of gender is regarded as a basic key to understanding the structures and actions within households, production relationships, the setting of goals and priorities of individuals, the mobilisation of resources, the willingness to take risk, and the rights to benefits from various forms of production. It is my hope that this study will contribute to a thorough understanding of how cultural patterns, commercialisation and impoverishment may interact in Fulbe gendered production, particularly in the domains of agriculture and pastoralism.

This thesis is based on research in the north-eastern, Sahelian region of Burkina Faso, in the provinces of Oudalan and Seno. The research sample includes Fulbe from three different ethnic subgroups: highly pastoral Fulbe Djelgobe, agropastoral Fulbe Gaobe and sedentary agropastoralist Fulbe Liptako (see Chapter 2). The sample covers poor and rich households, households heavily engaged in cattle trade, highly mobile pastoralists as well as those whose primary production is sedentary agriculture. Through a study of the production strategies of sample households as well as the contribution and decision-making processes of the genders in production and the obligations and rights both women and men hold within and towards the household, this cross-section of pastoral groups enables a qualitative assessment of how cultural features, relative impoverishment and commercialisation are currently affecting women's status in the research area. This understanding is developed with particular concern for the right or possibility to sell milk.

Roughly sketched, there are two main practical aims underlying this study. Firstly, to describe and analyse Fulbe's two most important areas of production in the research region: agriculture and pastoralism. Secondly, to ascertain the different roles Fulbe men and women play in these domains. Together, these aims will enable us to address the central debate of the thesis.

This first chapter of my thesis will provide a review of the literature relevant to the debate. Many of the issues raised will be discussed in more detail in the course of the thesis. Chapter 1 is divided into 5 parts. I will begin by discussing the diversity and common ground of Fulbe groups in West and Central Africa including their language and cultural features. In the second part I will discuss some aspects of Fulbe production systems as portrayed in a selection of the literature. The third part concentrates on

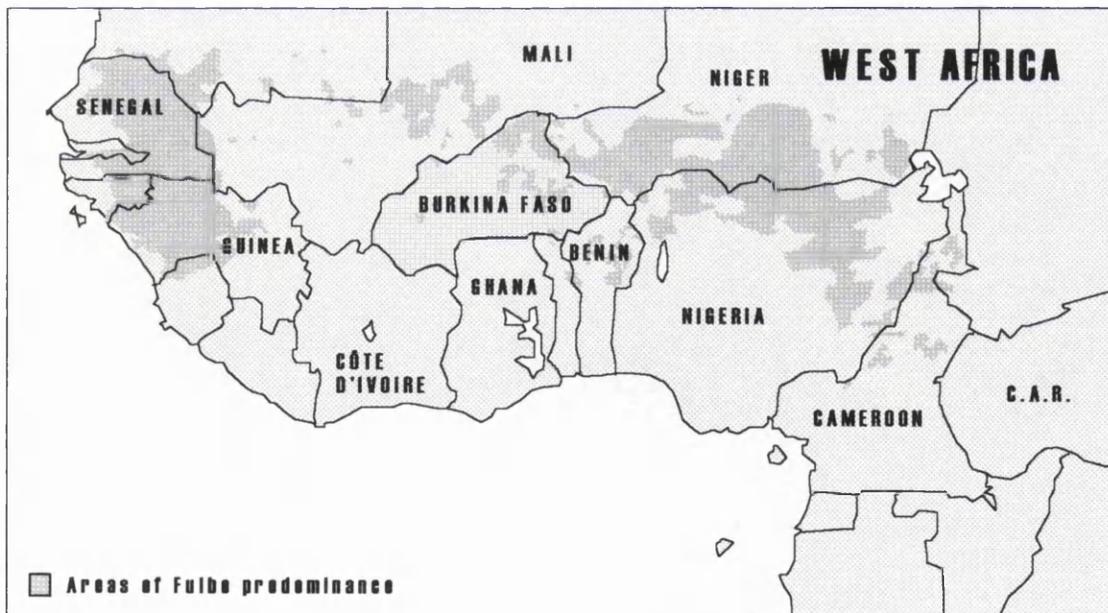
gender and development issues in general. In the fourth part the emphasis is on gender aspects in pastoral societies and particularly Fulbe societies.

The fifth part will introduce research questions arising from the literature review that are central to an assessment of gender and production among pastoral and agropastoral Fulbe in the light of cultural features, relative impoverishment and potential commercialisation.

## Fulbe societies

The Fulbe are a broad ethnic category found in many parts of West and Central Africa, stretching from Senegal and the Gambia in the west to Cameroon and Central African Republic in the east. They mostly inhabit the Sahelian and Sudano-Sahelian belt, but also reach into more sub-humid and humid areas, i.e. the south of Benin, Nigeria and Cameroon. Map 1 shows the distribution of Fulfulde speaking areas in West Africa. The distribution of Fulbe people, however, is much more extensive due to widespread migration.

Map 1: Fulfulde speaking areas of West Africa



Source: Adamu & Kirk-Greene 1986:ii  
Design: S.Fraser

The classic ethnographic works that have initiated wide interest in the Fulbe include Stenning (1959), Hopen (1958) and Dupire (1962, 1962a, 1962b, 1970), who studied the social structure and economy of nomadic pastoral Fulbe in Nigeria and Niger.

After the Sahelian droughts of the early 1970s and 80s, a wide range of studies concentrated on more aspects of the different livelihoods of various Fulbe groups all over West and Central Africa, e.g. Senegal (Juul 1996), Mali (Gallais 1984; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995; de Bruijn 1997), Côte d'Ivoire (Bassett 1994), Burkina Faso (Barral 1977; Delgado 1978; Benoit 1977, 1982; Hagberg 1998), Benin (Welte 1989; Bierschenk & Le Meur 1997), Niger (Dupire 1963; Beauvilain 1977; White 1991), Nigeria (Salih 1992; Waters-Bayer & Bayer 1994) and Cameroon (Boutrais 1994; Burnham 1996)<sup>2</sup>. These studies include Fulbe living in arid areas (e.g. Beauvilain 1977; Swift *et al.* 1984; Maliki 1988) as well as sub-humid areas (e.g. Waters-Bayer & Bayer 1994). The works encompass the diversity of the Fulbe's production systems, ranging from very mobile pastoral-oriented groups who practice hardly any agriculture (Hopen 1958; Stenning 1959; Dupire 1962; White 1991), to agropastoral groups who only transhume for shorter periods and/or shorter distances, or not at all (e.g. Grayzel 1990; Salih 1992; Waters-Bayer & Bayer 1994; Bierschenk & Le Meur 1997), to town-Fulbe who hardly engage in any agro-pastoral production at all (e.g. Kirk-Greene 1986; Burnham 1996).

What these studies show is the great variation in Fulbe production and social systems. *"Any attempt to state something general about Fulbe is a risky enterprise"* (Hagberg 1998:149). However, despite this wide variation there are some features that, even if they do not unite all Fulbe groups, still differentiate them from other groups. Grayzel (1990) differentiates three points that delineate Fulbe as a unique phenomenon: *"an inherent identification with cattle, and cattle raising, even if they themselves own none; an awareness of their shared identity as Fulbe, meaning "free cattle people"; and a very conscious purposefully promulgated set of values and accompanying behavioural roles that they themselves call pulaade"* (*ibid.*:36).

In the following sections, three important features will be discussed: language, social organisation and cultural ideology. These cultural ideologies, *pulaaku* and Islam, are an

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<sup>2</sup> The list of studies could be continued, but is restricted here to those authors that will be discussed in more detail later.

important component to understanding production strategies and gender relations.

### *Language*

The language associated with the Fulbe is called Fulfulde<sup>3</sup>. There are six recognised regional dialects of Fulfulde across West Africa (Arnott 1970:3)<sup>4</sup>. These dialects are influenced by other local languages and are not used only by Fulbe, but also by other groups who may like to be associated with them, where Fulbe constitute a powerful class (e.g. Burnham 1996). On the other hand, there are some Fulbe groups who do not speak Fulfulde at all, e.g. the Warag Warag in Burkina Faso, whose first language is Tamasheq (Barral 1977:50).

### *Social organisation*

Fulbe societies are organised hierarchically (Hopen 1958; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995). They can be differentiated into freeborn groups *FulBe* (sing. *Pullo*) including aristocratic groups *RimBe* (sing. *dimo*), as opposed to former slave groups *MaccuBe* (sing. *MaccuDo*) and enfranchised slaves or serf cultivators *RimaiBe* (sing. *DimaaJo*). Those who are non-Fulbe are called *HaaBe* (sing. *KaaDo*) (cf. Bovin 1990). Slavery no longer has any legal status, but in many Fulbe societies this historical dichotomy may still influence production strategies and socio-cultural understandings.

The freeborn Fulbe divide themselves into patrilineal clans called *lenyol*. In the past *lenyol* membership was a more critical status factor in Fulbe life than it is today (Grayzel 1990). However, certain clans in some Fulbe groups may still have more political status than others. There are also various endogamous castes to differentiate: weavers, smiths, leather workers, wood workers and bards (cf. Dupire 1962; Bovin 1990; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995).

This hierarchical structure is of greater significance for sedentary, more Islamised Fulbe such as the Liptako in Burkina Faso than it is for more egalitarian, pastoral nomadic Fulbe living in small groupings such as for the WoDaaBe in Niger (Stenning 1959:4, 24; Bovin 1990).

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<sup>3</sup> Sometimes Fulfulde is referred to as 'Ful' 'Fulani' or 'Fula' (for more detailed information on Fulfulde see McIntosh 1986 and Arnott 1986).

<sup>4</sup> In the dictionary prepared for the Regional Documentation Centre for Oral Tradition, Arnott distinguishes between 13 different dialects (Centre régional de documentation pour la traduction oral 1971).

### *Cultural ideology*

Production strategies and gender issues of any ethnic group cannot be examined without an understanding of the various collective codes of human behaviour characteristic of that specific group. These cultural patterns are regarded as a framework that limits what **can** be done within a group, rather than what **must** be done. Within its boundaries, individuals can choose according to personal needs and preferences. While cultural patterns have to be thoroughly understood, one has to account also for their flexible interpretation at household and individual levels (cf. Tzschaschel 1986). Culture is not a static set of codes and rules, but a flexible force that changes with time and circumstance (e.g. Waller & Sobania 1994). As the individuals within a group adapt in response to both internal and external change, so their culture and mannerisms change, producing a new set of codes for the group and their society as a whole (cf. Horowitz 1975:389; Swift 1975:443; Aguilar 1998).

*“collective values and representations are not imposed by an immutable tradition. On the contrary, they are constantly subject to change. ... these changes give rise, in turn, to new forms of organisation and new collective practices that cannot be fully understood from the sole standpoint of individual behaviour”* (Raynaut 1997b:322).

### *Pulaaku - The Fulbe Way*

In the case of the Fulbe, the “*cultural ideology*” (Burnham 1996:45) that characterises Fulbe distinctiveness is what they themselves call *laawol pulaaku*: the Fulbe way. This concept, this “*cultural ideology*”, *pulaaku*, is flexible across both time and space and reflects “*the process of change and adjustment continually at work in Fulbe societies*” (Burnham 1996:54).

*Pulaaku* has been discussed by various authors for different Fulbe societies in West Africa (e.g. Stenning 1959; Dupire 1970; Riesman 1977; Grayzel 1990; Burnham 1996). Although Fulbe groups and individuals differ greatly in their mode of subsistence and in their various settings cannot necessarily be stereotyped (Boesen 1997), *pulaaku*, with its varying manifestations, in many ways unites Fulbe from all areas, but even more so distinguishes them from non-Fulbe groups and from their former slaves (Stenning 1959:57; Riesman 1977; Castle 1992).

*“More than an idea of ethnic identity or social cohesion, pulaaku denotes ‘Fulbe-ness’. It provides a code of moral behaviour which regulates the conduct of the Fulbe in their dealings with people from other races and with each other”* (Castle 1992:16, emphasis by author).

*“Pulaaku ... is an ideology of racial and cultural distinctiveness and superiority that ranks the Fulbe above all other ethnic groups”* (Burnham 1996:106-7).

*Pulaaku* regulates and restricts general behaviour, as well as personal etiquette. A Pullo, as opposed to a *DimaaJo* (pl. Rimaibe) is ideally supposed to be *“refined, subtle, responsible, cultivated, endowed with a sense of shame, and master of his needs and his emotions”* (Riesman 1977:127). Important character components of *pulaaku* are modesty, restraint, patience, intelligence, care and forethought (Stenning 1959; Dupire 1970; Riesman 1977; Kirk-Greene 1986; Grayzel 1990; Castle 1992; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995; Burnham 1996). A Pullo should not show emotions like love, jealousy, hatred, pain, hunger, thirst and joy (Riesman 1977). *Pulaaku* also governs Fulbe behaviour in avoidance and joking relationships between different members of society, such as kin and affines or age-mates (e.g. Dupire 1963; 1970).

‘Typically Fulbe’ behaviour is often thought by Fulbe themselves to be a role which one plays (or does not play) rather than an automatic consequence of being of the Fulbe ‘race’. Behaviour that is absolutely contrary to *pulaaku* can be excused to some extent by society and attributed to personality (Riesman 1977:238 - 244).

### ***Fulbe and Islam***

Apart from adhering to the ideals of *pulaaku* most Fulbe groups are Moslems, following the Islamic codes of behaviour to varying degrees (Diallo 1986:230; Bovin 1990:50; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:402). In the late 18th and early 19th century some Fulbe groups adopted Islam as their religion. At several times and places in history acquired privileged positions as ‘aristocrats’ in the genesis of pre-colonial Moslem states, built by military expansion (e.g. Trimmingham 1959:12; Stenning 1959:13 *et seq.*; Bah 1986).

Consequently some Fulbe have been not only cattle herders but also war leaders, administrators, teachers and Islamic leaders in urban centres. The taking up of Islam may thus have brought not only spiritual, but also economic and political advantages (e.g. Frantz 1986).

The act of settling may enable Islamic institutions to be adhered to more rigidly (Baxter 1975:206). Thus, among some sedentary Fulbe groups, *pulaaku* and Islam seem to have merged into a single cultural ideology (Kirk-Green 1986). This has been described, for example, among Cameroon town Fulbe (Burnham 1996) or Fulbe Liptako in Burkina Faso (Bovin 1990:50). Others, for example pastoral WoDaaBe in Niger, appear to have incorporated far fewer Islamic features into their social system (Stenning 1959:4; Dupire 1963; Bovin 1990).

## Fulbe production strategies

*“Le boeuf est, pour le Peul, sa raison d’être: ce n’est pas seulement son bien, mais c’est une partie de son être”*<sup>5</sup> (Diallo 1986:228).

*“Un Peul se définit par ses bovins”*<sup>6</sup> (Boesen 1997:46).

According to *pulaaku*, Fulbe usually associate themselves with cattle, even if they have none (Grayzel 1990). Many other economic activities are not considered seemly among a large proportion of Fulbe groups and are thus, ideally, to be avoided wherever possible (Dupire 1962b:350; Riesman 1977:122; Bovin 1990).

*“Les Peul comme les non Peuls ont traduit ce fait socio-économique [the fact that they own cattle] en une constante anthropologique et les Peuls sont encore de nos jours considérés au Bénin – et se considèrent – comme des hommes, qui pour des raisons culturelles ou physiologiques, sont incapables d’effectuer des travaux physiques, alors même que la condition centrale de possibilité de refus du travail agricole, l’esclavage, a disparu”*<sup>7</sup> (Bierschenk 1997:14).

While this exclusive association with cattle may have been possible historically for some pastoral Fulbe groups (Diallo 1986:228), there is today often a discrepancy between cultural value systems and actual production system (Dyson-Hudson & Dyson-Hudson 1980). In West Africa today, pure pastoralism rarely exists and may have done so in the

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<sup>5</sup> “The cow is for a Fullo his reason to be: it is not only his possession, but also part of his existence” (own translation).

<sup>6</sup> “A Fullo defines himself by his cows” (own translation).

<sup>7</sup> “The Fulbe as well as the non-Fulbe interpreted this socio-economic fact as an anthropological constant and nowadays the Fulbe in Benin are still considered and consider themselves as men who, for physiological or cultural reasons are incapable of doing physical labour, although the central condition to refuse agricultural work, slavery, has disappeared” (own translation).

past only in unusual circumstances (Swift 1986:179). There are Fulbe groups that may not have herded animals recently; concentrating instead on other activities such as political or urban administration.

Recently, a range of socio-economic and ecological factors has triggered a considerable change in Fulbe production strategies<sup>8</sup>. The two most disruptive events were the liberation of former slaves, the Rimaibe, and the recent droughts. The emancipation of the Rimaibe prevented Fulbe from depending on them for certain tasks, e.g. cultivation. The devastating droughts in the 1970s and 1980s caused those Fulbe groups who were engaging in pastoralism to suffer tremendous losses of livestock; many of them have not yet been able to restore their herds to former sizes (e.g. Beauvilain 1977; Bovin 1990; Claude *et al.* 1991; White 1991; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995)<sup>9</sup>. Only in some areas do Fulbe still have considerable livestock holdings (e.g. sub-humid zone of Nigeria (Waters-Bayer 1985). Only a few studies give examples of Fulbe who have succeeded in accumulating more pastoral wealth than they had before the drought, e.g. the FuutankoBe in Northern Senegal (Juul 1996). These Fulbe, studied by Juul (1996), had in fact shifted from cattle oriented production to small stock breeding. This shows a flexibility and capacity to adapt, so typical of many dryland populations (Mortimore 1998).

For many pastoral Fulbe households, however, a vicious downward cycle has been reached when female cattle of reproductive age have to be sold. The herd then falls below the minimum number of animals with a particular age/sex distribution, which is necessary for the herd to reproduce itself. If this minimum is not maintained, animal births cannot keep up with sales and deaths, and milk supplies are insufficient for consumption needs. This combination of factors forces the household into greater dependence on cereal purchases, which necessitates the sale of more animals (Dahl & Hjort 1976; Swift *et al.* 1984:469; White 1991:129). In times of drought the scenario is worse, as cereal prices soar and animal prices collapse (Swift 1986:183; White

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<sup>8</sup> Strategies are understood in a sense that Richards (1993:67) refers to as 'performance'. Strategies are not only based on prior decision making and the result of indigenous knowledge, but are the record of what happened to a specific person at a specific time at a specific place. A strategy is thus a series or sequence of adaptive responses (Dyson-Hudson 1980) to a specific situation.

<sup>9</sup> Fratkin & Roth (1990) found in Kenya among Ariaal that the East African drought in 1984 mainly affected poor households. Rich households stayed rich while poor households became poorer. As a result the wealth difference between rich and poor increased.

1991:124; Kerven 1992). The literature indicates that most Fulbe groups cannot survive on pastoral resources alone but have to diversify their income strategies.

### *Diversification*

Diversification and flexibility have been described as a matter of survival born out of desperation (poverty, vulnerability or disaster), as a risk avoidance strategy (Bryceson 1996), or an opportunity involving a choice of pro-active strategies for improving living standards (Hart 1994 in Ellis 1998:7). However, such typologies of diversification fail to grasp far more complex local circumstances combined with different motives and opportunities which develop out of both desperation and choice (Ellis 1998:7), not only on a household but also on an individual level.

Many authors emphasise the fact that Fulbe diversify mainly out of need rather than choice (e.g. de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995). Widespread impoverishment among Fulbe groups has been regarded as being *“associated with engagement in types of labour which negate nobility, because this labour was done by maccube in the past”* (de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:401). Such work is avoided as much as possible. *“If not, he or she brings shame upon the category of nobles. This is one of the reasons for people to leave the community. They cannot bear the judgement of others and the feelings of yaage<sup>10</sup> which result from poverty”* (ibid.:401).

These quotes indicate that at least for the Fulbe groups studied by de Bruijn & van Dijk, (Jallube Fulbe in Mali), diversification is seen as shameful and to be avoided if at all possible, as it ultimately *“endangers the existence of Jallube society”* (de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:401)<sup>11</sup>. This determination to hold on to their cultural association with cattle would seem to make Fulbe less flexible than many other African dryland societies (e.g. Mortimore 1998:39). However, most other studies provide evidence of Fulbe in all parts of West Africa shifting in and out of a pastoral-oriented mode of production to take up other activities, most notably cultivation (e.g. Stenning 1959; Dupire 1970; Boutrais 1994; Waters-Bayer and Bayer 1994; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995; Juul 1996; de Bruijn

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<sup>10</sup> Fulfulde, meaning ‘shame’.

<sup>11</sup> Among other pastoral groups, researchers have shown that a loss of pastoral resources may not always be disadvantageous as, for example, town life offers other opportunities that may be beneficial, such as wage labour, education and access to social services (e.g. Ensminger 1987). It is also interesting to note in this context, that Baxter (1975) found in East Africa (but also applicable to West Africa) that both *“the failures and the extremely successful leave pastoralism”* (ibid.:224).

1997; Thébaud 1998; Hagberg 1998). This scenario has been noted both historically and up to the present. Fulbe involvement in market exchange to varying degrees, by selling cattle and exchanging milk for millet, has also been described for a long time (e.g. Dupire 1963, 1970; Delgado 1978; Waters-Bayer 1985; Kerven 1992; cf. Swift 1986). Many Fulbe are reported to resort to migrant labour, to work as hired herders for livestock belonging to non-Fulbe or to engage in 'new' activities, such as working as butchers, drivers, night watchmen, etc. (Swift *et al.* 1984; Bovin 1990; Boutrais 1994; Burnham 1996; Thébaud 1998; Bolwig & Paarup-Laursen 1998; Hampshire 1998)<sup>12</sup>.

In his study in northern Cameroon, Burnham (1996) presents data on the occupation of 58 town Fulbe household heads. The data reveal a wide spectrum of activities outside the pastoral sector, notably agriculture, but also work as tailors, kola nut traders, leather workers, to mention just a few. Nevertheless, in his sample, *"being a cattle owner... is a high status occupation within the Fulbe category. This is so much the case that, regardless of their actual occupation, almost all the household heads ... had stated their official occupation on the government's tax census records to be 'pasteur' (pastoralist), in spite of the fact that pastoralists paid double the rate of head tax ... compared with cultivators and were liable to cattle tax in addition"* (Burnham 1996:62; cf. Gondolo 1986).

Most Fulbe have taken up a variety of production strategies despite their cultural attachment to cattle. Such diversification has been initiated often by impoverishment in pastoral resources, but as will be shown in the course of the study, may also be an optimising strategy in its own right. In the following few pages, four livelihood strategies that are of primary importance for many pastoral Fulbe will be discussed: pastoral production, trading, cultivation and labour migration.

#### ***Activities directly related to pastoral production***

**Contract herding/salaried herding:** Nowadays, many pastoral Fulbe in Benin (Schneider 1997), Burkina Faso (Ouedraogo 1995:11; Hagberg 1998:142; Breusers 1998), Niger (White 1991) and other West African countries are reported to be engaging more than ever in herding animals for non-Fulbe owners such as rich farmers, civil servants and merchants. This is explained by impoverishment (Swift *et al.* 1984:503; Castle 1992:27;

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<sup>12</sup> It is difficult, therefore to categorise groups such as 'agro-pastoralists' or 'pastoralists'. A household that may be exclusively herding one year may spend considerable energy on farming the following year (Horowitz 1975:388).

de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:325;) and is often interpreted as one of the Fulbe strategies to stay within the pastoral economy despite severe cattle loss (Swift *et al.* 1984:503; White 1991). From a cattle owners' point of view, contract herding not only reduces their own seasonal labour bottlenecks but is also an effective means to 'hide' their wealth from fellow villagers who may be jealous (Breusers 1998:278). Some authors, though, emphasise the growing importance of herding contracts as a result of formerly specialised ethnic groups diversifying their income strategies (Horowitz 1975:399 *et seq.*; Ouedraogo 1995:11).

In general, if there is an oversupply of impoverished Fulbe who are willing to herd animals belonging to others, a decrease in Fulbe herder rates of pay can be observed (Beauvilain 1977; Swift *et al.* 1984:503; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:325). Some studies found that the herder gains only the milk of the animals he herds (Beauvilain 1977:226; Swift *et al.* 1984: 503; Castle 1992:27; Toulmin 1992:63). However, often only a fraction of the entrusted animals are females, as owners tend to keep the herd for investment rather than subsistence (White 1991). Furthermore, in the dry season when milk production is already low, owners may demand their cows back for their own household's milk consumption (Beauvilain 1977:226; Swift *et al.* 1984:503). Breuser (1998:277) points out that at his study site in Burkina Faso, herding contracts take place in the context of friendship relations, consequently payments vary from case to case. In contrast, salaried herders in Côte d'Ivoire, mainly migrants from Mali, find themselves well paid in cash and/or kind. Indeed, some herders manage to accumulate enough resources to establish a small herd of their own (Basset 1994:162 *et seq.*).

There are many disadvantages to herding others' animals on a hired basis. Swift *et al.* (1984) and White (1991) observed that those herding for others are likely to be excluded from the normal network of animal loans. WoDaaBe, for example, do not want their animals to be mixed with cattle whose origins are unknown to them, because they fear the introduction of unruliness or disease (Swift *et al.* 1984:320; White 1991:132). Households who herd for non-Fulbe are also more restricted in their transhumant movements, as the owner may like to supervise his animals. This is a way of controlling their milk off-take and livestock well-being, a source of constant suspicion (Toulmin 1992:189, 190). When the owner of the entrusted animals wants to sell an animal, the herder must leave the bush to bring the animal to the market (Swift *et al.* 1984:507). Thus, the herder is not necessarily able to choose the best pastures, which is not only

detrimental to the growth of their own herd but may also have negative ecological consequences (Swift *et al.* 1984:497, 321; White 1991; Bassett 1994). Bassett (1994) suggests that crop damage occurs more frequently when salaried herders are responsible for herds, as the herds are often too big for one person to herd. Further, wage labourers, usually short or medium term migrants, feel less sense of responsibility towards the herd or the local cultivators (Bassett 1994; Hagberg 1998).

Thus, contract herding may be an effective mean of staying in the pastoral economy despite cattle loss, but these possibilities vary from one site to another.

**Manure contracts:** Most cultivators appreciate manure on their fields, as it increases yields and preserves soil fertility (Jahnke 1982; Toulmin 1992; Ramisch 1998) as long as a rainfall minimum is experienced. Once rainfall is below a certain level, manure on fields can have the opposite effect and damage ('burn') the crop (Riesman 1977:14; Swift *et al.* 1984:363; Toulmin 1992:78).

Manure arrangements between herders and farmers are described as frequent in some Sahelian areas; in Seno province in Burkina Faso, 34% of Thébaud's sample engaged in manure arrangements (Thébaud 1998:42). In the more southerly savannah regions the numbers engaging in these arrangements are even higher, e.g. 55% in North Central Nigeria (Fraser 1997:39). Other studies, however, argue for a decline in manure arrangements (Beauvilain 1977:228; Gefu 1992; Juul 1996:17).

The determinants of manuring arrangements between herders and farmers and the payment received against manure vary widely across West Africa, and depend greatly on the strength of individual and local relationships between those involved (Fraser 1997:49-56; Thébaud 1998:42). For example, in the Segou region of Central Mali manure is exchanged for water (Toulmin 1992), while in other areas, grain may be given to the herders manuring the land (Beauvilain 1977:228; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995). In central Nigeria (Waters-Bayer & Bayer 1994:223; Fraser 1997:40) and in the south of Benin (Schneider 1997) Fulbe usually receive payment in cash or kind, sometimes millet, a meal per day or money, but may receive nothing at all.

Manure arrangements are in some places advantageous for the pastoral economy, but the possibilities and benefits vary to a great extent within and between locations.

### ***Trading (commercialisation)***

Commercialisation is a term widely used by different authors to describe various economic developments (e.g. barter being substituted by monetary trade; former subsistence crops being sold for cash; reciprocal help being measured in monetary terms, etc.). When I refer to commercialisation in this thesis I concentrate on the process of increasing livestock sales for meat as opposed to the pastoral ‘ideal’ of keeping the herd to reproduce and only taking off milk. This form of pastoral commercialisation is by no means a new phenomenon among pastoralists, not even the Fulbe. It dates back to earlier centuries of interaction with other African groups, not specialising in livestock. It has been accentuated in this century by colonisation, with the introduction of taxes and improvements in infrastructure enabling trade (Salih 1992:5; Kerven 1992).

I will differentiate here between two forms of pastoral commercialisation. Firstly, poverty-driven, stress-sales of animals to satisfy other, more pressing needs (i.e. grain); a phenomena of increasing importance for many impoverished Fulbe (e.g. White 1991; Tyc 1992; Quarles van Ufford 1997; Zaal 1998). Secondly, an optimising strategy practised by those richer households who engage in larger-scale commercial livestock activities in order to accumulate wealth<sup>13</sup>. Although the two motivations are very different, the consequences are often similar. Livestock is kept for meat rather than milk production and thus the herd age, sex and species composition may change.

### ***Cultivation***

Even before the recent droughts, pastoral Fulbe groups were reported to have shifted in and out of agricultural production (Riesman 1977; Stenning 1959; Dupire 1970). The Fulbe in Seno province, Burkina Faso, for example, have long considered agriculture as an integral part of their economy (Thébaud 1998). *“Pour la majorité des exploitants rencontrés (... 81% de l'échantillonnage), l'agriculture est considéré comme l'activité principale de la famille, l'élevage venant le plus souvent en seconde position. Cette tradition agricole est jugée être ancienne, y compris par les Peul”*<sup>14</sup>(Thébaud 1998:15).

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<sup>13</sup> A third form is by acting as an intermediary. The intermediary buys and sells other people's stock and keeps the profits. This can also be done on a very small scale by relatively poor but trusted Fulbe, by receiving the animals to be sold on a loan-basis and then selling them, keeping a proportion of the profit (cf. Quarles van Ufford 1997). This form of commercialisation also occurs in the study area, but is not of primary importance to the argument.

<sup>14</sup> *“For the majority of producers (... 81% of the sample) agriculture is considered as the principle activity of the family, pastoralism coming in most places in second position. This agricultural tradition is considered as ancient, including by the Fulbe” (own translation).*

Due to decreasing livestock numbers, cultivation is today regularly pursued by most Fulbe groups (e.g. Beauvilain 1977; Swift *et al.* 1984; Juul 1996; Bierschenk & Le Meur 1997). Indeed, many studies provide accounts of Fulbe increasing the area they cultivate in recent years (e.g. Milleville 1991a:145, 153 *et seq.*; Delville 1997:150; Waters-Bayer & Bayer 1994; Thébaud 1998).

Cultivated areas have not only increased among formerly more pastoral-oriented groups, but often more so among traditional farming communities in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa. Population growth has further resulted in a greater demand for agricultural land. Therefore access to arable land is becoming more and more difficult. The result is that in many areas, customary laws cannot sufficiently regulate the increasing demand and land has entered the market (Raynaut 1997a:257).

Despite the increased involvement of pastoralists in farming, many studies make it clear that the majority of Fulbe, including those who already engage in agricultural work, do not like it (e.g. Beauvilain 1977:218). Similarly, Bovin (1990:39) argues *“WoDaaBe seen with blisters on their hands after having cultivated ... complain more about the psychological difficulties of bending down, than the actual difficulties in working the soil with a hoe. The “Fulani way” ... is threatened, the very core “Fulaniness” if they [the Fulbe] are forced to give up pastoralism to become agriculturalists”*.

Fulbe dislike agricultural work not only for cultural reasons (cf. Bovin 1990; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995) but also because the resulting labour conflicts may necessitate a temporary neglect of their cattle, which may be detrimental to herd growth (Riesman 1977:12). On the other hand, agriculture can help to reduce animal sales for purchasing millet, if the labour conflict does not damage the herd.

### ***Labour migration***

Studies have documented agropastoralists' migratory movement out of agropastoral production on a seasonal or permanent basis (Swift *et al.* 1984; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995; Raynaut 1997a; Thébaud 1998; Bolwig 1998; Hampshire 1998)<sup>15</sup>. While most authors emphasise the economic benefits labour migration can have for the individual or the household as a whole (e.g. Knerr 1998), others note that migration can also be an

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<sup>15</sup> When I use the term 'migration' in this thesis I refer to movements out of agro-pastoral production by means of a physical move to a place away from the village of origin and the intention to take up other economic strategies. Seasonal movements with cattle are always referred to as 'transhumance'.

important step to adulthood, a *rite de passage* before getting married (e.g. Breusers 1998). While many studies observed that migration is often poverty driven (Swift *et al.* 1984; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995), others see risk minimisation as the primary factor (Stark & Levhari 1982 in Hampshire 1998). Hampshire (1998), in her detailed study on migration in the north of Burkina Faso among various Fulbe groups, found: “*Migration out of agropastoralism can be driven by a diminishing local resource base and insecure rural livelihoods, but many types of out-migration are used as optimising strategies by relatively wealthy households. ... a simple economic framework is insufficient for understanding all of the variation in spatial mobility, and ethnic identity is found to be as, or even more, important than economic factors alone*” (Hampshire 1998:291).

Activities commonly taken up on seasonal or permanent migrations (contract herding, butcher, watchmen, begging, etc.) are as diverse as the locations that Fulbe migrate to (e.g. Bovin 1990; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995; Hampshire 1998). Migrants often engage in activities that are frowned upon as not being in accordance with *pulaaku* and being below the status of a Pullo. Only far away from their homestead, i.e. on migration, do Fulbe feel they can shamelessly pursue these activities.

## Gender relations

I have briefly outlined the general social system and main livelihood strategies of some West African Fulbe groups. In this section I will review literature which focuses on the practical aspects of gender relations in developing countries<sup>16</sup>, mainly based on Sub-Saharan African countries but with examples from all over the world, before concentrating on ‘gender’ literature relating to pastoralists, and Fulbe groups in particular.

Beginning with Ester Boserup’s pioneering work “*Woman’s Role in Economic Development*” (1970)<sup>17</sup>, gender relations have emerged as a major issue in the study of

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<sup>16</sup> For theoretical aspects of gender relations in the anthropological debate see e.g. Rosaldo & Lamphere 1974; Ortner & Whitehead 1981; Moore 1993.

<sup>17</sup> Boserup analysed economic data from three continents. Her work showed that women’s agricultural production was critical in sustaining local and national economies, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. She documented the negative impact of colonialism and modernisation on women, providing evidence of Third World women’s marginalisation and lack of access to technology and resources. For a critique of Boserup’s work see, for example, Sen & Beneria (1997).

labour allocation and resource use, and as a crucial dimension in the trajectories of policies and programmes of socio-economic development and change.

A central point in gender analysis is the recognition that the roles of women and men are socially rather than biologically determined (e.g. Rosaldo & Lamphere 1974; Rogers 1980). *“Gender is a social phenomenon, socially constructed, while sex is biologically determined. ... Since gender is created by society its meaning will vary and will change over time”* (Momsen 1991:4).

A rapidly growing body of literature has discussed and analysed the socio-economic role of women in many parts of the world. It highlights the extent to which historical and contemporary socio-economic and ecological transformations have changed gender relations, frequently destabilising and in many respects worsening women’s lives (e.g. Rogers 1980; Whitehead 1985; Savane 1986; Monimart 1989; Momsen 1991; Vickers 1991; Østergaard 1992; Moser 1993; Braidotti *et al.* 1994; David 1995; Charlton 1997; Wiegersma 1997; Tinker 1997).

The factors considered to contribute to a marginalisation of women vary from society to society and their respective significance is judged differently by different authors. In some studies, for instance, colonisation is considered as having accentuated an imbalance of the genders (e.g. Bennholdt-Thomsen *et al.* 1983). In others, structural adjustment projects are seen as primarily responsible for having worsened women’s conditions (e.g. Palmer 1991). In other studies, the adoption of Islam is seen as the key factor in reinforcing female subordination (Dey 1981:115).

However, one has to be careful not to oversimplify the gender relationship in a ‘men exploit, women are exploited’ formulation (Mohanty 1997). In fact, it is often women who want to maintain the oppressive hierarchies within a household, because only then can they exercise power at some stage in their lives, if not over men then at least over ‘inferior’ women (cf. Kandiyoti 1997; Gallin 1997). In the following section I will, without attempting completeness, give an overview of how women are widely perceived as being discriminated against in changing societies in terms of their decision-making rights, access to productive assets, labour, income and expenditure patterns.

### *Changing decision-making rights and access to productive assets*

With colonialism, the European model of a family was transcribed onto other cultures. The husband was regarded as head of, and responsible for, the household, while his wife was attributed a subordinate and complementary role. This 'domestication' of women (Rogers 1980; Bennholdt-Thomsen *et al.* 1983; Bennholdt-Thomsen 1986) is seen as being accentuated by the transformation to cash economies of formerly more subsistence oriented economies to cash economies. While men took a leading role in the cash economy, taking up new economic opportunities, women were left with a growing responsibility in the subsistence sector (Rogers 1980; Bryson 1981; Hay 1990). This process is seen to be further aggravated by male labour migration which, particularly in some African settings, leaves women to replace the male workforce (Rogers 1980; Brydon 1989b) without increasing women's decision-making rights (e.g. Gordon 1981; Monimart 1989:59; Myers *et al.* 1994; Hampshire 1998). Women often have fewer resources to call upon once their husband has gone, and are additionally confronted with a lack of social and emotional support (Gordon 1981).

Development projects and trajectories of government policies often enhance this process of female marginalisation (e.g. Caplan 1981; Brydon 1989a). Important usufruct rights of women are undermined by introducing ownership rights that benefit men more than women (Bryson 1981; Nelson 1981). Development projects which regard the household head as the provider, promote the concentration of productive assets and cash as well as access to information or new technology in the hands of men (Rogers 1980; Monimart 1989:94,96; Momsen 1991:1; Kasman & Körner 1992) as the 'famous' example from irrigated rice schemes in the Gambia show<sup>18</sup> (Dey 1981). Women would often thus become victims rather than beneficiaries of development, as market production is invariably valued higher (in a monetary and societal sense) than the subsistence economy and domestic work mainly pursued by women (Klemp 1992:292 *et seq.*).

And yet, within this process of marginalisation of women, households simultaneously become ever more dependent on women's labour and income (Rogers 1980; Monimart 1989:137-139).

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<sup>18</sup> Three development projects in the Gambia introduced rice cultivation to Mandinka men, channelling inputs to male household heads on the assumption that they generally control land, labour, crops and finances. Among the Mandinka of the Gambia, however, rice used to be a female crop, controlled by women. By failing to integrate women into the development projects, Mandinka women's economic dependence on men increased (Dey 1981).

## ***Gender and labour***

Gender division of labour is historically and socially shaped and differs from one society to another (Rogers 1980; Momsen 1991:3). However, most studies reach the conclusion that women have to cope with heavier work burdens than men. They are most often responsible for housework, childcare and subsistence food production, in addition to an expanding involvement in paid labour (Ellis 1988; Monimart 1989).

Criticism of the conventional definition of economic activity and labour force concepts has arisen as most of women's work is domestic and unpaid (i.e. in the subsistence sector). It tends to be neglected in statistics and development planning (Benería 1981), concealing the fact that women worldwide carry the burden of two-thirds of the total hours of work performed (Momsen 1991:1). For this they earn a mere 10 per cent of the world's income and own but 1 per cent of the world's property (Momsen 1991:2). This situation is often worse in areas prone to environmental degradation, which in developing countries affects women worse than men<sup>19</sup> (Agarwal 1986; Monimart 1989:23 *et seq.*, 163, 166; Joekes & Pointing 1991). Here, women's proportional labour input in household production, both for reproductive and productive work, increases. At the same time, their access to resources, social power and autonomy are at risk of decreasing (Rogers 1980; Mies 1986; Momsen 1991:95; Rodda 1993; Braidotti *et al.* 1994; Shiva 1997; Agarwal 1997; Braidotti *et al.* 1997).

## ***Gender and income/expenditure patterns***

Research has shown, cross-culturally, that women generally spend proportionally more of their income on household maintenance than men (Momsen 1991:1; Mayoux 1998). Men tend to spend money more on personal interests than on household necessities (e.g. Mencher 1988; Hoodfar 1988; Monimart 1989). This is accentuated when 'new' forms

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<sup>19</sup> In the Sahel, for example, women are seen as the primary victims of desertification as they are responsible for food, fuel-wood and water. Fuel, some wild plants that used to be collected to complement the diet, or some natural resources that have been used for craft, e.g. mat-making, are becoming rare due to environmental degradation. Consequently, more time needs to be spent on domestic duties that could otherwise be invested in income generating activities. Women are also often confronted with fines for cutting live wood and have an increased expenditure on fuel, water and food (Monimart 1989:23-25, 33, 163, 166; Joekes & Pointing 1991).

of income are gained by men without traditional rules on how it should be spent (e.g. Monimart 1989:43,49)<sup>20</sup>.

### *Limitations of gender analysis*

The picture of the impact of change and development on the role of women in developing countries painted by most research, is usually rather negative. However, in more recent work it has been suggested that women from the South should not be generalised as marginalised, downtrodden and exploited, assuming a cross-cultural patriarchy (Guyer 1995; Ekejiuba 1995; Mohanty 1997; Shiva 1997). Among the falsely homogenised category 'women' there may be variations even within the same culture, leading to a high diversity in women's experiences across space, time, class and lifecycle (e.g. Dahl 1987:5; Jeffery *et al.* 1988; Arbeitsgruppe Ethnologie Wien 1989; Castle 1992; Katz and Monk 1993; Labrecque 1996; Mohanty 1997; Agarwal 1994, 1997; Warner *et al.* 1997). In this context, the word 'status' is frequently used as a measure of women's economic and political situation in an often vague and undifferentiated way (Dahl 1987:6). In fact, "*the concept of 'the status of women' is one which conceals as much as it enlightens*" (Rogers 1980:29). It ignores the enormous variety of situations in which individual women can find themselves. Status is a very dynamic and diverse concept in relation to women (Whyte 1978 in Dahl 1987b). Reference to gender alone cannot suffice in determining the roles and status of individuals. A great deal of additional information needs to be collected to disaggregate the broad categories 'women' and 'men' according to other socially defined and naturally (or biologically) determined differences between individuals (Warner *et al.* 1997:145).

I will discuss three key factors that can influence women's status in a variety of ways: class, wealth and lifecycle.

### *Class*

*"Class relations condition and traverse all aspects of social relations including the relationship between men and women"* (Bourgeot 1987:104). Women of a higher social rank or class may be subject to smaller workloads than women of a lower class, as for

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<sup>20</sup> Monimart describes how money earned by men on migration, in particular through gold-mining, is 'new money'. There are no traditional rules attached on how to spend it. Therefore men often use it for their personal affairs and not for the benefit of the household (Monimart 1989:43, 49). "*Mais les hommes utilisent la majeure partie de <l'argent de l'or> à leur gré, car c'est un <plus> qui échappe aux règles traditionnelles*" (Monimart 1989:43). - "However, the men use the majority of this 'gold money' as they wish, because it is a surplus that escapes the traditional rules" (own translation).

example observed among Tuareg women in Niger (Oxby 1987; cf. Randall & Winter 1985). On the other hand women from a higher class may be more economically marginalised than lower class women. Mies (in Mohanty 1997), for example, found that higher caste women were more secluded and could only do work in the confines of the house. They looked down on, but at the same time envied, those lower caste women who could go out, work in various places and earn more money because they were not respectable housewives from a higher class (Mohanty 1997:84-85).

### ***Wealth***

Being of a higher class may enhance social standing but does not necessarily lead to economic benefits. Similarly, in some societies income-generating options for women are often more socially circumscribed in better-off households than in poorer households (Ellis 1998:7). On the other hand, personal wealth can enable women to have a better bargaining position within the household by being less dependant on men and having a better standing vis-à-vis other women (Safilios-Rothschild 1988; Mayoux 1998).

### ***Lifecycle***

Age, together with other social-biological features of women's and men's lifecycles, such as marital status, number of children or lifecycle of those around the individual (i.e. household demography), confront women with different problems, opportunities and obligations (Momsen 1991; Castle 1992; Katz & Monk 1993; Moser 1993; Kandiyoti 1997; Warner *et al.* 1997). Most gender studies are based in the reproductive years of women - around age 20-45 - when, in most societies, male control over women is greatest (Momsen 1991:80). For both men and women, lifecycle influences access to resources, workloads, ownership rights and expenditure obligations (Little 1987; Baroin 1987; Warner *et al.* 1997).

### ***Gender policy approaches in development***

As a response to this widely perceived discrimination against women and female disadvantages in developing countries, governmental aid agencies and non-governmental organisations have tried to integrate women more into sectoral planning in the last 25 years (Visvanathan 1997, Sawadogo 1989). It has almost become an obligation, certainly politically correct for development practitioners, to do something for or with women. "*<Faire quelque chose avec les femmes> est devenu un leitmotif...*

*Mais quoi faire avec les femmes?*<sup>21</sup>” (Monimart 1989:83, emphasis by author). Two main points that seem to be dominant in the trajectories of development for women will be discussed here briefly:

- Collective action of women to improve their socio-economic situation,
- Diversification of women’s income strategies and enhancement of their monetary income, both seen as the keys to women’s empowerment.

### ***Collective action***

Women have often been portrayed as actively reacting against discrimination or a deterioration of their economic and social status by organising themselves in new ways, particularly where traditional forms of collaboration and support are no longer sufficient (Roger 1980; Lapido 1981; Moser 1993; Davison 1995). Joekes & Pointing (1991:26) suggest that “*especially in poorer societies, collective action through women’s groups is indispensable to improvements in women’s position*”.

“... *les femmes decouvrent que l’indépendance individuelle passe par la solidarité collective*”<sup>22</sup> (Monimart 1989:54).

In Burkina Faso, for example, *groupements villageois* (GV) for men (GVM) and women (GVF) were formed (Monimart 1989:53, e.g. PATECORE 1991), not only out of women’s own initiative but also through the intervention of development projects that prefer to address women’s problems collectively rather than dealing with women on an individual basis. These GVF are often slightly idealised as a forum to empower women against men by improving their economic situation through collective work and action (Monimart 1989:95). My own experience of working with Mossi women in Burkina Faso revealed that collective work enabled some women to improve their economic situation and social standing vis-à-vis their husbands, but that this had been the case since well before any Western/Northern intervention, through traditional forms of collaboration. However, hierarchical structures within the women’s social categories (e.g. age, wealth) still remained an obstacle for individuals in those collective action groups (Buhl 1994).

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<sup>21</sup> “<*To do something with the women*> has become a leitmotif ... *But what to do with the women?*” (own translation).

<sup>22</sup> “Women have discovered that individual independence is achieved through collective solidarity” (own translation).

Gender literature and development projects alike sometimes idealise rural women's 'female solidarity networking' (Bryceson 1995:260). Co-operative behaviour and solidarity amongst women is not a universal reaction to change and may even be rejected if collaborative production is not part of women's traditional strategies (Davison 1995) or if there is a high level of competition between women<sup>23</sup> (Lewis 1990). Among the matrilineal population of south Malawi, for example, women prefer individual production, over which they could maintain direct control, including control of the profits. There is no cultural tradition of co-operation among these women and they do not feel the need so much to collaborate 'against' their husbands. Subsequently, many development schemes focussing on collaboration, in Malawi and elsewhere, have failed (Davison 1995:194 *et seq.*).

### ***Diversification and enhancement of monetary income***

It is often implied that when women diversify their income strategies, or gain an income independent from their husbands, they may be able to empower themselves (cf. von Braunmühl 1992; Bruchhaus 1992; Mayoux 1998). Even if women's income does not translate directly into increased well-being for themselves, as it is "*strongly influenced by gendered rights to household expenditure and norms of female altruism*" (Mayoux 1998:15), it is assumed that it improves the livelihood of the household as a whole, and the well-being of children in particular. An independent monetary income is also thought to give women higher self esteem and, at the same time, provide them with a stronger bargaining position vis-à-vis male members of the household (e.g. Papanek and Schwede 1988; Mayoux 1998; Safilios-Rothschild 1988:227).

Income generation programmes for women, i.e. provision of start-up credits and courses for learning new activities, are widely initiated by NGOs and development projects with a view to improving women's livelihoods (Monimart 1989:52; e.g. PATECORE 1991). However, these activities often present women with an even greater workload (Rogers 1980; Mayoux 1998) and not all women may be happy to start up a new activity for cultural, religious or other reasons, or for lack of the initial capital, despite start-up credits.

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<sup>23</sup> Lewis (1990) found among market women in Abidjan that the main reason for failure of group action was the competition in the market place between individuals.

## Gender and production in pastoral societies

This short summary of gender literature shows that women are generally seen as being increasingly economically disadvantaged and marginalised, particularly in the face of recent socio-economic and ecological changes. In the following section, I will discuss how the literature portrays pastoral and agropastoral women in sub-Saharan Africa, and in particular Fulbe women.

*“women’s work is more or less universally undertaken from some position of subordination”* (Dahl 1987a:5,6).

*“as a result of the social and economic transformations taking place in sub-Saharan Africa, pastoral women’s rights are being eroded. They are increasingly becoming excluded from access to productive assets with a consequent undermining of their status in relation to both the household and wider society”* (Joekes & Pointing 1991:22).

The above quotes indicate that most studies addressing gender issues in pastoral and agropastoral African production systems have suggested that women are confronted with increasing economic and social marginalisation (dwindling rights in livestock, no rights over land, increasing workloads and the gradual loss of power to determine their own labour) (e.g. Talle 1988; Sikana *et al.* 1993:28-29; Huss-Ashmore 1996; Smith Oboler 1996).

Three factors are thought to be most important, and it is these three that I will now discuss more thoroughly:

- cultural patterns,
- general impoverishment,
- growing commercialisation.

### *Cultural patterns*

Cultural patterns have to be understood and taken into account when interpreting the economic strategies of individuals (Little 1987; Ellis 1998:11). These patterns can form a major constraint on women’s roles, often more so than is the case for men (Agarwal

1990). For Fulbe, as already mentioned, two main cultural features are important: Islam and *pulaaku*.

The variability of the position of Moslem women in societies is conspicuous across and within Islamic societies (Utas 1983). Especially in African Moslem societies, women's rights and social standing, in general, may be inconsistent with the rules of any Islamic school of thought as 'traditional' African social systems may have incorporated only some aspects of Islam (Nicolaisen 1983:3, 4). There is reason to suggest that Moslem women in West Africa are freer than Arab women or those in North Africa, as a result of religious syncretism (cf. Trimingham 1959:176; Stenning 1959:25) and due to the fact that governments tend to have secular laws<sup>24</sup>. However, supremacy of men over women prevails itself through divorce rights of men, rules concerning the custody of children, rights of men to marry up to 4 wives<sup>25</sup> and inheritance rules that discriminate against women (White 1978:53; Nicolaisen 1983:6, e.g. Bourgeot 1987; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995). On the other hand, Islam may provide women with certain rights that they might not have had in pre-Islamic societies. For example, in Islamic polygynous marriages co-wives have the right to demand being treated equally, otherwise a woman has the right to divorce. Prior to Islamization, in some societies women may not have had the right to inherit anything.

In general, pastoral women are said to be more socially and economically autonomous than sedentary agricultural or urban women (Keddie & Beck 1978:7). This is certainly the case for many Moslem Fulbe (e.g. Bovin 1983:66). Fulbe women's place in the production systems is relatively strong (e.g. Waters-Bayer 1985) and female seclusion among most Fulbe is usually not strictly observed. The degree of autonomy depends more on the economic situation of the household than on the level of Islamization (cf. Trimingham 1959:176). Furthermore, Fulbe women can relatively easily initiate a divorce and can, after the first husband, usually choose their subsequent husbands themselves (Dupire 1970).

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<sup>24</sup> For example, according to the official law in Burkina Faso, adopted in November 1988, monogamy is the legal form of marriage, but polygamy is tolerated. This law furthermore grants every individual the right to choose his or her marriage partner and legally, both parents (mother and father) have full authority over their children. Levirate is deemed unlawful. The age of consent is set at 17 (Monimart 1989). However, these marriage laws have had little impact on most rural populations and may not even be known.

<sup>25</sup> Polygamy is by no means an exclusively Moslem feature; in non-Moslem African societies polygamy is similarly common (e.g. Cutrufelli 1983:53 *et seq.*; Burnham 1987:46).

The degree to which Islam may restrict women's socio-economic role, depends on how strongly Islamic rules are adhered to within the village or household, or by the individuals concerned.

A bigger obstacle for women, in this context, are the 'obligations' promoted by *pulaaku* on the rank of a freeborn Fulbe. "...when we look more closely at the nature of women's submission, we discover that her obedience is much more an adherence to culture itself than a conformity to the will of an individual, be it father, mother or husband."

(Riesman 1977:85). Women seem to adhere strongly to the social and moral codes as prescribed by society. "*This may seem contradictory, because those same codes force them into very poor positions and close alternative roads to survival*" (de Bruijn 1997:647).

De Bruijn & van Dijk (1995:410) suggest that most Fulbe Jallube women in Mali would prefer to starve than to do the work of Rimaibe. They would rather accept greater dependency on their husbands and other male relatives than lower their social standing to that of their former slaves. Rimaibe women, although lower in social rank, often seem to be economically better off than Fulbe women. Work rarely pursued by Fulbe women, except in case of absolute necessity, is regularly done by Rimaibe women, e.g. agriculture, gathering, weaving, leatherworking, woodworking, petty trade (de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:124).

This is confirmed by studies that have explained Fulbe women's attitudes towards agriculture. In some pastoral societies women engage in agriculture and are able to inherit fields and have full control over the yields. This phenomenon is seen among the Dodoth in Uganda (Bruggeman 1994:3) and the Turkana in Kenya, where women do most of the agricultural work (Broch Due 1983 in Joekes & Pointing 1991:6), a situation which is rare in Fulbe society. Fulbe women normally play a minor role in agricultural production. For example, Dupire (1963:70) and Beauvilain (1977:134) found that WoDaaBe women only participate in agriculture when there is exceptional understanding with their husbands. A similar situation prevails in Burkina Faso (Thébaud 1998:48) and in Northern Nigeria (Salih 1992:22) where Fulbe women only participate when there is a severe labour shortage. Salih identified two reasons why Fulbe women do not help in cultivation: firstly, they are busy enough with domestic work, and secondly, and more importantly, it would bring shame to the husband as his

parents-in-law may interpret this as a sign of poverty (Salih 1992:22). In Mali “*men are responsible for the work in the fields, which is absolutely forbidden to women*” (de Bruijn 1997:633). “*Some women cultivate, but they are considered deviant and are accused of witchcraft*” (de Bruijn 1997:642). There, even when labour is one of the major constraints to agricultural production, women would not participate, not even in sowing (de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:224, 411; cf. Castle 1992:228.) “*The economic activity of Fulbe women is centred around milk selling – they practice no agricultural activity...A woman’s status is related to milk and cattle and not land*” (de Bruijn 1997:633). From these studies it would appear that the only culturally accepted economic activity for Fulbe women is the selling of milk products.

Cultural patterns, however, differ for women at different stages in their lifecycle (Dupire 1970; Riesman 1977:87; Little 1987). De Bruijn & van Dijk (1995) concede that most old Fulbe women are economically slightly better-off because there are fewer constraints on their behaviour than on that of younger women. Household composition and an individual woman’s particular role in it, vis-à-vis other women, limits what she can and cannot do. “*A woman’s status position in relation to other women within her marital family dictates her degree of ‘empowerment’ and autonomy and gives her differential access to social, financial or psychological resources*” (Castle 1992:30). Within households then, the position of women in relation to each other is as, if not more, important than their position in relation to men (*ibid.*:219).

### ***Impoverishment***

I have pointed out earlier that impoverishment in pastoral resources has led to a diversification of income strategies among pastoral Fulbe. However, the last section has indicated that this diversification may be less of an option for Fulbe women. What, therefore, is the assumed impact of impoverishment on women in Fulbe and other pastoral societies?

In general, it has been suggested that pastoral women have progressively lost control over their own livelihoods and security with impoverishment caused by ecological, political and demographic change (Dahl 1987b; Talle 1988; Bruggeman 1994; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995; de Bruijn 1997). Through impoverishment “*women are losing their traditional rights and therefore what little independence they had*” (Bruggeman 1994:ii).

In the context of impoverishment, two further issues shall be discussed. Firstly, pastoral women's access to animals, particularly in terms of inheritance and bridewealth. Secondly, women's changing rights to determine their livelihoods, notably their right to divorce.

### *Access to livestock through inheritance*

It is generally believed that women in pastoral societies have less access to animal ownership than men (e.g. Hopen 1958; Stenning 1959; Joekes & Pointing 1991:12). This tendency is accentuated both by impoverishment and development-related change, through which men have increasingly appropriated women's rights to livestock (Joekes & Pointing 1991:12; Talle 1988:224).

For East and West African pastoralists, whether they are oriented more towards Islamic or towards 'traditional' African institutions, inheritance rules tend to favour men. "*East African pastoral societies are generally known to have inheritance laws that are strongly discriminatory and men have control over all cattle in the homestead*" (Horowitz 1992 in Bruggeman 1994:24). The classical literature on WoDaaBe Fulbe in the northern part of Nigeria states that "*cattle are traditionally the property of men and any system whereby women acquire animals is regarded with disfavour*" (Hopen 1958:139). Stenning (1959:48) observed among WoDaaBe that the inheritance system "*was firmly, although not exclusively, patrilineal ... No woman inherited in this system.*" Dupire confirms that among some Fulbe groups women are more or less excluded from inheriting animals (Dupire 1970:93,115,292). However, Dupire also gives account of Fulbe groups in which the husband likewise has no right to inherit the animals of his deceased wife: either the animals are distributed among her children or they go back to her kin (Dupire 1970:93). Nevertheless, women are generally discriminated against in inheriting livestock and where there is little livestock there is reason to believe that women are even more disadvantaged.

### *Access to livestock through bridewealth*

'Traditional' African marriage is primarily an arrangement between two families, not just between two individuals. It is characterised by the payment of bridewealth<sup>26</sup> as a guarantee of the stability of a marriage, and as compensation to the wife's family for the

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<sup>26</sup> I define 'bridewealth' as the gifts or payment from the future husband's family to the bride or her family, whereas a 'dowry' is the payment or gifts from the wife's parents to their daughter to take into the marriage.

loss of one of its members. Islamic marriage, at least theoretically, involves just two individuals and the purpose of any bridewealth differs from that described before. The bride receives *sadaaki*, which is a payment to compensate her for the loss of her virginity, obviously never to be regained and thus, at least theoretically, the *sadaaki* cannot be claimed back after divorce (cf. Trimingham 1959:165).

In many pastoral societies bridewealth is usually, where possible, given in animals. At least in Islamic pastoral societies, it could thus be assumed that the bridewealth might be an effective means for women to start a small herd for her own. However, in many East and West African pastoral societies bridewealth in cattle is reported to have decreased, replaced by payments in cash or not paid at all, due mainly to impoverishment (e.g. Ensminger 1987:35; Bruggeman 1994:4; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:290; de Bruijn 1997:643). Other studies have found the bridewealth in some Fulbe societies to have increased over time. Hoppen (1958:84 *et seq.*) described nearly 40 years ago the value of marriage gifts as being greater at the time of his study in Northern Nigeria than previously due to “*the break-down of clan endogamous marriages*” and “*because in modern marriage there is a pronounced competitive aspect*”. In a more recent study, Burnham (1996:112) interprets a similar increase that he observed rapidly taking place among Jafun in northern Cameroon, since the 1970s, as a result of a widespread desire to adhere (for political reasons) more closely to Islamic components of marriage.

It has been argued that, due to impoverishment among Islamic Fulbe, more often than not the father takes the bridewealth to buy millet for his family (e.g. de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:377). He thus deprives his daughter of the possibility to start a herd on her own (de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:377) or to complete her dowry equipment (Castle 1992:23).

In less Islamised Fulbe societies, for example the WoDaaBe of Niger, bridewealth did not, at least in the 1960s, belong exclusively to the bride, but stayed in the husband's herd and the woman had over right on these animals apart from milk rights (Dupire 1963). She would, however, act vehemently against any attempt of her husband to sell these animals as the capital these animals represent is inalterably destined to be transmitted to her own children. In the event of her husband's death, her children will inherit these animals. If she divorces she has no right to take any of these animals (Dupire 1963:83). Similarly, according to Castle's (1992) observations in Mali,

bridewealth animals were usually kept in the husband's herd and their wives would have no idea how many cattle they had been given as bridewealth. Women have no right to sell these animals and they cannot prevent their husband from taking possession of them in times of need (Castle 1992:22-23). Only among the Djelgobe women, in the 1970s in Riesman's research area were bridewealth animals divided between the couple in the case of a divorce, as long as there were children between the couple (Riesman 1977:82).

### *Dwindling divorce rights*

Most research among the Fulbe and other West African pastoral groups has shown that divorce is frequent (Stenning 1959; Dupire 1963; Randall & Winter 1985; Riesman 1977; Hampshire 1998). This 'easy-divorce situation' may provide women with a certain bargaining power. Riesman (1977:212) suggests that because divorces are frequent, "*the submission of a woman to her husband is never once and for all but depends on the woman's will.*" A Pullo woman thus has a considerable amount of independence (Dupire 1963:48). De Bruijn & van Dijk argue that, with impoverishment, the "*easy divorce situation has changed*" (*ibid.* 1995:389). A woman can no longer rely on her own family as a fall-back option, because they may simply not have the means to support her. This may lead to a decrease in the number of divorces<sup>27</sup>. Consequently she "*loses part of her bargaining power vis-a vis her husband*" (*ibid.* 1995:290, 389; de Bruijn 1997:643).

A similar problem arises when, as observed for example among the Maasai, a high bridewealth paid by rich husbands makes it virtually impossible for a women to divorce, as she has to pay back an excessive sum if she wished the divorce (Talle 1988). The higher the bridewealth, and the poorer the family of the bride - and thus the greater their inability to pay back the bride price - the fewer the possibilities for a woman to free herself from an unsatisfying marriage and, therefore, the lower her bargaining power within the household.

### *Commercialisation*

Many studies infer that with greater sedentarisation and commercialisation, often going hand in hand (Baxter 1975; Ensminger 1987:32), women lose control over resources in term of outright ownership. "*The growing importance of beef production and marketing is adversely affecting women's property rights in livestock*" (Joekes & Pointing 1991).

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<sup>27</sup> However, in de Bruijn's article in 1997, she contradicts this statement and reports that: "*My data indicate that the rate of divorce has not decreased*" (de Bruijn 1997:644).

Subsequently, although in most pastoral societies “*the man must customarily ask permission from the woman before he can sell any of her cattle*” (Horowitz 1992 in Bruggeman 1994:24), pastoral women, including Fulbe women, complained that their animals are among the first to be sold (cf. Ensminger 1984:64; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995).

The complexity of livestock rights is demonstrated by the fact that different people have a range of rights to the same animal (Joeke & Pointing 1991, Smith Oboler 1996).

Although women may not own animals outright, they have control over these animals (Llewlyn Davis 1981; Bruggeman 1994; Smith Oboler 1996). It is therefore important not only to examine access to resources, but also usufruct rights, and in particular, what obligations individual household members have in using the resources they access.

These dynamics in household economics are often more important when analysing women’s position than information about ownership alone. One important usufruct right women customarily have over cattle in many pastoral societies has been the right over milk. This right diminishes when production is increasingly used to support calf growth and milk off-take is discouraged as undermining calf survival (Grandin 1988; Bruijn & van Dijk 1995). Moreover, due to sedentarisation, cattle may be kept away from the homestead and therefore hinder women from accessing milk (Joeke & Pointing 1991; Bruggeman 1994). I will discuss how impoverishment, commercialisation and cultural patterns are reported in the literature to influence women’s milk selling activities and how income from milk sales is generally spent.

### ***Women and milk sales***

In many pastoral societies in Africa “*women are in charge of the handling and management of milk and milk products*” (Dahl 1976:116; see also Talle 1988; Bruggeman 1994; Brockington 1998). The position of “*milk managers*” (Dahl 1979:116) may give women a key role in the household economy. The study of dairy trading, a commercial activity dominated by women in societies where most other economic activities are dominated by men, provides a good opportunity to examine the effects of commercialisation, impoverishment and cultural patterns on women’s position (Little 1994).

The classic literature on Fulbe portrays women in semi-arid and arid Niger and Nigeria as responsible for milking, processing and marketing milk<sup>28</sup>, and using the proceeds to buy cereals to feed the household or to exchange milk directly for cereals (Hopen 1958; Stenning 1959; Dupire 1962; 1963). This has been confirmed by more recent work (Swift *et al.* 1984:361-2, 364) but it is clear that things had already changed in the aftermath of the major droughts of the 1970s, with milk exchange only contributing around 10% of the cereals acquired by barter or purchase (Swift *et al.* 1984:365). This trend was if anything accentuated during the 1980s, with researchers observing widespread impoverishment among the Fulbe in Niger (White 1986; 1991).

In other studies, Fulbe women have been found to gain a considerable income from milk selling (e.g. Waters-Bayer 1985; Kuhn 1997). Waters-Bayer (1985) has described women in sedentary agropastoral villages in the subhumid zone of Nigeria as maintaining a lively dairying trade. There, most women were regularly involved in milk selling as well as other market-based income-generating activities such as food processing and the selling of cooked foods. Their income from milk made up their single largest source of independent income: around half their earnings overall. The Fulbe women in Waters-Bayer's study used approximately one-third of their milk income to purchase condiments, vegetables or fruit for the household, but men were expected to provide cereals as the staple food of the household. Women used the rest of their earnings for their own needs. This included purchase of chickens, small stock or even cattle, as well as utensils, kerosene, toiletries, medicines, and cloth. The contrast with earlier literature (e.g. Dupire 1970), and with more recent studies in drought-stricken areas (e.g. de Bruijn 1997), is striking. However, as Waters-Bayer pointed out, there is little reason to expect that studies of settled agropastoralist Fulbe in a subhumid area in the 1980s would show the same patterns as studies of nomadic pastoralists in arid and semi arid areas in the 1950s.

The Nigerian Fulbe dairywomen (Waters-Bayer 1985) never missed marketing for more than a few days and then usually only in the event of illness or childbirth. By contrast, de Bruijn & van Dijk (1995:278) thought relatively few Jallube Fulbe women from the 62 Malian households they studied, sold milk. Within their dominant interpretation of impoverishment driving Fulbe decisions, they inferred that probably only women from

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<sup>28</sup> Throughout the thesis, the term milk selling is used to refer to the marketing not only of fresh milk but also of milk products such as sour milk and butter, including milk that has been watered down to varying degrees.

the richest households or those who herded cattle for cultivators, were able to sell milk at all.

De Bruijn & van Dijk observed that, while in the past a Pullo woman in their research area was allowed to keep part of her milk money, she is now expected to bring in the basic food for the household (de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:295). Only the little that remains may she use for herself, to buy clothes or jewellery or to save for the dowry of her daughters. (*ibid.*:126, 161)<sup>29</sup>. However, the same author, de Bruijn, wrote in a later publication: "*The income she gains from the milk and the way she likes to process it is completely under her control. Her husband has no say in it, not even in the amount of milk he receives himself*" (de Bruijn 1997:636). This is the situation Blench (1994:206) observed in his study in Nigeria; the income Fulbe women earned by selling milk products was solely at their own disposal.

Milk off-take is generally seen as prejudicing calf growth and survival (e.g. Grandin 1988<sup>30</sup>). Therefore a shift towards commercial animal sales in some wealthier pastoral groups (Kerven 1992) may mean concomitant withdrawal of women from marketing milk products. With commercialisation of cattle as the main means to provide household income, women have been excluded from increasing areas of livestock and milk management and decision-making, and thus from control over family resources, especially where commercialisation goes hand in hand with impoverishment (Talle 1988; Joekes & Pointing 1991; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:281; Huss-Ashmore 1996; Smith Oboler 1996). Growing commercialisation, whether for richer or for poorer, is thus commonly seen as undermining women's self determination and Fulbe women's progressive loss of control of milk earnings (de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:295). Rich men concentrate more on the marketing of cattle; poor men do not have cattle or have to sell the few they have. This means an enormous loss of freedom for women, a deterioration of their social position (de Bruijn 1997:642) and a dependency on their husbands or relatives (de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:410).

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<sup>29</sup> In other pastoral societies it has also been observed that, with impoverishment, households may depend ever more heavily on women's income from milk selling and other activities. These earnings become less available to women to use for their own personal needs and to their own preferences (e.g. Talle 1988; Bruggeman 1994; Brockington 1998).

<sup>30</sup> In Grandin's (1988) sample of Maasai, poor households had as much milk at their disposal as rich households. In rich households women did not milk their cows as frequently as those from poor households. Calf growth is better in those rich households, but this may also be due to better proximity to water and pasture availability.

There are exceptions to these views. Recent literature has suggested that in primarily agropastoral or mixed farming groups in East Africa, access to, decision-making over, and use of income from livestock has sometimes become more gender equitable with development and change (Curry 1996). Sikana *et al.* (1993) cite studies, particularly Michael's (1987) study of the Baggara in northern Sudan, where commercialisation of milk products has occurred within the framework of women's management of milk, and where women have if anything achieved greater economic and social independence as a result.

Some authors found that women may be increasingly constrained from selling milk where social ideals of seclusion are more prevalent, notably in more orthodox sedentary Islamic groups (Boutrais 1988; Burnham 1996).

### ***Labour and co-operation***

One last aspect of production worth mentioning in this context is labour allocation, both in terms of the individual and according to the concept of co-operation in pastoral groups, again with particular reference to the Fulbe.

The performance of economic tasks in African pastoral societies has been described for various societies (e.g. Dahl & Hjort 1976; Grandin 1983; Swift *et al.* 1984; White 1991; Fratkin & Smith 1994). One typical feature of pastoral societies is that there is no real 'slack' period, as is the case for agricultural societies (White 1991). Furthermore, they show that the common stereotype of men carrying out all significant labour in animal husbandry, while women are 'only' responsible for taking care of the children and the house (e.g. Stenning 1959:103) is not necessarily a true reflection of the pastoral reality (Joekes & Pointing 1991:6 *et seq.*). Labour allocation varies from one society to another, but often women do participate in pastoral tasks (Dahl 1987b; Talle 1988:180; Joekes & Pointing 1991; Fratkin & Smith 1994). For example, within Fulbe societies, women nowadays can and sometimes do perform traditionally male tasks such as herding and watering animals in times of labour shortage. Men rarely perform female tasks, unless the seclusion of women is rigidly observed. Women thus spend more hours working than men (e.g. Swift *et al.* 1984:427; White 1991:133-134).

Generally, in most mobile pastoral societies, women are responsible for the house, its construction and repair (e.g. Dupire 1963:76). Once societies are more sedentary there

seems to be a shift towards male dominance in this formerly female domain, especially when houses become more permanent structures (e.g. Talle 1988). *“While women benefit by being relieved of the constant task of house-repairing, this change also has negative implications, as it represents male encroachment into traditionally female territory. It also represents a consolidation of male control over an asset which is increasing in value”* (Joekes & Pointing 1991:7).

Some authors have suggested that sedentarisation increases women’s workloads (e.g. Talle 1988; Ensminger 1987)<sup>31</sup>. Others, for example Fratkin & Smith (1995), using a time allocation study approach, have shown that while workloads clearly change for Rendille women in households that are undergoing sedentarisation and have less livestock, those women do not have greater workloads overall than the Rendille women in more mobile pastoral households that retain larger herds.

With regard to labour co-operation, the literature on Fulbe suggests that there is little collaborative production between households or individuals (Hopen 1958; Stenning 1959; Riesman 1977; Swift *et al.* 1984:419; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995). It is assumed that the concentration of resources for some, and impoverishment for others, exacerbated by the droughts, has led to a further decrease of mutual aid between households (Castle 1992:26-27; Salih 1992:26). Riesman (1977) argues that the lack of ‘communal’ ownership in Fulbe society is responsible for the missing concept of mutual help for a common benefit. There is *“no common purpose”* (Riesman 1977:179) in a society that has the highest returns *“when people are the most dispersed”* (Riesman 1977:73). If a group organises to do something together, then it is usually to help somebody for individual benefit. This is born out by Benoit’s (1982) research on the Fulbe of Yatenga, Burkina Faso. Despite similar problems faced by all the Fulbe groups in the area, and despite their common religion (Islam), no *“solidarité pastoraliste”*<sup>32</sup> (Benoit 1982:60, 134) has developed.

In most pastoral Fulbe households, co-operation among women of a single household is rather sporadic and selective, and is primarily based upon agreements and friendships between individual women (White 1991; Castle 1992). Co-wives, sisters-in-law and

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<sup>31</sup> Talle (1988) among the Maasai and Ensminger (1987) among the Orma in Kenya, both observed that sedentarisation caused women to travel longer distances to collect fire wood and spend a larger amount of time preparing meals based on agricultural rather than pastoral produce.

<sup>32</sup> *“pastoral solidarity”* (own translation).

other women married into the same agnatic group are expected, according to the norms of agnatic loyalty, to give each other assistance in domestic chores. In Mali, Fulbe *“women rely more on the internal structure of their marital families, or on their natal households, and only rarely, and as a last resort do they seek assistance from non-kin neighbours”* (Castle 1992:30). *“Once a woman has constructed her own suudu shelter, she is helped only by dependent women and girls. Even co-wives have their own calf ropes, separate cooking fires, milking calabashes and water buckets”* (Swift et al. 1984:419). Co-wives are in fact economic competitors, each reducing the milk supply that the other woman can control (Stenning 1959:186; White 1991:136).

It appears that a structural arrangement of family solidarity is not sufficient in itself to generate female co-operation. An additional factor of decisive importance is friendship or, again, congeniality between individual women.

## **Research questions**

I have shown that Fulbe are a very diverse ethnic category. Their production modes range from urban, or at least semi-urban activities of so-called ‘town Fulbe’, to agropastoral Fulbe and finally to the so-called ‘nomadic Fulbe’ who adhere most to a pastoral ‘ideal’. Due to impoverishment, most rural Fulbe have increasingly taken up a diversity of production strategies despite their cultural attachment to cattle.

Pastoral women, including Fulbe women, are commonly seen as losing out in systems that are becoming more commercialised, whether or not this goes together with progressive impoverishment. Furthermore, cultural norms, i.e. *pulaaku*, and impoverishment are often regarded as being restrictive factors for women’s access to resources, economic potential and self determination.

This literature review raises several questions that will be discussed in the course of this thesis, questions that facilitate an exploration of the patterns and mechanisms that influence gender issues in Fulbe production.

In order to understand current pastoral production strategies and gender issues in the research area, we first need a clear concept of intra- and inter-household transaction and the significance of changing rights and obligations during the life-cycle of both women and men.

- What are the power structures in households among the Fulbe sampled? What rights and obligations do different members of the household have and how are they affected by gender and lifecycle?

We have seen that the Fulbe are not a homogenous group and that their production strategies vary tremendously despite the ‘common’ ideal of *pulaaku*.

- What are the income strategies of the different Fulbe groups in the sample? Which activities have been taken up by men and women? Have cultural ideals, i.e. *pulaaku* or Islam, been a constraint on Fulbe’s ability to benefit from alternative means of income generation outside of the pastoral economy?

Many Fulbe groups are reported to have suffered tremendous cattle loss during the recent droughts. This impoverishment has led, in many groups, to an increased sale of cattle and decreased access to animals for women.

- Could livestock holdings of the different Fulbe groups sampled permit households to live off pastoral produce alone? What is their level of impoverishment? To what extent are they engaged in commercialisation?
- How are pastoral resources allocated in the household? What are the obligations (labour and expenditure) and rights towards pastoral resources (animals and milk) allocated in the household? Do women indeed have less chance to inherit and possess cattle as a result of a cultural preference for males or due to impoverishment and/or commercialisation?
- How do pastoral resources provide an income apart from milk sales, e.g. manure or herding arrangements, or animal sales? Who are the main decision-makers and beneficiaries in these transactions?

The literature has shown that many Fulbe took up cultivation following animal losses during the droughts and are even now extending their engagement in agricultural production, but that cultural ideals may also be an obstacle for women and men to likewise engage more in agriculture.

- What importance does agriculture have for the different Fulbe groups concerned? What crops are cultivated, which areas are cultivated, who owns the land, what are

the yields and how are these yields allocated within the household? What is the labour and monetary input of the genders in this area of production? Can women influence decision-making concerning product use in this sector?

Milk selling is regarded as the primary means by which Fulbe women raise an income. However, there are studies that suggest that, due to impoverishment, growing commercialisation and increasing Islamic ideals of seclusion, women may be finding it increasingly difficult to keep control of this activity.

- Are milk sales Fulbe women's primary income source, as suggested by the literature? Are women losing out in this sector as a result of impoverishment in pastoral resources? Is women's milk-selling constrained by new livestock marketing practices, ideals of seclusion or impoverishment in livestock? What are the key determinants of milk selling behaviour of the different Fulbe groups studied?

It has been suggested that due to impoverishment at the household level, women have to contribute more of their income to their household than before.

- What are the specific responsibilities and rights for the buying and selling of products within the household? What are the different gender-specific investment strategies? Is it the case, as has been suggested, that women have to proportionally invest more and more in the well-being of household, when the household as a whole gets poorer?

In order to put this work into a practical context, I will also try to shed light on gender issues in pastoral development.

- Do Fulbe women in the North of Burkina Faso organise themselves for production activities in groups/collectives/GVF? If 'development' for women in Fulbe society is seen in terms of their empowerment, how do they themselves seek to empower themselves? Is economic independence their immediate ultimate goal?

## **Outline of the thesis**

In Chapter 2 background information is given on the research site and the sub-ethnic Fulbe groups studied. Chapter 3 discusses the methodologies used in the field study and Chapters 4-8 present the analysis of the data collected during the research. Chapter 4

focuses on the socio-cultural context, the definition of the Fulbe household and the rights and obligations of individual household members, particularly women, during their lifecycle. I discuss how the cultural context (*pulaaku* and Islam) may influence production strategies of men and women in a different way. Chapter 5 discusses livestock ownership in the different research villages. Opportunities for and constraints on women's access to pastoral resources are analysed with respect to cultural, economic and demographic variables. Furthermore, labour input in the pastoral sector is analysed. Chapter 6 examines decision-making and economic advantages for individuals in the household relating to manuring arrangements, contract herding and the sale of animals. Chapter 7 discusses the extent and importance of agricultural production in the research area and Chapter 8 analyses women's milk-selling activities in the light of impoverishment, development and commercialisation. Chapter 9 contains a summary of the results and discusses the findings.

# 2

## THE SAHEL OF BURKINA FASO

### **Introduction**

In this chapter the research area, its geographical location and its climate and soils will be described. Also, the basic livelihood systems of the various populations in the research provinces of Oudalan and Seno will be sketched out. Towards the end of the chapter the focal populations in the research area will be described, emphasising the general differences between the three sub-ethnic Fulbe groups central to this study.

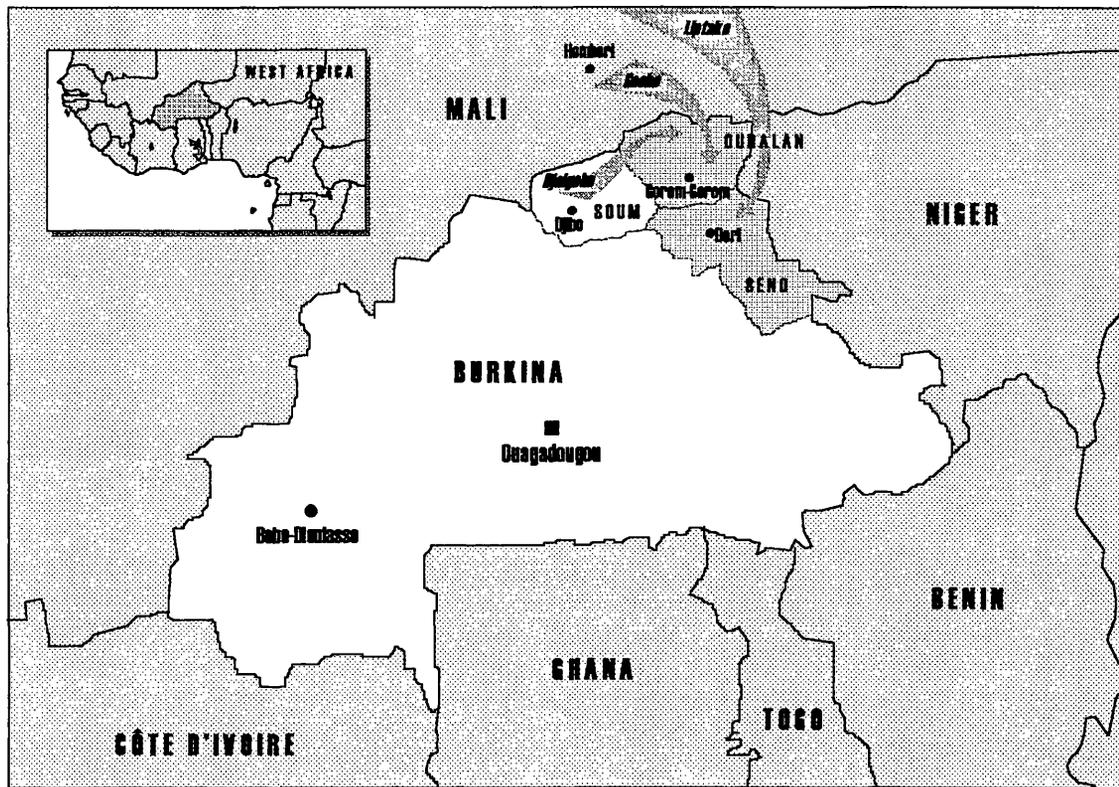
### **Physical description of the research area**

Burkina Faso is a landlocked country bordering Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin and Niger (Map 2). At the time of the study Burkina Faso was divided into 30 provinces<sup>1</sup>. The research took place in Oudalan and Seno provinces, both situated in the far north-eastern part of Burkina Faso, on the border with Mali to the north and Niger to the east (Map 3). Together with Soum these three provinces make up the Sahelian part of Burkina Faso; the administrative 'Sahel region'.

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<sup>1</sup> Since then 15 new provinces have been created.

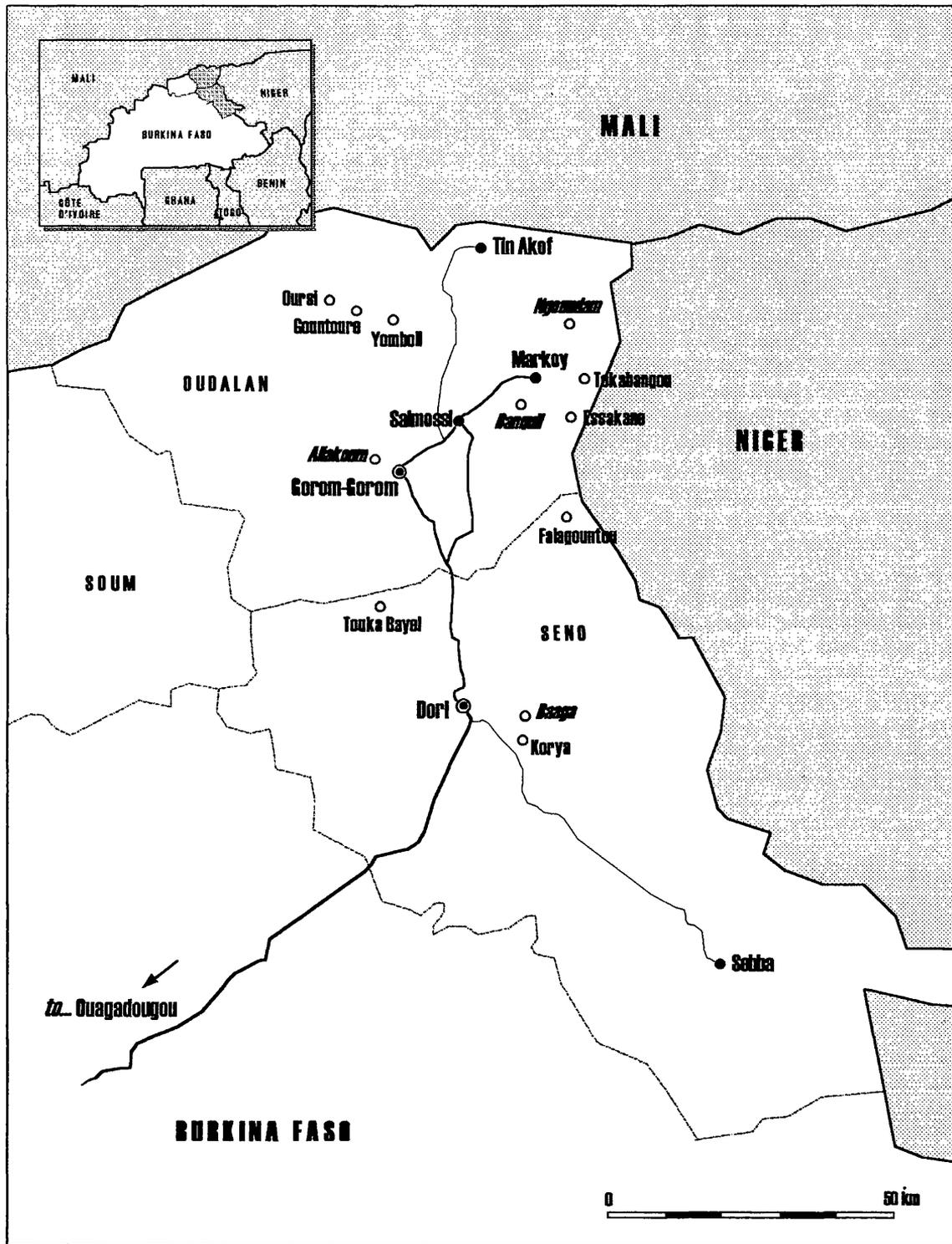
Map 2: Burkina Faso and the study region



Design: S. Fraser

-  In-migration
-  Capital city
-  Urban centre

Map 3: Research area



Design: S. Fraser

## *Climate*

The research area has a typical dryland eco-system, characterised by aridity, a dry season of eight to ten months and high spatial and temporal rainfall variability. Long term average annual rainfall totals show a marked gradient from around 370 mm in the northernmost to around 500 mm in the southernmost study site, increasing by around 100mm per year for every 60-70km travelled south (Table 2.1) (Barral 1977:9; Tyc 1992)<sup>2</sup>. Rainfall variability increases with aridity towards the north of Oudalan (Mainguet 1991).

In terms of recent rainfall history, annual variability has been very marked. The period from 1950 to 1965 was characterised by a large number of years with surplus rainfall for the entire Sahelian region. From 1966 onwards, rainfall deficits have been more pronounced, with absolute minimums recorded in the drought years of 1984-85 (Koechlin 1997:15-16). Correspondingly, there has been a continuous decline of rainfall between 1971 and 1991 in Oudalan and Seno (PSB/PB 1994:5)<sup>3</sup>.

The rains usually start in June, with maximum rainfall occurring in August. By September the rainy season has come to an end. Across this four month period though, the rainfall is sporadic: the number of rain days per annum in Gorom Gorom, for example, is, on average, only 25 (Koechlin citing Zoungrana 1997:13).

**Table 2.1: Rainfall gauges for Sahelian Burkina Faso**

Province	Rain gauges close to study sites <sup>4</sup>	Co-ordinates of rain gauge site	Mean annual rainfall (mm)	Coefficient of variation	Years recorded
Seno	Dori	14°02'N, 0°02'W	508.9	29%	1921-1995 (75 yrs.)
Oudalan	Gorom Gorom	14°24'N, 0°14'W	423.7	30%	1955-1995 (41 yrs.)
Oudalan	Markoye	14°38'N, 0°04'W	371.8	31%	1955-1991 (37 yrs.)

*Sources: Coefficient of variation: Le Houérou (1989)*

*Rainfall data until 1981: Claude & Chévalier (1991)*

*Rainfall data 1982-95: Homewood (1997) citing USAID Africa Data Dissemination Service*

<sup>2</sup>According to the climatic classification of the FAO, Oudalan and Seno stretch over an arid and semi-arid zone (100-400 mm/year and 400-600 mm/year respectively).

<sup>3</sup>The ecological significance of long-term rainfall fluctuations and its causes have been controversially discussed. Some authors attribute it to global warming, some to the negative influence of local and regional resource use patterns, while others emphasise the cyclic nature of rainfall pattern particular to this area (cf. Claude, Grouzis, Milleville 1991:204 *et seq.*; Mortimore 1998).

<sup>4</sup>The study sites will be introduced in Chapter 3.

This marked seasonality of the climate has an obvious impact on the potential livelihoods of the populations in the Sahelian region. Indeed, the limit of settled farming is generally marked by isohyets of less than 400 mm (Barral 1977:9). In the research area this 'border' would normally run through Markoye, Yomboli, Gountouré and Oursi (Map 3), although with such high inter-annual rainfall variability, this by no means represents a northernmost limit to the potential for rainfed agriculture.

Rainfed agriculture is practised throughout the whole research area but is extremely susceptible to risk. Whether an area is suitable for cultivation or not can change from year to year and this is dependant not only on the amount and dispersion of rainfall but also on individual soils and varieties of crop planted in the area (Mortimore 1998). Subsequently the strategies adopted by households can vary from year to year according to the change in climatic conditions. This type of strategic "*diversity is characteristic for dryland economies*" (Mortimore 1998:39), nevertheless, "*a strong annual pattern is imposed by the seasonality of the growing period*" (*ibid.*: 39). The seasonal changes that govern the farming calendar have an immediate impact on the social and economic life of all the people of a region, whether they engage in agriculture or not. "*Chaque saison a ses caractéristiques propres: sa manière de vivre, son rythme, ses problèmes, ses stratégies, ses techniques, ses travaux*"<sup>6</sup> (Maliki 1981:5). This applies to the sedentary agriculturists, agro-pastoralists and pastoralists of the research area alike. Household structure, labour allocation, economic activities, herd performance, nutrition and market prices fluctuate with the seasonal cycle of the farming calendar. In this context, the Fulbe in the research area generally distinguish between six different seasons<sup>6</sup> (Table 2.2).

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<sup>5</sup> "Every season has particular characteristics: its way of life, its pace, its problems, its strategies, its techniques and its tasks" (own translation).

<sup>6</sup>Other Fulbe groups in West Africa have different names for seasons and a different partition of the year (e.g. Barral 1977:10; Maliki 1981:5-22).

Table 2.2: Fulbe's seasonal division of the year

Month	Name in Fulfulde (and English) terminology	Temperature <sup>7</sup>	Humidity <sup>7</sup>	Basic characteristics	Pastoral activities, significance for pastoral production	Agricultural activities, significance for agricultural production
Nov.-Feb.	<i>Dabbunde</i> (cold dry season)	min. night 6°C max. day 30°C average 20.5°C	ca. 20%	Cold and dry	Still considerable pasture and water available (depending on the quality of the previous rains); harvested fields can be used for stubble grazing; milk yields still considerable (0.25 – 1 l)	Stubble grazing manures fields; millet stalks are collected as fuel and animal fodder
March –May	<i>Ceedu</i> (hot dry season)	max. average 41°C max. 48°C	30%	Hot and dry	Scarcity of water and pasture; hot season transhumance; little or no milk yields (0.2 – 0.5 l per milking)	Some agropastoralists may clear their fields
End of May – June	<i>Gataaje</i> or <i>korsol</i> (transition period)			Hot, beginning of the rains, transition time	Transhumance to the places where first rains occurred; little milk yield (0.25 – 0.75 l per milking)	First sowing
July - Aug.	<i>Ndunngu</i> (rainy season)	max. average 35°C	52% (June)- 71% (Sept.)	Humid, rainy season	Water and pasture available; problems occur when animals enter fields; high milk yields (1 – 2.5 l per milking)	Subsequent sowing (if necessary); first and second weeding
Sept.	<i>Hoore yamde</i> (before harvest time)			End of the rainy season, still humid	Water and pasture available; problems occur when animals enter fields; high milk yields (1 – 2.5 l per milking)	Harvesting of first millet
Oct.	<i>Yamde</i> (harvest)	max. average 38°C	35%	Very hot and humid	Water and pasture available; problems occur when animals enter fields; high milk yields (1 – 2.5 l per milking)	Harvest time

Source: own survey & Barral (1977)

In this thesis I tend to differentiate between three seasons: the cold dry season (*dabbunde*), the hot dry season (*ceedu*) and the rainy season (*ndunngu*). The other seasons are more transitional in character, or refer to an activity rather than a change in climatic conditions (e.g. *yamde*, meaning 'harvest'). They often only last a few days or a couple of weeks, are of less relevance to the study, and too problematic to incorporate.

<sup>7</sup> Data measured in Dori (Barral 1977)

**Plate 2.1: Sand storms announcing the rainy season**



**Plate 2.2: Flooded road from Gorom Gorom to Dori in the rainy season**



### ***Vegetation and soils***

The natural vegetation of Oudalan province and the northern part of Seno province is typical for a Sudano-Sahelian area, characterised by open grassland and spiny

vegetation (Grouzis 1991:43). Degradation of vegetation and soils has been reported in both provinces (Lenz 1993)<sup>8</sup>.

In Oudalan and northern Seno three main soil types can be crudely differentiated: dunes, brown soils and seasonally waterlogged valley bottoms (*bas-fonds*).

Generally speaking, there are two forms of dunes: ancient dunes and young dunes. The formation of the ancient dunes dates back at least 40,000 years. These soils are used for millet cultivation due to their good water storage capacity and their relatively high mineral content (Milleville 1991a:144). Young dunes, on the other hand, have a higher proportion of sand and less clay, giving them a poor water storage capacity.

Nevertheless, they are used for cultivation during the rainy season in the research area. Under increasing pastoral and agricultural use in recent years, the erosion risk of these 'young' soils is very high (Kring 1980:10).

Brown soils are characterised by a low infiltration rate and are of limited agricultural value (Kring 1980:14).

Seasonally waterlogged valley bottoms (*bas-fonds*) have clay hydromorphic soil. They have always been appreciated by pastoralists and used as pasture in both the dry and rainy season. Nowadays, both 'traditional' cultivators and pastoralists are increasingly cultivating these areas (Kring 1980:15; Milleville 1991a:145)

The Fulbe in the research area differentiate the types of land and soils of this region according to a variety of physical characteristics (Table 2.3). The importance of different soils to the Fulbe, in terms of their potential for agriculture or as pasture, was established through ranking exercises during a local survey. The Fulbe definitions of land and soil include topography, characteristics and use.

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<sup>8</sup> Commonplace assumptions that the drylands of sub-Saharan Africa are subject to desertification - i.e. wind and water erosion, loss of forest and woodlands, deterioration of natural grassland, a decline in soil fertility, and increasing salinization - mainly due to overgrazing, overcultivation and overcutting have recently been criticised and discussed controversially (e.g. Homewood & Rodgers 1987; Mortimore 1998). Interviews in the research area showed that local people indeed perceive a decrease in pasture availability, declining agricultural yields and increasingly difficult access to fuel wood and wild plants, but they attribute these changes exclusively to a decrease in rainfall.

Table 2.3: Fulbe classification of land and soils

Fulfulde name	Description	Level of importance for...	
		Agriculture	Pasture
<i>Bolaaje</i>	Usually loamy soils; in many <i>seeno</i> fields there are patches of <i>bolaaje</i>	+	+++ <sup>9</sup>
<i>Ceekol</i>	Large seasonally waterlogged valley bottoms ( <i>bas-fonds</i> )	+	++
<i>Caalol</i>	Small seasonally waterlogged valley bottoms ( <i>bas-fonds</i> )	+	++
<i>Ferro</i>	Rangeland; sandy and clay soils; tiger bush	+	++
<i>Kollade</i>	Infertile laterite lands; little vegetation, degraded land	-	+ <sup>10</sup>
<i>Seende</i>	Degraded <i>seeno</i> with gravel on the surface	-	+
<i>Seeno</i>	Developed on sand dunes; sandy soils; susceptible to erosion; low water retention; high infiltration of water	+++	+++ (in rainy season)

Legend: - not usable + possible ++ good +++ very good

## Livelihood Systems

The Burkinabe Sahel is ideally suited to extensive pastoralism. Pastoralism is mainly concentrated on cattle, sheep and goats, and to a much lesser extent on camels and donkeys.

The official statistics on pastoral animal numbers kept in Oudalan and Seno province vary by up to 300%. The following table (Table 2.4) is merely an indicator, therefore, of the importance of pastoralism within the area and should not be taken as being in any way definitive.

<sup>9</sup> Thébaud (1998:63) found that due to an increasing need for agricultural land in Seno province, *bolaaje* are more appreciated for agriculture than pasture, unless the land is very far from the village therefore difficult to access and prone to being destroyed by freely roaming cattle.

<sup>10</sup> Thébaud (1998:63) found that *kollade* are frequently used for pasturing due to land scarcity despite their bad state.

**Table 2.4: Animals numbers, actual and relative, Oudalan and Seno Provinces, Burkina Faso**

Animals	Oudalan		Seno		Burkina Faso		% of all national animals in Oudalan and Seno
	Total animal numbers	...per inhabitant <sup>11</sup>	Total animal numbers	...per inhabitant <sup>11</sup>	Total animal numbers	...per inhabitant <sup>11</sup>	
Cattle	74,823	0.6	137,914	0.5	2,507,317	0.3	8.5
Sheep	109,859	0.9	99,995	0.4	3,216,628	0.4	6.5
Goats	165,980	1.3	222,542	0.8	4,604,671	0.6	8.4

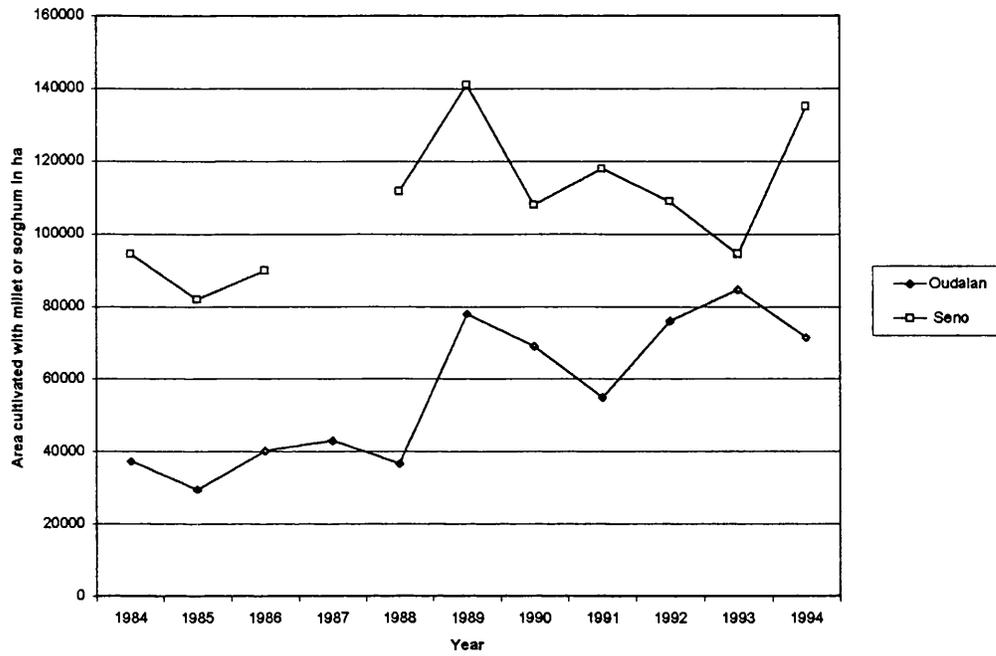
*Sources: Animal numbers: Direction des Statistiques agro-pastorales (1996);  
Population data for Oudalan and Seno: CRPA du Sahel 1990-91;  
Population data for Burkina Faso: Atlas du Burkina Faso 1993.*

According to Langlois & Milleville (1991:53) 74% of the population of Oudalan practice non-sedentary animal husbandry. However, most inhabitants, not only in Oudalan but also in the other Sahel provinces of Burkina Faso, combine pastoralism with agriculture. In a survey in Seno, Soum and Oudalan, 92% of all household heads, irrespective of ethnic group, regarded themselves as agropastoralists and only 2% as pure pastoralists (CRPA 1994).

The main crops cultivated in Oudalan and Seno are millet and sorghum; some households also plant groundnuts, okra (*Hibiscus esculentus*) and roselle (*Hibiscus sabdariffa*). Since 1985 the area cultivated for sorghum and millet in Oudalan has steadily increased, doubling in less than 10 years. In Seno province this increase in cultivated area is not as marked as that in Oudalan (DREP Sahel 1997:5) (Figure 2.1).

<sup>11</sup> These figures are based on population data from slightly different years and different sources and are used here for rough comparison only.

Figure 2.1: Area in ha of millet and sorghum cultivation in Oudalan and Seno provinces



Source: DREP Sahel (1997:5)

## Population in Oudalan and Seno

Seno and particularly Oudalan province have markedly lower population density than most other parts of Burkina Faso (Table 2.5).

Table 2.5: Population density in Oudalan, Seno and Burkina Faso

Province	Year	Area	Population	Density (per km <sup>2</sup> )
Seno	1990	13,473km <sup>2</sup>	270,000	20
Oudalan	1990	10,046km <sup>2</sup>	127,000	12,6
Burkina Faso	1985	274,200km <sup>2</sup>	7,964,705	29,6

Source: Data for Oudalan and Seno: CRPA du Sahel 1990-91; data for Burkina Faso: Atlas du Burkina Faso 1993

In Oudalan province Fulbe constitute one quarter of the total population, whereas, at a national level, Fulbe only constitute around 6% of the total population of Burkina Faso, with Mossi forming the majority (Statistisches Bundesamt 1992:31)<sup>12</sup>.

**Table 2.6: Ethnic composition in Oudalan**

Ethnic group	Sub-ethnic group	% in Oudalan
Tamasheq	Illelan	4.3%
	Iklan	44.3%
Fulbe	Fulbe Gaobe	21.4%
	Fulbe Djelgobe	4.3%
Songray		11.5%
Mallebe, Rimaibe, Haussa, Maures		13.2%
Mossi/Kurumba		1.0%
Total		100.0%

Source: Krings (1980:72)<sup>13</sup>

### ***The Fulbe and their settlement history***

This research was conducted among the three main Fulbe groups in the Oudalan and Seno area: Fulbe Djelgobe, Gaobe and Liptako who differentiate themselves according to their origins<sup>14</sup>.

The Fulbe Djelgobe are concentrated in the northern parts of Oudalan province, whereas the Fulbe Gaobe are the predominant Fulbe group in the southern part of Oudalan. The Fulbe Liptako are found mainly in Seno province.

The **Fulbe Djelgobe** originate from Djelgodji, the area north of Djibo, in Soum province<sup>15</sup>. They are relative newcomers to the area, having only arrived in the 1930s. Growing population pressure caused by the migration of Mossi into Djelgodji resulted in an extension of cultivation in Soum province and a consequent decline of pasture

<sup>12</sup> For Seno province no comparative data was available.

<sup>13</sup> The percentages roughly correspond to those given by Barral (1977:6) and Langlois (1991:53), still the accuracy of the exact numbers is debatable. They are only presented here to give an impression of the population in the area.

<sup>14</sup> Within those three Fulbe groups there are different lineages (*lenyol*) and caste groups. For further details on castes and lineages in the area see Hampshire (1998:70 *et seq.*).

<sup>15</sup> For the rough direction of in-migration of all three sub-ethnic groups see notes on Map 2.

availability. In addition, the Rimaibe, the Fulbe's former slaves, ceased to cultivate for the Fulbe after their liberation. As a result, some Fulbe became sedentary and stayed in Djelgodji. Those who wanted to retain their transhumant lifestyle were pushed to the north-east and into the northern parts of Oudalan. The Fulbe Djelgobe in Oudalan are today considered as the "*prototype du pasteur*" (Delmond 1952 in Barral 1977:52), being the most mobile pastoralists of the area and only opportunist cultivators (Barral 1977:51 *et seq.*). To the outside observer, differentiating Fulbe Djelgobe from other Fulbe groups in the region is made simple at the outset by a few additional traits: Djelgobe women can easily be recognised by the red woollen thread through their ears.

The origin of the **Fulbe Gaobe** is less clear. Barral (1977) suggests they originate from the western part of Gourma near Hombori in Mali. Their migration to the southern part of Oudalan is closely linked to the migration history of the Tamasheq, having previously had close relationships with the Tamasheq - Gaobe were the herders of Tamasheq cattle. Nowadays, there are very few points of contact between these two groups (Barral 1977:50)<sup>16</sup>. Gaobe women, like Djelgobe women, can easily be recognised by a characteristic of their dress code: they usually wear blue or black dresses.

The **Fulbe Liptako**, for their origins, refer to the history of a large emirate, known as the Emirate of Liptako or Emirate of Dori, in what is now the province of Seno. According to Irwin (1973) the first Fulbe (of the ToroBe clan) came to this area at the beginning of the 18th century, originating from Macina in Mali. During the holy wars of Usman dan Fodio the Fulbe established their great West African state, with Dori as capital of one of its emirates, after defeating the original inhabitants of the Dori area, the Gourmantché in 1810. According to Irwin (1973; 1981) Dori was at that time one of the big commercial centres of the area for the trade between North Africa and the inland regions of West Africa, and had been during the whole of the 18th century (Irwin 1976). Towards the end of the century though, following the great rinderpest epidemic of 1890 and under the constant threat of attack by Tamasheq, the economic power of Dori suffered badly and once in the hands of the French, the emirate soon fell into decline. Neither Seno nor Oudalan province were of great importance for the colonials because of their lack of potential for agricultural exploitation.

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<sup>16</sup> However, some Gaobe groups in the area still speak Tamasheq as their first language, e.g. the Warag Warag (Barral 1977:50).

Plate 2.3: Djelgobe woman and her children, Ngoundam



Plate 2.4: Gaobe woman with her child, Banguil



Plate 2.5: Liptako women pounding millet, Baaga



The three different Fulbe groups studied are not only different in terms of settlement history, but also range in terms of production strategies from pastoral oriented highly transhumant Fulbe Djelgobe, to agro-pastoral, less transhumant Fulbe Gaobe to more or less sedentary agropastoral Fulbe Liptako.

### *The relationship between Fulbe and Rimaibe in Oudalan and Seno*

The Fulbe have a strong socio-historical link with the Rimaibe, their former slaves. In former times Rimaibe were not allowed to own any means of production, such as land or animals, but had instead to cultivate the fields of their Fulbe masters. Nowadays the relationship between Fulbe and Rimaibe has changed drastically. Slavery in Burkina Faso was first abolished under French colonial rule. Any remaining exploitative character of the relationship between Fulbe and their former slaves was finally eradicated under the government of Thomas Sankara from 1983 –1987.

Djelgobe in the research area do not have any contact with their former slaves, due to their recent migration to the area. Nor do many Gaobe; the Gaobe Rimaibe frequently, but not always, live in permanent villages far from Gaobe settlements. Only Liptako still have strong links with ‘their’ Rimaibe, who usually live in the same villages as Liptako, but in different quarters. There is often reciprocal help between Rimaibe and Fulbe families, not out of obligation but based on respect and sometimes on friendship. For example, Rimaibe would sometimes help construct houses for the Fulbe (an activity spurned by Fulbe), and in return Fulbe would herd Rimaibe’s animals. This relationship is far from that of slave and master, although the past has clearly left a mark. Remarks like “*A Rimaibe can never be the same as a Pullo*”, “*Sankara was wrong in saying that all humans are equal*”, were expressed frequently by Fulbe, both old and young, more so in the Liptako village than in the Gaobe and Djelgobe villages, indicating Fulbe’s disapproval of their changing relationship. It appears that many of these Fulbe were unhappy with the fact that often Rimaibe nowadays are economically better off than most Fulbe (cf. Bolwig & Paarup -Laurson 1998). A reversal of this former hierarchy, in economic terms at least, appears to have taken place.

The sample population for this study only includes Fulbe and no Rimaibe.

## **Conclusion**

This brief background to the research area indicates that it is a typical Sahelian environment, characterised by aridity and high variability of annual rainfall even in non-drought years. Broadly speaking it constitutes a harsh environment for both humans and animals alike.

Although Seno and Oudalan are provinces known within Burkina Faso for their importance in the livestock sector, the importance of agriculture in this region is growing. This can be seen by the steady increase in the overall area of this region now under cultivation over the last 10 years.

The differences between the Fulbe groups of the research area, in terms of their origins and local history have been briefly outlined. As will be discussed later, there are many more differences particularly with regard to their socio-economic priorities and cultural

values. Recent socio-economic forces (e.g. consequences of droughts, lack of pasture) could be assumed to have erased the primary importance of ethnic differences between these groups by placing all pastoral societies in the region under similar pressures. In some respects there may have been a levelling process. However, the three sub-ethnic Fulbe groups of this study, Djelgobe, Gaobe and Liptako, frequently insist that their culture is different from one another and from non-Fulbe groups in the area.

# 3

## METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

The field work for this study was divided into two parts: a pilot study and the ‘main’ study.

The pilot study was carried out during the end of the rainy season and the cold dry season, from September 1995 until February 1996. This period was used to build up the infrastructure necessary to pursue the research (purchase a motorbike to access study sites, establish a base in Gorom Gorom, etc.), familiarise myself with the area, find a research assistant, select research villages and sample households and test research methods. It also provided an opportunity for me to undertake an intensive Fulfulde language course lasting four weeks. An analysis of ‘grey’ literature in Ouagadougou, Dori and Gorom Gorom relating to pastoral development projects in Oudalan and Seno was undertaken. It allowed me some time to hold useful, preliminary discussions with representatives of local governmental bodies, NGOs and development projects<sup>1</sup>.

The main study lasted a full calendar year in the four selected research villages, from April 1996 – May 1997. Normally only one to two weeks were spent in each village at a time, but these visits were repeated at regular intervals<sup>2</sup>. In total, each village was visited at least seven times during the course of the main research.

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<sup>1</sup> Projects and institutions visited were: ORSTOM, PAE, PSB Pays-Bas, PSB GTZ, UNSO, UNHCR, SPA, SPE and the EU collaborators IDR and IRBET.

<sup>2</sup> This did not include weekends, or at least Sundays, which were mostly spent in Gorom Gorom or sometimes in Ouagadougou. This not only gave me time to evaluate the work that had been achieved in the previous week and make plans for the following week, but also to convalesce and recuperate from illnesses, and from bruises from falling off the motorbike, have the luxury of a whole bucket (or two) of clean water to shower and also a chance to eat properly; a need rarely satisfied in the field.

In this chapter I will discuss the process of choosing these research villages, the sample households and the interpreters, methods of data collection and analysis used during the research to address the questions outlined in Chapter 1. Roughly sketched, I had to collect data on the following topics:

- range of production strategies taken up at household and individual level;
- data on agricultural and pastoral production: the economic importance of agricultural and pastoral production for the household and the individual, the different labour input of men and women and the share of decision-making processes about product use;
- extent of commercialisation and impoverishment at household and, if possible, individual level;
- lifecycle and changing decision-making rights, access to resources, expenditure obligations towards the household of both men and women;
- cultural values in the three sub-ethnic groups for both men and women.

The various constraints and accomplishments of the research will be discussed in the final part of this chapter.

### **Choice of interpreter**

My Fulfulde was not fluent enough to pursue the research without the assistance of an interpreter.

The person chosen as interpreter for this study was not to be too young, nor to come from any of the research villages, but of necessity had to be a Pullo. The choice of the interpreter's gender was the most problematic. Ideally, both a female and male interpreter would be chosen for this type of research. On the one side, a male interpreter would facilitate talking to men. But then, Fulbe women are often very reluctant to talk to a male interpreter. Likewise, most male interpreters feel embarrassed about talking to women in the absence of their husbands, and on some matters even more so in their presence. As I did not have the means to employ two interpreters I

opted for a female. It was extremely difficult to find an adult, married woman who was not too young, was able to write and speak French, able to ride a moped, and had the permission of her husband to stay in villages overnight. Ultimately she had to meet with the approval of the Burkinabe project partners. The woman eventually chosen fulfilled all these requirements and was in fact recommended by the project partners. During the pilot study the interpreter was made familiar with the research aims and methods.

Unfortunately this female interpreter dropped out after the first few months of the main study and to replace her, I chose a young Fulbe man from the area of Djibo. By that time, fortunately, I had already established a good relationship with the women in the villages, so the contact with women was not too much affected and access to the men's world was greatly facilitated by this change.

### **Choice of research villages**

Prior to beginning of the pilot study, a colleague, working on the same project, Kate Hampshire, had conducted a demographic survey (Hampshire 1998) in the same research area. This then served as a first sample frame from which to select appropriate villages for my own research. Her survey gave broad information about village size, the ethnic composition of villages and the primary occupation of all village households. For the pilot study, I focused on eight villages in Oudalan and Seno. Giving their main ethnic composition in brackets, the villages selected were: Touka Bayel (Fulbe Liptako, Rimaibe), Baaga (Fulbe Liptako, Rimaibe), Korya (Fulbe Liptako, Rimaibe), Banguil (Fulbe Gaobe), Aliakoum (Fulbe Gaobe, Rimaibe, Bella), Yomboli (Fulbe Gaobe, Rimaibe), Gountoure (Fulbe Gaobe) and Ngoundam (Fulbe Djelgobe) (Map 3). From these eight, I selected four villages for the main study.

The main criteria used to select the final research villages were:

- It was assumed that increasing cultivation is related to growing sedentarisation and possibly a loss of pastoral resources. Therefore, in order to establish how a shift from pastoral to agricultural production influences women's socio-economic status and milk-selling opportunities, and to assess whether women engage in agriculture, the sample had to include households ranging from a more pastoral-oriented mode of production to a more agro-pastoral oriented one, and from a more transhumant lifestyle to a more sedentary one. Thus Fulbe Djelgobe, Gaobe and Liptako had to be adequately represented by the selected villages for the study sample.
- In the most northern areas, it was assumed that agriculture may not play a significant role in household production due to lack of rainfall, whereas in the more southern areas agriculture may be a valuable asset for households and for women within those households. Therefore it seemed appropriate that the distribution of the villages should cover a number of ecological gradients (rainfall, vegetation, etc.), but for practical reasons within a range not exceeding 100 km from north to south, to facilitate access both in the dry and rainy season<sup>3</sup>. Also, in order to integrate Fulbe Djelgobe, Gaobe and Liptako, this north-south distribution was found to be necessary.
- One of the aims of the study was to reveal how impoverishment influences women's role. Therefore, a variation in wealth among the households sampled was desirable. However, the villages themselves could not be extraordinary in terms of wealth, otherwise the results would be too specific to a village and less related to 'common' factors.
- The level of commercialisation was also an important issue, in terms of how it influences women's status, particularly their milk-selling behaviour. Villages showing little involvement in commercialisation of livestock, e.g. Djelgobe villages, were therefore chosen to contrast with those showing greater involvement, e.g. Gaobe and Liptako villages in combination with either impoverishment or wealth.

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<sup>3</sup> In the rainy season paths often turn into rivers and make access to villages nearly impossible, while in the dry season sand dunes are just as difficult to cross with a motorbike.

- The proximity of a market could play an important role for both men and women. It was assumed that a village close to a semi-urban centre like Gorom Gorom would be more involved in commercialisation than villages further away, therefore it seemed appropriate to choose one village which was close to a town<sup>4</sup>.
- The research sample had to accord with the needs of other collaborators in the EU-project, to facilitate the integration of my research into the broader study.

The basis on which the final four villages were selected, according to these criteria, was established systematically. First, in all eight villages the research was introduced to the village chiefs or deputies and in group meetings to the men and women living in the village.

Informal semi-structured interviews were then held in separate men's and women's groups and with randomly selected individual Fulbe in all eight villages. This enabled me to broaden the general information on the villages already collected in the demographic survey, and so to select four villages for the in-depth main study. The topics discussed with groups and individuals included the general infrastructure of the villages (e.g. access to water, land, proximity to markets, influence of development projects, presence of NGOs and governmental institutions) as well as the organisation of traditional and modern institutions (e.g. *groupements villageois* (GV)) present in each village. As the research sample had to be of limited size in order to collect well-founded qualitative data, it was important that none of the villages were too atypical (e.g. having had a recent large-scale project intervention of some sort, being a dominant market village, etc.).

Other topics that were discussed related to the general economic situation of the households in the villages. Using PRA ranking techniques (see below), definitions of wealth were discussed. Emic concepts of living, production and consumption units, inter- and intra-household relationships were discussed and the main production modes of each village were established (e.g. the relative importance of agricultural and pastoral production and alternative income sources). These discussions also generally dealt with

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<sup>4</sup> I also thought there may be times when I would not be well enough, or the weather conditions would not allow me to travel. Being based in Gorom Gorom it was sensible to choose one village that I could reach easily and would not necessarily have to stay overnight to accommodate this possibility.

such matters as the gender division of labour, access to resources and expenditure obligations towards the household.

From the original eight villages the following four were chosen for the in depth-study: Ngoundam (Djelgobe), Banguil (Gaobe), Aliakoum (Gaobe) and Baaga (Liptako).

### *Selected reasons for not choosing other villages*

Korya was not selected because two years ago a development project built a milk-factory there. Men, not women, from more than twenty households regularly sold their surplus milk to the factory. A number of other households were eager to fulfil the requirements to also benefit from this stable and guaranteed market. Although this would have been an interesting research area, as it seemed to undermine women's main income source, i.e. milk selling, it did not fulfil the requirements for the research sample of this study. Furthermore, there were rumours that witches inhabited the village: whether genuine or not, field assistants were reluctant to work in this village.

In Yomboli, a Danish researcher had just completed several months of in-depth survey. It seemed that the people there needed a break from answering questionnaires.

Touka Bayel could not be chosen as it revealed itself to be an unusually rich village, inhabited by Djawambe, a group of Fulbe who engage mostly in large-scale animal trading (Thébaud 1998). In all the villages except Touka Bayel, a wealthy person was defined as somebody having around 50 or more cattle. However, in Touka Bayel a wealthy man was considered as someone having at least 300 cattle. There were several mosques, constructed by rich village members, and the women wore exceptionally nice and new looking clothes and were obviously much better nourished than the women in the other villages. Although I wanted to include cattle traders in my research sample, and useful information could have certainly been collected here on how large scale commercialisation influences women's economic behaviour and social standing, I decided that Touka Bayel would be too atypical for the study in mind.

The choice between Gountouré and Banguil was a close one, but, all other things being similar, in the end came down to practical reasoning. Banguil is *en route* from Gorom Gorom to Ngoundam; therefore research in these two villages could be carried out without losing too much time (and gaining too many bruises) on the roads from village

to village. Its geographical location, on a north-south gradient, also made Banguil the more favourable of the two.

### ***Short description of research villages***

#### ***Ngoundam – Fulbe Djelgobe***

Only one Djelgobe village appeared among the first sample, as access to Djelgobe villages was somewhat constrained by my inability to ride a motorbike in the sand. Most Djelgobe villages are to the far north of Oudalan, behind several sand dunes.

Fortunately, Ngoundam proved to be an excellent choice. No development project had ever intervened there and no researchers, apart from the EU-project collaborator Kate Hampshire, had worked there so far. Ngoundam was situated roughly 60 km to the north-east of Gorom Gorom. The nearest market town was Markoye, approximately 8 km away. Ngoundam was inhabited by Fulbe Djelgobe and Bella, who lived in separate quarters about 1km away from each other. There was little social interaction between these two groups, although competition between them, in terms of land use, was growing: the Bella were gradually blocking most cattle routes to the near-by *bas fond* through expansion of their cultivated area. The deputy of Ngoundam was a Bella. Most Djelgobe in Ngoundam were highly transhumant and often left the village seasonally, heading north with their cattle in the direction of Tin Akof and Mali. In terms of basic infrastructure for these pastoralists, there was a *bas-fond* next to the Djelgobe settlement. However, this dried up in January or at latest February. From this time onwards, until the first rains in May, June or July there was a pump in the Bella quarter for human consumption. For watering their cattle, Fulbe dug wells in the *bas-fonds* in Ngoundam where water-levels were comparatively high.

As expected, nearly half of the households in Ngoundam did usually not cultivate at all. Most household's primary production was centred around livestock.

#### ***Banguil – Fulbe Gaobe***

Banguil was situated approximately 10 km south-south-west of Ngoundam, and was inhabited mainly by Fulbe Gaobe. It was a difficult village to locate because it split up on a seasonal basis. One group of households (5 of them in the sample) had constructed mud-brick huts halfway between Salmossi and Markoye, to the south of the main road

where they had their fields. In the rainy season they usually moved to these huts to farm their fields. After the harvest, they constructed tents directly on their fields where they remained while their cattle manured them. When the ponds in that area dried up they moved a third time to an area roughly 2 km away from Markoye at the edge of a natural water-pan (large pond) where they dug wells. The water-pan of Markoye dried up in most years, by May at the latest, but the ground water level was high and therefore well-digging was considered easy, so they remained there until the farming season started again.

A second group, comprising three other households, had their fields around 6 km west of Markoye to the north of the main road. They stayed 2 km away from their fields during the rainy season, and then, as soon as they had harvested, united with the group mentioned above at the water-pan of Markoye, as there was no water closer to their fields.

The last group, of three households, lived permanently in mud-brick houses 3 km away from Markoye, next to the main road to Gorom Gorom, despite the fact that their fields were located in the same area as the first group. However, these three household did not cultivate themselves, but hired labour for cultivation. It was therefore not essential for them to be so close to their fields during the farming season. Their main concern was to be close to Markoye as they were professional cattle traders. They also had an interest in separating from the other Banguil households because they were extremely rich and tried to avoid being relied upon to support the other villagers.

All Gaobe in Banguil cultivated to varying degrees and they seemed generally less pastoral oriented than Djelgobe in Ngoundam.

#### ***Aliakoum – Fulbe Gaobe***

Aliakoum was approximately 2 km away from Gorom Gorom, the provincial capital of Oudalan, south-west of both Ngoundam and Banguil. It was inhabited by Gaobe and Rimaibe, who lived in separate quarters 1 km apart. It was assumed that the level of commercialisation might be higher in the proximity of a bigger town, thus Aliakoum, being so closely located to Gororm Gorom, seemed to be a good village to find answers to this research question. Gorom Gorom, despite being a provincial capital, was still

rather rural in many respects (no electricity and little employment outside the agro-pastoral sector), but it was a major market town – markets held every day and a big cattle market held every Thursday. More than half of the Gaobe in Aliakoum lived in tents. There were two water pumps in Aliakoum and a natural water pan in Gorom Gorom that was used to water cattle.

All Gaobe in Aliakoum were agropastoralists.

### *Baaga – Fulbe Liptako*

Baaga was the most southerly of the villages selected, and the only one located in Seno province. It was 6 km to the south-east of Dori. It was inhabited by Liptako and Rimaibe, in separate quarters. All the Liptako here were sedentary and lived in mud-brick houses surrounded by compound walls. Transhumance was, if at all, only undertaken by an individual and never by an entire household. Although Liptako formed a big emirate in times past (cf. Chapter 2), those from Baaga were not part of a town Fulbe elite, but led rural lives based on agriculture and to a much lesser degree than Djelgobe and Gaobe, on pastoralism. There were two man-made and one natural water-pans around the village, all of which dried out by December or January, depending on the rains of the previous season. However, there were 3 pumps in the village and these provided water throughout the year.

## **Choice of research households**

After having selected the research villages, most of those Fulbe households present at that time of the pilot study in these four villages were visited (a total of 11 in Ngoundam, 27 in Aliakoum, 14 in Banguil, 20 in Baaga)<sup>5</sup>. A list of names of household heads was provided by the demographic survey carried out by Hampshire (1998). Willingness of the household members to co-operate in the main study was essential for the feasibility of the research, therefore an introductory discussion was held with each of the focal households to introduce the research, encourage co-operative participation and ensure the respondents' understanding of the projects aims and potential use.

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<sup>5</sup> As mentioned earlier no Rimaibe were included in the sample. The Rimaibe's cultural and historical background is different from that of Fulbe. Their inclusion would have meant increasing the sample size if any statistically valid analysis were to be made. This was not possible due to time and financial constraints. A smaller sample size offering greater in-depth and qualitatively meaningful information was considered preferable.

### *Definition of the household*

During the pilot study, a total of 72 households was visited in order to set some ground-rules for the purpose of more detailed data collection and analysis. Primary in this was the definition of the 'household'.

In recent years a number of widely held assumptions in relation to the role of the household in rural African societies have been critically reassessed from within a variety of disciplines: economics, anthropology, sociology, geography, etc. (e.g. Netting *et al.* 1984; Dwyer & Bruce 1988; Guyer 1986; Mook 1986; Low 1986; Räder 1990; Kasman & Körner 1992).

It has become increasingly evident that assumptions about West African households based on neoclassical household models, are misleading. The neoclassical household model assumes that altruistic family members maximise profits under a dictatorial but benevolent (and male) household head regarding the household as a homogenous unit: a 'black box' with unified preferences and pooled resources (Becker 1976). In most households in West Africa, however, there is a great deal of competition for resources between the different household members and labour is not allocated purely under household maximising perspectives, but is much more complex (cf. Dwyer & Bruce 1988; Talle 1988; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995; Momsen 1991:51; Whitehead 1994; Kabeer 1998:96).

Misconceptions about household dynamics frequently result in unforeseen or disparate outcomes when used as a basis for interventional politics and programmes and often have very negative impacts on certain members of a household; usually women, children and the elderly (Guyer 1981, 1986; Safilios-Rothschild 1988; Hoodfar 1988).

For this thesis, in order to comprehend gender roles in production in Fulbe households, I needed to have a thorough understanding of intra-household dynamics. Therefore I set out to define the term 'household' from a Fulbe perspective, and at the same time find out how the Fulbe household could be characterised and differentiated, in general terms, and in terms of the position of its individual members. The equivalent of what I considered to be a household from a Fulbe perspective was, in Fulfulde *wuro* or *baade* (cf. Chapter 4) (cf. Thébaud 1998; Hampshire 1998).

Each household head, or any other elderly male member of the household if the household head was not available, was questioned about the composition of his household and the reasons why those named were regarded as household members. Kinship diagrams of all households were drawn and herding, farming and consumption units within each household were defined. In the main study that followed, this 'initial' household information was investigated in greater depth and confirmed through interviews with other household members and through periods of participant observation in each of the sampled households (n=39).

The establishment of this information was essential to my understanding and utilisation of the household concept, as used by the Fulbe themselves, in the research area. Moreover, it enabled me to collect baseline information on the main economic strategies of the individual household members (cf. Thébaud 1998). This information was continually cross-checked, updated and refined throughout the course of the study.

### *Structure of the research sample*

Eleven households in Ngoundam, Banguil and Baaga and six households in Aliakoum<sup>6</sup>, were chosen for the main research. This involved a total of 362 people, of which 94 were adult women and 88 adult men<sup>7</sup> (Table 3.1 and 3.2).

**Table 3.1: Demographic structure of the sample**

Approximate age in years	Number of men	Number of women	Total
0-4	42	46	88
5-14	53	39	92
15-20	22	25	47
21-40	41	47	88
41-60	19	13	32
61+	6	9	15
Total	183	179	362

**Table 3.2: Demographic structure of sample per village**

Age	Ngoundam		Banguil		Aliakoum		Baaga	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
16-20	3	8	4	12	7	4	8	1
21-40	10	10	17	19	5	8	9	10
41-60	5	3	5	3	4	4	5	3
61+	0	3	2	2	2	2	2	2
Total	18	24	28	36	18	18	24	16

<sup>6</sup> In Aliakoum only six households were chosen, because I did not want to exceed 40 households for my in-depth study. In retrospect this seems a bit odd, although at the time I did not want to over-represent Gaobe in my sample, and also I initially only thought of gathering qualitative data in Aliakoum. Looking back, it would have made more sense to collect information from an equal number of households in Aliakoum as in the other villages. On the other hand, the number of individual women sampled in Aliakoum is actually higher than that in Baaga and the number of men sampled in Aliakoum equivalent to that in Ngoundam. The total number of individual Fulbe sampled in Aliakoum was therefore comparable with that of the other villages.

<sup>7</sup> Throughout the study an adult was defined as a person above the age of 15.

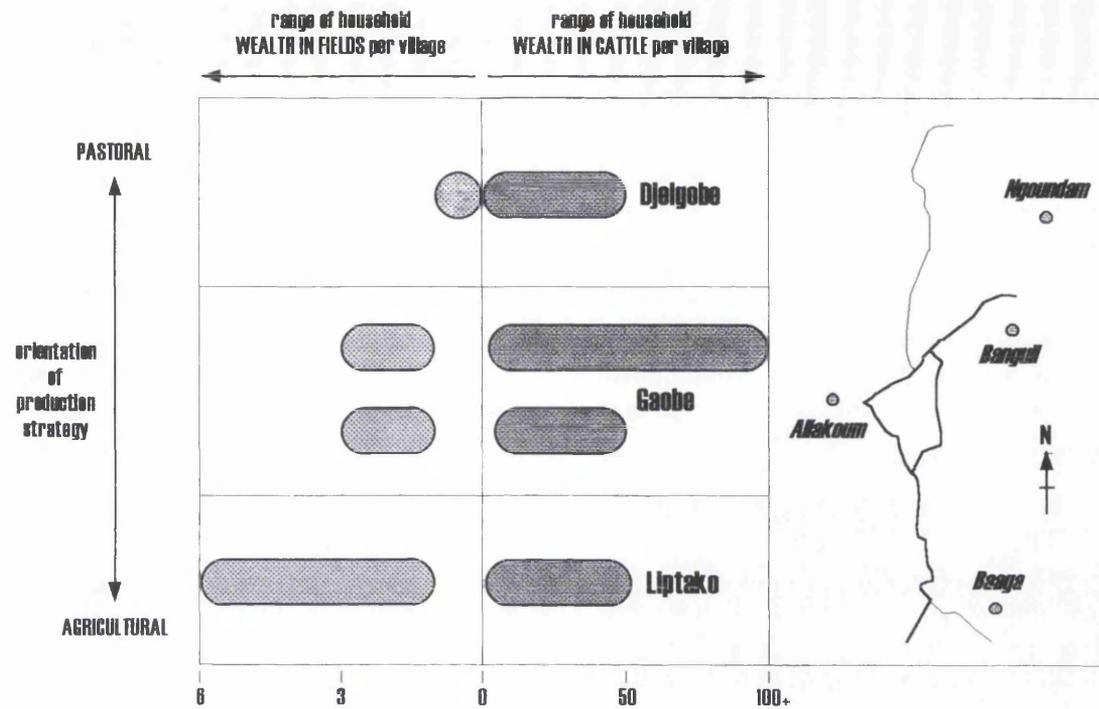
The aim of this study is primarily to understand patterns of production and how they might influence women's socio-economic status. Therefore, the following criteria were important in the selection of individual households within each village:

- A range from a more pastoral to a more agropastoral production mode in the sample households had to be included (see selection of villages).
- Wealth range among sample households within the villages was an important consideration to understand how impoverishment influences gender relations and production strategies. The solution was to cover a range of wealth in cattle in the households in each village.
- Households were also selected on the basis of the age ranges they included. One of the aims of the study was to assess how lifecycle influences women's status in terms of socio-economic status. It was therefore important to include women of different age, with or without children, cohabiting with other women in small or large households.
- One of the issues that I had wanted to investigate early on in the study was whether there was any inter-household co-operation in any of the villages, and if so, how this was organised. During the pilot study it appeared that some amount of inter-household co-operation did occur in the Gaobe and Liptako villages, mostly between households within the same quarter. From the outset, therefore, households from the same quarters were included in the sample so as to capture any of these inter-household relationships.

The selected sample households are in no way a statistical representation of the population in the research area, nor were they chosen randomly, but I can confidently say that they represent a 'typical' variety of households in the area.

Figure 3.1 summarises the general characteristics of villages and households selected for this study.

Figure 3.1: Summary of general characteristics of the selected sample households



Design: S. Fraser

### *Problems linked to the sampled households*

Three households in Banguil turned out to be extremely successful cattle traders and their wealth in cattle fell well outside of the standard range of the sample. These households are excluded from some of the statistical analysis, as their inclusion gives a distorted picture of the reality for the majority of the households in the area (particularly where mean/average figures for groups and villages are given). Wherever this is done it is indicated. Through their necessary inclusion though, interesting material was collected on how this extraordinary wealth, achieved through commercialisation, had affected the role of women of these household. This was particularly interesting given that the socio-economic status of these women could be considered in the context of other women from the same village with the same cultural background<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> This rewarding comparison would not have been possible if I had chosen a village like Touka Bayel, where every household is rich.

The transhumant character of some households posed a problem. More so in Ngoundam than in the other three research villages, households or individuals would leave for transhumance and could rarely be found; directions given as to where they camped were usually very vague. Once the household could be found all the information collected from them was based on recall. Where this information was considered unreliable, or known to be untrue, it was disregarded in the analysis. Likewise, those on seasonal labour migration could not be followed and their contribution to the study was limited. On their return they were asked about locations to which they migrated and the nature of the labour they had engaged in.

During the course of the study, only one household was partially lost from the sample. A household in Aliakoum refused to take part in this study after some weeks, but this was soon replaced by another whose members were willing to participate. In Baaga, another household dropped out, but after nearly six months. By this stage it was too late to integrate a substitute household into the sample. Data for this household were therefore incomplete.

## **Methods used**

It has been acknowledged that using questionnaires as the only means of gathering information often results in the acquisition of incomplete or incorrect data that subsequently lead to incorrect conclusions (Gill 1993). Gill (1993:10) gives various reasons why questionnaire surveys can be particularly difficult in developing countries: they are often written in a language other than that of the focus group, most of whom are usually illiterate and cannot correct any misunderstandings or mistakes. Likewise, respondents are rarely familiar with the rationale behind surveys and tend to give answers that they think are wanted. To avoid at least some of these pitfalls, participatory methods have to be employed as a supplement to questionnaires (e.g. Farington & Martin 1988; Chambers *et al.* 1989; Chambers 1991; Gill 1993). The methods used in this study were participatory/rapid rural appraisal, informal and semi-structured interviews and participant observation, questionnaires, a market survey and direct measurements of fields and yields.

### ***Participatory or Rapid Rural Appraisal (PRA/RRA)***

During the pilot study a variety of PRA and RRA tools were used to obtain some baseline information. These tools are part of an approach which is designed to obtain information from knowledgeable rural people in a time- and cost-effective way. Such an approach, nevertheless, borrows heavily from classical anthropological techniques - e.g. semi-structured interviews, participant observation - but seeks to apply them in a more rapid way (e.g. Chambers 1991; McCracken 1988)<sup>9</sup>.

In combination with semi-structured interviews and participant observation (discussed below), the following RRA tools were used:

- Walks (transects) were taken around the village and its surroundings with men and women, separately, to familiarise myself with the village.
- Seasonal calendars were made during single-sex group discussions and while individuals were being asked about expenditure, prices, seasonal labour, work allocation and transhumance patterns.
- Ranking and scoring techniques were used to obtain information about the use of different soils for agriculture.

Towards the end of the pilot study, the results of all these RRA methods were openly discussed with a group of people in each village. The information gained from this provided me with the necessary raw material to design questionnaires for the main study.

### ***Informal or semi-structured interviews and participant observation***

The semi-structured interview is widely recognised as “*a technique that is characteristic of participatory, rather than top-down, methods of attempting to learn about - and therefore from - rural people*” (Gill 1993:15). Its application was highly

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<sup>9</sup> Over the years this approach has further developed into a more villager-oriented process and has become one of the most fashionable tools in development work, supposedly enabling the local population to analyse their own knowledge and perceptions of their condition, address their own problems and thus effectively empower themselves. The local people thus ‘teach’ the outsider, explaining and sharing their knowledge and perceptions, so that the researcher can get an overview on the functioning of a particular system within a short period of time. However, PRA can be open to bias. It may be inadvertently dominated by particular interests, to an extent that is not apparent to the researcher and cannot provide hard quantifiable data. The empowerment and team-building aspects of PRA can also arouse false expectations and generate conflict if there is no realistic and practical goal being addressed (cf. Chambers 1991).

appropriate to the level and nature of my own research, and I used it extensively in both the pilot and main study.

Throughout the main study I stayed in the villages overnight, took part in peoples' everyday lives, conducting informal or semi-structured interviews with individuals and undertook discussions with groups. This enabled me to establish close contact with the individuals of the research sample and gather information on all aspects of the research that could verify (or refute) the data collected by questionnaires (cf. Fischer 1988). One of my primary goals in this study was to assess how cultural values influence women's and men's production strategies. Cultural values are not a topic that can be sufficiently handled by questionnaires but have to be discussed at length, and actual behaviour, that may well be different from expressed opinions, has to be observed.

These semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions made a welcome change for the local people who admitted to feeling restricted and slightly intimidated by the mere sight of questionnaires. A lot more useful information and a better understanding of all important aspects of this research were gained from this.

Group discussions were usually organised in single sex groups (if 'organised' at all, as very often they developed spontaneously). This proved to be extremely valuable; women generally had different views from men but often tended not to express these differences in front of men.

Participant observation and informal or semi-structured interviews were the key and most useful methods employed in attempting to answer the questions underlying this thesis.

### *Questionnaire surveys*

Questionnaires are a useful means of obtaining quantitative measurements from standardised questions across the entire population of a sample. However, if a questionnaire is to be of any real use, it has to be designed in such a way that it allows for cross-checking (cf. Oppenheim 1992, Gill 1993). Any bias in recording answers has to be avoided as far as possible (especially when it comes to 'open' questions and 'attitude' questions). The combined use of semi-structured interviews and participant

observation helped me to alleviate a fair amount of bias, avoid most misinterpretations of both questions and answers and realise when answers given were incorrect.

During the **pilot study** questionnaires were administered to 44 women and to 17 men (mostly household heads) in the four research villages.

The questionnaire comprised mainly of open questions and focused on:

- Basic information about life histories: present age, place of origin, socio-economic significance of marriage, divorce, and children, etc.,
- Labour allocation within the household during the life cycle, including domestic, agricultural, pastoral and artisanal work,
- Expenditure obligations in the life cycle, including everyday, seasonal and occasional,
- Income sources.

The information gathered from this served primarily to obtain general baseline information, and to give guidelines as to how further questionnaires should be formulated.

During the **main study** four gender-specific questionnaires were designed to obtain both qualitative and quantitative information, supplemented by a presence/absence list.

The questionnaires were:

- a multi-round survey questionnaire,
- a three-round questionnaire on agricultural production,
- a single-round questionnaire on pastoral production,
- a single-round questionnaire on non-agropastoral income generating work.

#### ***Presence/absence list***

A list of household members was established when I first visited the households and was updated on each subsequent visit (approximately every 2 months, 6-7 times during

the main research) in order to find out whether individuals were on transhumance, seasonal labour migration or visits.

### *Multi-round survey*

The multi-round survey questionnaires were applied to women and men at regular intervals of six to eight weeks over the period of a year. It was, where possible, applied to all adult members of the household.

As well as its application, the design of this questionnaire was a considerable task. The questionnaire was designed to take intra-household as well as inter-household dynamics into account. Although focussing on the production activities of adult Fulbe men and women, the significance of younger household members' activities became apparent through this questioning of the adults and, where possible, were incorporated into the results.

Questions were asked about a household's herd management, and about activities outside the pastoral sector, such as artisanal work and seasonal labour migration. Each time a household was visited, measures of herd performance, off-takes from herds and labour allocation in various production areas (seasonal labour migration, pastoral, artisanal and domestic work) were recorded. The questionnaire also enquired about decision-making over product use (pastoral and agricultural) and consumption within the household.

Above all, the questionnaire focused on income and expenditure, in monetary and non-monetary terms, of all the adults in the household, based on one to four-week recall data (the recall time depending on the item purchased or sold). This was the most effective way of understanding intra-household income and expenditure obligations. It was considered necessary to interview every adult household member about income and expenditure as all household members, and not just the household head, make different contributions to the household. What is more, the household head is often not informed of the other member's income and expenditure or may not always be willing to give such information (e.g. Toulmin 1992:10<sup>10</sup>). However, even with this multi-member

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<sup>10</sup> Toulmin did research in two villages in Mali, north of Segou, where households consist on average of 18 people. She realised that it was very difficult to interview every single household member about income and expenditure, but at the same time one person could not answer for all household members.

approach, income and expenditure data for each household were difficult to collect (see discussion below).

The multi-round questionnaires contained mostly closed questions. Open questions were predominantly posed in the context of semi-structured informal interviews after administering the bulk of the questionnaire.

#### ***Single- to three-round agricultural survey***

At the beginning of the agricultural season, a questionnaire was applied to every household head, enquiring about the number of fields owned, borrowed or lent within the household and who those owners, borrowers or lenders were. Then, during the agricultural season, a further questionnaire was applied to those engaging in cultivation (a total of 34 household heads), enquiring in one to three rounds about access to land, labour allocation, agricultural investment, farming techniques and yields. Answers to questions relating to the recollection of actual working hours tended to reflect more the intention of the person than their actual hours of work and were therefore mostly disregarded (cf. de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:264).

A questionnaire different from that applied to men, but also on agricultural production, was applied to the household heads' wives. A total of 36 women were interviewed. This questionnaire enquired about opinions on agriculture, participation in agricultural production and access to land and yields.

#### ***Single-round pastoral survey***

In this questionnaire open questions were asked to every male household head and his wife about access to animals, herding strategies, decision-making about herd management and the economic and social benefits of having animals.

#### ***Single-round non-agropastoral production survey***

A final questionnaire, involving both open and closed questions on activities was applied to 74 male and 90 female informants about activities outside the agropastoral sector. It asked about economic activities taken up after the last drought and the respondent's opinions on these activities, the obstacles they faced to undertake them and the opportunities they gained through them.

## *Market Survey*

A study of production has to take account of the economic framework that influences a household's and its individual member's production strategies. Information was therefore gathered on the fluctuation of prices of agricultural and pastoral products and other market goods, in the seasonal cycle. It was important to know about seasonal fluctuations of prices not only to verify household expenditure and income but also to know whether, and if so how, households and individuals react to these market fluctuations.

Respondents in all four villages were asked which markets they frequented most. In the three most commonly mentioned (Gorom-Gorom, Dori, Markoye) a market survey was conducted over a single calendar year. Prices were collected at 2 monthly intervals for the following products:

- grain (millet and sorghum),
- milk,
- various sauce condiments<sup>11</sup>,
- artisanal products (ready-made products and raw materials, particularly for mat-weaving),
- animal fodder (e.g. cotton seeds).

Reliable data on animal prices and the number of animals present at the market in Gorom Gorom were obtained from a researcher with SPE (*Service Provinciale Elevage*) for the period January 1994 to September 1996. Other markets in the area were found to have similar price fluctuations, although prices in general may have been slightly higher (Zaal 1998).

## *Direct measurements*

### *Fields and yields*

In order to evaluate the importance of agricultural production, the area cultivated in 1996 was measured for each household in the sample. The ministry of agriculture and

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<sup>11</sup>Quantities were measured in local measurements and then transferred to Western measurement, e.g. one heap of dried okra was equivalent to 30 g (see Abbot 1993).

animal resources (M.AGRI-R.A.) regularly conducts surveys on yields and field surfaces (taking into account investment, soil quality, soil improvement measures and agricultural techniques). One of the people who took part in a ministerial survey in 1994 was employed to assist me in the measuring of fields in the four final research villages. This field assistant already knew the research villages well as he had been employed by a Dutch counterpart of the EU-project in the preceding year.

The borders of the fields owned or borrowed by each household were indicated by the owner of the field or a representative. The area owned or borrowed is only an indicator of potential production, as the area sown is often not equal to the area available for sowing, nor to that which is eventually weeded and harvested (cf. de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:262). Some fields may be lent to others, or a field may be sown but then left unweeded and neglected, resulting in either a meagre harvest or none at all. Only the area that was successfully sown during the research year was measured; if a field was neglected afterwards it was noticed or reported to us (only one such case occurred).

Using a compass, 50m measuring tape and two long poles, the perimeter of each field was measured. This was done after sowing but before crops were too high to complicate measurements. Afterwards the surface area cultivated was calculated. A total of 72 fields were measured for 34 households.

In addition, I had planned to peg out a square of 5m side length in each field. The intention was for this square to be harvested and weighed in my presence in order to calculate the overall yields of the total field (cf. M.AGRI-R.A.). However, access to the villages turned out to be extremely difficult in the rainy season and most households harvested at roughly the same time. It therefore became necessary to opt for another method of measuring yields.

After the harvest, 15 randomly chosen millet bundles, one from each of 15 different households in 3 different research villages, were weighed after removal from their stalks and husks. The weight of the grain per bundle varied between 12 and 22 kg, depending on the person who made the bundles and the quality of the grain. The mean weight of the bundles was 16 kg. To my surprise this is the standard weight used in statistics in Burkina Faso (cf. Zaal 1998). The average weight was then multiplied by the number of

bundles harvested in each household to obtain the approximate yield per hectare cultivated for each of the households surveyed.

### ***Milk offtake***

Direct measurement was made of milk offtakes, at two month intervals, in randomly selected households. Many women objected to having their milk measured in the presence of others, even family members (cf. de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:279). My initial intention was to measure how much milk each individual in the household had at his or her disposal on a daily basis, and how much milk could be sold by each individual woman. However, this proved to be impossible, working in four different villages and with so many women. For this kind of measurement, much closer and more constant contact with fewer women would have been necessary. Also, most of the women felt too intimidated by the whole process of measuring milk offtakes, even when on their own.

### **Analysis**

Once I had returned to the UK all qualitative information gathered in the field was entered into Q&A, a general database programme. This facilitated my access to and analysis of the data.

Quantitative data were entered into Excel and SPSS databases. Statistical analysis of these data were used to support the findings of semi-structured interviews, participant observation and general qualitative data collection in order to verify my understanding of the situation; household and individual circumstances. Where appropriate, linear and logistic regression analyses were undertaken using the SPSS package. These results do not necessarily reflect the whole population of the area, as the sample was not chosen according to statistical sample methods. Nevertheless, they do provide an explanation for the reality observed in the households sampled.

## Limits and accomplishments of the research

### *The problem of counting animals*

*“To ask a man how many beasts he has is pointless and indiscreet, for cattle are not counted, lest by doing so their number is made finite”* (Stenning 1959:148).

It was extremely difficult, but essential for this research to investigate numbers of cattle owned by the individuals in the households (cf. Pouillon 1988:184), and to differentiate those owned from those herded for others (cf. Benoit 1977:44 *et seq.*; Breusers 1998:261 *et seq.*).

The actual number of animals per household could only be ascertained as a result of the long duration of the field study and the close relationships I built up with key informants. Presented in this thesis are the numbers that were given by these key informants, continually verified through informal discussions with the members of all households, as well as through direct observation and repeated counting of animals throughout the field study<sup>12</sup>. It was difficult to ascertain the numbers of animals owned per individual within the households. For men, no reliable information could be collected. For women, with whom contact was generally closer, approximate numbers could be found and verified through discussions.

### *Income and expenditure data*

Fulbe men and women were very reluctant to give information on expenditure and even more so on income. Four main problems relating to this were identified.

Firstly, Fulbe men's and women's answers both reflect what they perceive to be appropriate or ideal, rather than what actually takes place in practice. For example, on many occasions, women would insist that their husbands had paid for condiments, as their custom suggests they should. However, even when asked repeatedly, some husbands would deny having paid for these condiments.

Secondly, sometimes it could not be avoided that spouses or other family members were present during interviews. Women did not want their husbands to know what their

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<sup>12</sup> Counting animals, however, does not reveal the number of animals owned as opposed to those herded.

income from milk selling was, nor how they spent this income. Women admitted that they went to the market to sell milk, but they often refused to reveal the quantity of milk sold or the exact profit they made from the sale (cf. Thébaud 1998:4). Likewise, men were equally reluctant to talk about animal sales in absolute numbers or about income from any other sort of wage labour in front of others.

Thirdly, not only were they reluctant to admit income and expenditure to each other, both male and female respondents were often even more hesitant to reveal this information to a white European working in their area. They naturally assumed me to be linked to one of the many development projects or NGOs in the area and therefore saw me as a potential source of access to food, fodder or anything else being 'distributed' to those who could show a need and an interest in this region. To give an example of this, it was preferable for the members of households not to admit to having recently bought sacks of cotton seeds as supplementary cattle feed (even though they might be standing there in plain view next to me while I was conducting an interview), but rather to ask me to buy one for them arguing that they couldn't afford to buy one themselves. More than once respondents reported not owning any small livestock, but then in a following round, would tell me that they had just sold one of their goats or sheep.

The fourth problem was rooted in the overall structure of the EU's research project. In most households, two researchers from the same project had already started surveys, and one of them had employed enumerators to ask similar 'intimidating' income and expenditure questions. People were understandably rather fed up of repeatedly answering such questions without any visible benefit as a result, apart from the small gifts of tea and sugar that we usually brought for every household we interviewed. The population of the Burkinabe Sahel are now well used to the recurrent provision of food aid (particularly during the drought years) or to other forms of interventional benefit from development projects and NGOs working in this area. Although people were generally very welcoming and happy to talk to me in an informal way, it was often difficult to motivate and convince some of the more sceptical respondents of the need to answer the questions on formal questionnaires.

Household income, and the contribution of individuals to the household, could not therefore be quantified as envisaged and were far from being robust enough to be analysed statistically. Zaal's (1998) detailed economic study attempts to analyse individual income and expenditure data and data on livestock sales in the same research area obtained by employed enumerators, on the basis of questionnaires. For my research, information of a more qualitative nature was gathered, and only quantitative data that could be cross-checked and backed up with sound qualitative data were used in the writing of this thesis.

### *Long-term changes*

A study of only one year's length is unable to observe, record or assess long-term changes in production strategies or gender relations. A family which is predominantly pastoral oriented during the research year might, through a cattle epidemic or other unforeseen circumstances, be forced to devote themselves to agriculture the following year. The scope of this study was therefore limited in this respect, although some data were collected on retrospective longer term changes in the research area. This was, however, often of a very subjective nature, which may well have been heavily influenced by the individual experience of the interviewee and show a tendency to glorify the past and exaggerate recent changes.

### *Sample size*

At the outset of the study it was decided to limit the number of households in the research sample in order to fulfil the primary objectives of the study. A high degree of trust and familiarity needed to be developed to enable me to ask detailed questions about economic activities and gender relations and to verify the answers given.

Because of the small research sample, some statistical analyses were difficult to pursue, especially as there were three different sub-ethnic groups involved and on some issues each needed to be analysed separately. The advantages, however, of the small sample size seem to outweigh the disadvantages. Firstly, because it was possible to spend a long time with each household during the research year, most of the inaccuracies in respondent's answers to my questions could be ascertained and remedied<sup>13</sup>. Secondly,

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<sup>13</sup> This was, nevertheless, also very frustrating at times.

in getting to know the respondents and their characteristics better over time, qualitative information could be adequately judged and more easily put into context. Individual experience inevitably colours people's opinions. It was important, therefore, to know the circumstance in which respondents held and expressed certain opinions. Thirdly, even though less quantitative information could be obtained than originally envisaged, the patterns that underlie different production strategies and gender relations could be better understood with a smaller sample as more detailed qualitative information could be gathered.

Finally, given the very large samples used in the course of complementary research by Hampshire (1998), Zaal (1998) and IDR (Homewood 1997), the present study made its most valuable contribution to the overall research project by working intensively with a small sample that could be situated within, and lend perspective and validity to the larger one.

### ***Translation and interpretation***

Making sense and use of the information given by women and men in the sample households, involved a lengthy process of translations and interpretations in a number of senses (see Phillips 1996:23-24). First of all, in the field, virtually every statement had to be translated from Fulfulde into French. In the course of writing up this thesis everything was again translated from French into English (and all the while thinking in German). Although my Fulfulde may have been good enough at some point to understand what respondents were saying (at least if they repeated it often enough), I was in no way able to grasp their proverbs, intonations or sense of irony. Nor was I in any position to judge the seriousness of their responses and comments. To avoid misunderstandings or incorrect interpretations of respondent's statements, my Fulfulde-French interpreter and I usually discussed all interviews in the evenings or on weekends. Nevertheless, there may still be phrases that were misunderstood by both of us.

Gestures or looks given while saying something can often be more important than the words themselves, or even indicate something very different from what is being said. Furthermore, gestures differ from culture to culture. Thus, sometimes my scepticism

over certain remarks made by respondents, while at the same time ‘making a face’ that – in my experience – indicated something else, may have been misplaced.

The main limitations of this study, as in any other study of this type, were time and distance. Although it was assumed that rather ‘typical’ villages were chosen, results are subordinate to the particularity of conditions found in those villages and households studied. Two neighbouring villages may show very different realities concerning production and gender relations. This is often found to be the case, due to minor and localised facts, such as for example the personality of the village head, the example set by certain successful individuals, the social network built up by a particular village, or the economic or political influence of a key individual in the village. Conclusions that are drawn from the results have to take into account the fact that the research can only show trends or examples, which might be strongly influenced by the choice of the villages and households and by the time at which the research was done. Annual fluctuations in climate, in this Sahelian region, might give different results in other years for the same research villages.

On entering into this research, my own intentions were to learn about Fulbe production strategies and the role women play in these various production strategies, and in particular, how commercialisation, impoverishment and cultural ideals influence their socio-economic status. Inevitably, I was influenced by my own previous experience of working on gender issues in agricultural societies. These may have coloured my own interpretation of some of the responses given by women in the course of the study.

Also, as for any other anthropological study, I was heavily dependent on the extent to which the population accepted me and let me share their knowledge. In some households that was more the case than in others. Every anthropologist using qualitative information is prone to interpret observation and data through his or her ethnocentric filter. This is certainly also the case in this study, although at all times I attempted to be objective and to reveal the situation as it was presented by the population itself.

I hope that this study will thus be able to contribute to a better understanding of gendered production in pastoral societies, and of the particular importance of milk, millet and mannerisms.

# 4

## THE FULBE HOUSEHOLD AND THE SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT

### Introduction

This chapter provides important background information for issues discussed in more detail in the course of the following data chapters.

The first part of this chapter discusses housing, household size and household structure in relation to the economy of the Fulbe in the research sample. Livestock pastoralism in Africa is predominantly regarded as a household enterprise (Fratkin & Smith 1992). Many previous studies on the Fulbe have thus regarded the household as the basic, autonomous unit of Fulbe social and economic organisation (e.g. Stenning 1959; Dupire 1970; Swift *et al.* 1984). Others have emphasised the importance of an even smaller unit, the 'hearthhold' (i.e. a woman and her children) as the most important socio-economic unit (de Bruijn 1997). It will be shown in this study that while it is important to employ such units to understand household dynamics and viability of the household as a whole, it is equally essential to disaggregate data to an individual level in order to understand gender relations within the household (cf. Guyer 1981, 1986; Whitehead 1994). The key issue addressed in this section will therefore be how Fulbe in the research area perceive a 'household' themselves. What is the 'household', a very western concept, in the Fulbe groups studied?

It has been discussed in Chapter 1 that women cannot be dealt with as a unitary category (e.g. Little 1987; Baroin 1987; Warner *et al.* 1997). This is due in part to the fact that women's socio-economic status and expected mannerisms change during their lifecycle and with household demography. In the second part of this chapter I will therefore discuss how women's status in the research area changes with age, parity and marital

status. Her rights and obligations in marriage and her possibilities to divorce will be presented. What social rights do women have in the Fulbe households sampled and how do these change during their lifecycles?

With respect to Fulbe's economic activities in the research area, an important aspect of Fulbe society, '*laawol pulaaku*', the Fulbe way, will be discussed. Although, as reviewed in Chapter 1, most Fulbe are seen to identify themselves strongly with cattle (e.g. Diallo 1986; Grayzel 1990; Boesen 1997; Bierschenk 1997) and some authors emphasise Fulbe's reluctance to pursue activities formerly done by their slaves (e.g. de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:401), most literature indicates that Fulbe in fact have diversified their income sources, both due to impoverishment (de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995) but also as an optimising strategy (e.g. Waters-Bayer 1985). What does *pulaaku* mean to the Fulbe groups in this research area in terms of production? To what extent do they adhere to its ideals? What, if any, alternative economic strategies do Fulbe men and women pursue in the research area?

It has been assumed elsewhere that adherence to *pulaaku* contributes to an increase in women's subordination to men, already exacerbated by growing impoverishment and the expansion of Islam within modern Fulbe society (de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995; de Bruijn 1997). The chapter closes with a discussion of how cultural norms (Islam and *pulaaku*) influence women's opportunities to diversify their income sources.

## **The Fulbe household**

All Fulbe in the research villages conceptualised their surroundings in terms of a dichotomy between *ladde*, the bush and *wuro*<sup>1</sup> (pl. *gure*), the village. *Ladde* was the outside world; the uncultivated area they inhabited, i.e. the rangeland. *Wuro*, on the other hand, comprised the cultivated space, i.e. the village in which they lived and the fields in which they farmed. For Gaobe and Djelgobe the term *wuro* also referred to the empty space (*winde*) where tents had once been, before their inhabitants removed them to go on transhumance; a space to which they might later return. The Fulbe Djelgobe and Gaobe both used the same word, *wuro*, for what I refer to as the household. On the other hand, the Fulbe Liptako, when referring to what I call the household, used the word *baade*.

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<sup>1</sup> Dupire (1970:86) states that the word *wuro* stems from the root *wur* = to live, and means those who live together.

### *Fulbe housing*

In my research sample, a *wuro* or *baade* consisted of homesteads, *cuudi* (sing. *suudu*)<sup>2</sup>, which were either houses made of mud bricks (*suudu lofal*) or tents made of mats (*suudu tabermao*). Some authors, particularly those describing the Fulbe WoDaaBe, emphasise the importance of the strict arrangement of huts or tents in a north-south direction, according to seniority in the household, with the calf rope separating the female and the male sphere (Stenning 1959; Swift *et al.* 1984; Dupire 1970). Among the Fulbe in this research area no such arrangement could be observed, although all entrances faced south to prevent strong winds and rains from entering the hut.

Tents were constructed and owned by women alone, while mud-brick houses were the property of men. The bed and shelves, the only furniture in a Pullo house or tent, were the property of women in all Fulbe groups studied. They were usually given to a woman by her mother as part of the dowry for her first marriage.

Among the Djelgobe in Ngoundam none of the households had a mud-brick house. When household heads went on transhumance they usually left with the whole family, taking their tents with them.

Among the Gaobe of Banguil, six of the eleven household heads owned mud-brick houses. Nevertheless, every woman made mats for constructing tents. Three of those households lived in mud-brick houses only during the rainy season; the remainder of the year they lived in tents. The women of those three households that lived in mud-brick houses all year round, still constructed half a tent inside the house as it was considered to be something of beauty. Aside from this, many mats were still needed for the dowry of daughters, who might not live in a mud-brick house once they got married.

Among the Gaobe of Aliakoum only one household head, the village deputy, had a mud-brick house. All the other households were living in tents.

Among the Liptako of Baaga, who had long been sedentary, all those sampled lived in mud-brick houses. Liptako women did not even know how to weave the mats needed to make a tent. Liptako men usually went on transhumance without taking their wives with them. Once in the bush the men often constructed their own small shelters.

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<sup>2</sup> *Suudu* can also be used in a genealogical sense, referring to kin groups (Riesman 1977; Stenning 1959).

None of the Fulbe men in the sample constructed their mud-brick houses themselves. They paid Bella or Rimaibe to make the mud-bricks and build the entire hut, including the straw roof. Sometimes Rimaibe helped their former masters without payment in cash, but received 'customary' reciprocal help, i.e. herding. Fulbe women, who were generally responsible for the interior of the homestead, contributed to the construction to an extent, in that they plastered the interior walls of the hut.

Every Gaobe and Djelgobe woman in the sample constructed her first tent when she moved to her first husband's compound. To build a tent, first the scaffolding was made with between 38 and 42 branches of long bent wood. Informants said that in former times the wood was cut by relatives of the bride. During the time of the study, however, most women had to buy wood because it had become rare in the research area and they feared being fined by the environmental services for cutting it as live wood. Per branch, the wood cost between 25 and 50 FCFA<sup>3</sup>. The mats to cover this 'scaffolding' were usually made by the women themselves. Only when they could not manufacture enough, or when their husbands were willing to contribute financially, did they buy mats at the market.

Three different mats were needed for the tent. The longest and most expensive ones were the three *japeho* to be put vertically over the wooden scaffolding. Each cost around 20,000 FCFA. Two mats, called *sutiyo*, were put horizontally, one on each side of the tent. These cost around 12,000 FCFA each. Then *fedo* mats were placed over the *japeho* mats to protect them from the wind and rain. The more *fedo* that were added, the better insulated and more resistant the tent was. Each *fedo* cost around 10,000 FCFA. In total a tent could easily cost more than 100,000 FCFA if all the mats were bought. Even if the mats were all made by the women themselves, the raw material used to make them seemed to be almost equally expensive<sup>4</sup>. The grass used (a variety of *Andropogon*) had also become rare in the research area and again had to be bought (CRPA 1994:19). The thread made of roselle (*Hibiscus sabdariffa*) also had to be purchased, or alternatively the stalks had to be bought and made into thread. Above all, the mats were very time consuming to make. When women visited each other they usually took part in the host's weaving, spinning the thread or preparing the grass. Nevertheless, there was no real form

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<sup>3</sup> 1000 FCFA are equivalent to 10 French Franc, 10 French Francs are approximately £1.

<sup>4</sup> It was impossible to quantify the costs as women bought the raw materials in small amounts, whenever they had the cash.

of organised mutual help in mat-making among the Fulbe women, other than between a daughter and her mother or mother-in-law.

**Plate 4.1: Women weaving mats for their tents, Aliakoum**



**Plate 4.2: The 'scaffolding' of a Fulbe tent, Banguil**



Plate 4.3: Fulbe Gaobe tent, Aliakoum



Plate 4.4: The 'fenced' compound of a Liptako, Baaga



For every ever-married woman (including those who were divorced and lived temporarily without a husband) there was one house or tent; no two married women – not even co-wives – ever shared the same lodging (cf. Dupire 1970; de Bruijn 1997). If a Pullo Djelgobe or Gaobe woman divorced she took her tent and the bed with her, and her husband was left with no shelter unless he had constructed a mud-brick house for himself. A Liptako woman would only leave with her bed.

Gaobe and Liptako generally preferred mud-brick houses to tents; men, because they did not have to sleep outside when they divorced; women, because they could house their mats and preserve them longer. There was also social prestige attached to owning and living in a mud-brick house.

### *The problem of defining the Fulbe household*

In Chapter 3 I outlined the problems linked to the 'household' concept in research. Fulbe households in this sample were fluid in composition and function over time and space. The Fulfulde terms *baade* or *wuro* give little information on consumption, production or residence units (cf. Randall & Hampshire 1995), nor for that matter on kinship. In the following, I present some baseline information about the Fulbe households in the research area.

The household head in Liptako society was the *babaade*. Djelgobe and Gaobe referred to a household head as *jom wuro*, the master of the household. In all three groups the household head's wife was called *jom suudu*, the mistress of the house (cf. Maliki 1988). The different titles reflected the different domains attributed to each gender, and showed where their respective decision-making spheres lie. A woman, in all three sub-ethnic groups, was primarily responsible for the house (*suudu*). Although men were usually responsible for the decisions that influence the household as a whole (*wuro/baade*), they had little say in domestic affairs and economic activities that were carried out at the *suudu* level (cf. Dupire 1970:96; Castle 1992; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:150; de Bruijn 1997). A Fulbe household head thus rarely had the authority to preside over all production and consumption issues within the household. Even though he was usually informed about any major decisions taken, there were further levels of subordinate decision-making where a household head was powerless to interfere (cf. Momsen 1991:51; Whitehead 1994). This separation of male and female arenas in everyday life, inherent in many pastoral and non-pastoral groups, provided the women in my sample with a degree of freedom (cf. Riesman 1977:209; Dahl 1987b; Talle 1988:182).

Production strategies can only be understood in relation to each individual's rights and obligations within the household. In the Fulbe households studied, each household member had a range of rights and obligations determined not only by gender, but also by the hierarchies within each gender group, based on factors such as age, social status and

wealth (cf. Dupire 1970; Castle 1992). The rights and obligations also changed depending on household demography.

Every individual had certain financial obligations towards the household. Once these were fulfilled, the individual could dispose of his or her income, as he or she preferred. The Fulbe household was thus not a community of common property. Property was strictly allocated to individuals, although the allocation of usufruct rights differed from ownership rights (cf. Smith Oboler 1996). Pooling of income or resources was in most cases done only to the extent of securing the immediate subsistence needs of all members of the household. Accumulation of wealth beyond this point took place on an individual basis (cf. Langlois 1991:196).

Within those Fulbe households sampled, different individuals took up different production strategies. This had the potential to cause conflict and create tension, mainly over the allocation of time and energy to different activities and the distribution of resources; e.g. the competition for milk between milk selling and live animal production.

Thus, the Fulbe households in the research sample cannot be considered homogeneous units of consumption and production where each member contributes according to his/her capabilities and where produce or profit are shared evenly, as is suggested by economic models (e.g. Becker 1976; cf. Moock 1986; Dwyer & Bruce 1988).

For the purpose of analysing aspects of production or consumption, some French anthropologists split the household into units based on labour activities, for example, agricultural, pastoral or cooking units (e.g. Claude *et al.* 1991). However, in the sampled households such 'units' were frequently reshuffled during a single calendar year. To give a few examples: as some household members left on transhumance, others had to reorganise their labour; some members herded their animals together, but cultivated separate fields, sharing pastoral activities but not agricultural; some cultivated together but divided the harvest and had two independent consumption units, controlled by separate household members. The use of units based on labour activities alone is therefore highly problematic in the context of the Fulbe households sampled.

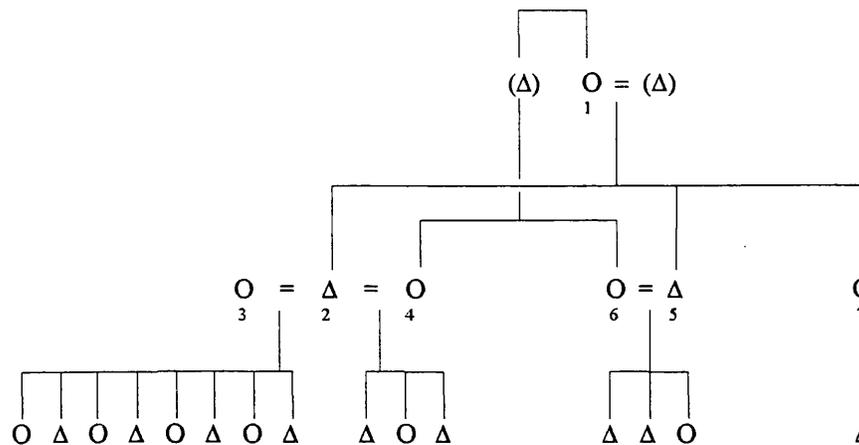
Of the 72 households that were initially visited during the pilot study, less than half, 33, were jointly residential, consumption and production units for the whole research year.

The following example illustrates just how flexible Fulbe households can be:

**Box 4.1: A household in Ngoundam**

Δ=male

O=female



*Idrissa (No. 2), the eldest son of Ranata (no.1), was the household head. He was married polygynously. His second wife was the sister of the wife of Hassane, his brother (no.5). Both wives were daughters of their husband's mother's brother.*

*The husband of Ranata lived with his second wife in another village and only came occasionally to visit her. Many years ago she had chosen to live with her two sons.*

*The animals of the whole household were kept as one herd throughout the research year. The herd included animals of Idrissa and Hassane and their wives and children, as well as Ranata's animals. There were also the animals of Ranata's eldest daughter(no. 7) in the herd. She had married a man from Niger, but had not taken her animals.*

*The herd was taken care of by Idrissa and Hassane, but Idrissa's eldest son herded the animals in turn. Sometimes Idrissa's eldest son, who was 16 years old, would sometimes help with herding. In the dry season, the household was together as a single residential unit in Ngoundam, with each woman having her own house, and all houses being constructed close to each other.*

*In the rainy season, Idrissa, the household head, went on transhumance for 3 months with all the household's animals. He took with him his wives and their children.*

*Hassane remained in Ngoundam and cultivated. Ranata and Idrissa's eldest daughter stayed with Hassane in Ngoundam. During that time those who stayed behind in Ngoundam had no milk, no millet and hardly any cash or food (no animals to sell either, as they were all on transhumance). Hassane therefore decided to take his wife and his children to his wife's mother, where they stayed for 4 months.*

*Ranata's eldest daughter was married in Niger, but her husband was beating her constantly, so she ran away from him to seek refuge in this, her brothers' household. The brothers took pity on their sister and allowed her to stay with them, together with her baby son. She constructed her tent next to Hassane's wife. After 5 months of negotiation with her husband, she eventually went back to him.*

*Ranata together with Hassane, his wife and their children could be considered as one consumption unit within the household, with Hassane's wife cooking for all of them. During her stay in Ngoundam, Ranata's eldest daughter also mostly ate with them. Being the sister-in-law of Idrissa's and Hassane's wives, and thus higher in household hierarchy, she never prepared food herself, but sometimes helped processing grain<sup>5</sup>. The wife of Hassane was sometimes helped by her sister (no.4). Also, Hassane shared part of the millet he had cultivated with his brother Idrissa.*

*Despite being co-wives, Idrissa's two wives (no.3 and 4) never prepared food in turn. Their relationship to one another was not a harmonious one. Each wife prepared separately and Idrissa ate with each of them in turn.*

This example shows how production and consumption units can change significantly, even over the period of a single 'normal' year. And yet, although members of this household were at times physically separated, had diverse obligations towards the household, and rarely pooled all their resources, they still considered themselves as a single household.

For the purpose of this study, households were therefore defined according to individuals' own perceptions of who belonged to their *baade* or *wuro*, irrespective of kinship and any temporary changes in residence, production and consumption units over the year.

### ***Household size***

Households were generally patrilocal and comprised up to three generations. Sometimes distant relatives, elders, widows, divorced sisters of the household head and fostered children were also household members (cf. Hampshire 1998).

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<sup>5</sup> Women who went back to their parent's or brother's compounds after a divorce, or while separating from their husband, had a much higher status within their native compound than those women who had married into it from outside. Usually, in these situations, the sisters-in-law were likely to do the cooking and most of the domestic work.

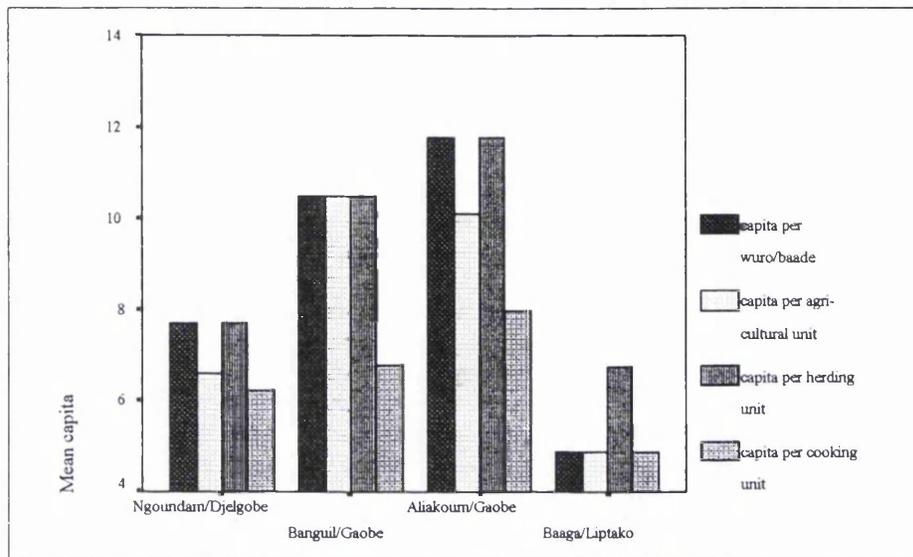
The mean household sizes presented in Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1 are based on the structure of the households in the sample when all household members were present. These numbers therefore represent a *de jure* maximum and not a *de facto* observed. During the research year most of the households temporarily split up; some members went on transhumance, some on seasonal labour migration and others left the household for a variety of reasons.

**Table 4.1: Mean size of household, pastoral, agricultural and cooking unit in the sample villages**

Village	Mean household size in capita ± SD	Mean household size in AEU <sup>6</sup> ± SD	Mean size of agricultural unit in capita ± SD	Mean size of agricultural unit in AEU ± SD	Mean size of pastoral unit in capita ± SD	Mean size of pastoral unit in AEU ± SD	Mean size of cooking unit in capita ± SD	Size of cooking unit in AEU ± SD
Ngoundam	7.7 ± 5 (n=11)	4.8 ± 2.7 (n=11)	6.6 ± 1.3 (n=5)	4.4 ± 0.8 (n=5)	7.7 ± 5 (n=11)	4.8 ± 2.7 (n=11)	6.2 ± 2.3 (n=14)	3.9 ± 1.6 (n=14)
Banguil	10.5 ± 7.9 (n=11)	6.8 ± 4.8 (n=11)	10.5 ± 7.9 (n=11)	6.8 ± 4.7 (n=11)	10.5 ± 7.9 (n=11)	6.8 ± 4.8 (n=11)	6.8 ± 5.6 (n=17)	4.4 ± 3.0 (n=17)
Aliakoum	11.8 ± 5 (n=6)	7.04 ± 1.9 (n=6)	10.1 ± 5.4 (n=7)	6.0 ± 2.8 (n=7)	11.8 ± 5 (n=6)	7 ± 1.9 (n=6)	8 ± 2.6 (n=7)	5.2 ± 2 (n=7)
Baaga	4.9 ± 2.8 (n=11)	3.3 ± 1.8 (n=11)	4.9 ± 2.8 (n=11)	3.3 ± 1.8 (n=11)	6.75 ± 4.5 (n=8)	4.6 ± 2.2 (n=8)	4.9 ± 2.8 (n=11)	3.3 ± 1.8 (n=11)
Total	8.3 ± 5.9 (n=39)	5.3 ± 3.4 (n=39)	8 ± 5.8 (n=34)	5.2 ± 3.4 (n=34)	9 ± 6 (n=36)	5.8 ± 3.4 (n=36)	6.4 ± 3.9 (n=49)	4.2 ± 2.3 (n=49)

<sup>6</sup> One AEU (adult equivalent unit) is calculated as follows: a man or woman over 15 years of age counts as 1 AEU; 10-14 years as 0.8 AEU; 5-9 years as 0.25 AEU; 0-4 years as 0 AEU (Crawford 1982). Other studies use a different calculation: e.g. Thébaud (1998) takes every child below the age of 12 as 0.75 AEU and everybody else as 1 AEU. The calculations I use do not give an indication of food needs based on estimated basic metabolic rates (WHO 1985), but rather reflect labour availability in the households studied. Nevertheless, due to the gender division of labour, the figures given here are still only relative.

Figure 4.1: Mean size of household, pastoral, agricultural and cooking unit in the sample villages



The average household size for all four villages was 8.3 people, or 5.3 AEU. Households were biggest in Aliakoum (Table 4.1, Figure 4.1). It is surprising that the Liptako households in the sample were the smallest despite being the most sedentary and involved most in agriculture (see Chapter 7). One would normally expect these sedentary Liptako households to be larger than Djelgobe households, and the same size or maybe even bigger than Gaobe households. In the demographic survey by Hampshire (1998) the mean household size among Liptako in Baaga was 7 ( $\pm 4.8$ ), which is bigger than my average of 4.9, but still smaller than the means of the other villages.

Figure 4.1 shows clearly that Baaga was the only village in which the mean herding unit was bigger than the mean household unit. In fact, only in Baaga did members of different households herd their animals together, particularly during the rainy season, freeing labour for agricultural production, and to a lesser extent in the dry season, allowing men to go on seasonal labour migration (cf. Dupire 1962b; Swift *et al.* 1984). The cooking units were the smallest units in all villages, as women rarely co-operated in this domain.

In contrast, if Djelgobe had enough cattle and did not need to farm, they usually preferred to live in smaller groups. Fulbe Gaobe and Liptako generally preferred larger households, enabling them to diversify their income sources, reducing the risk of production conflicts and tensions (cf. Dahl & Hjort 1976; Toulmin 1992:19; Hampshire

1998; Mortimore 1998) and minimising demographic risks, such as migration or death (cf. Mencher 1988; Mortimore 1998:99). In terms of agricultural production a larger household can benefit from economics of scale. Households, which are rich in cattle tend to have more members than those which are poor in cattle as a large household usually increases the ability to acquire and maintain productive assets<sup>7</sup>. In the present study, all villages included, household size in terms of Adult Equivalent Units (AEU) showed a significant increase with livestock holdings (measured in tropical livestock units (TLU)<sup>8</sup>) (Linear regression:  $r^2=0.40$ ;  $p<0.001$ ,  $F_{1,35}= 23.13$ ).

However, all Fulbe in the present sample were also well aware of a labour incentive problem. Briefly described, once a labourer no longer fully benefits from the profits of his or her work, because it is either shared with other household members or taken by the household head, he or she will not work as hard as if it was to his or her own benefit (cf. Sen 1975 in Toulmin 1992:261). Labour incentive problems were sometimes given as a reason for the splitting of a household, in all research villages.

Household composition is not only based on demographic considerations, but also depends on the understanding of the individuals concerned. For example, one reason frequently mentioned was that women of the same household did not get along with each other, and men thought it better to split their households than to allow this situation to continue unabated (cf. Hampshire 1998).

## Social status and lifecycle

Within their household units, Fulbe women's and men's socio-economic status and expected roles changed with age, and on three important occasions in particular: at the time of their first marriage, the birth of their first child and their attainment of old age. In this section I particularly concentrate on women's lifecycle, as it is central to many of the research questions posed. Women's rights and obligations in matters such as

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<sup>7</sup> Toulmin's (1992) study of Bambara communities in Mali found considerable advantage of households being large for the above mentioned reasons. In her sample, large household size and herd size are correlated, and there is a positive correlation between wealth per person and household size (Toulmin 1992:46, 175). This is, however, not a general rule. For example, in Mortimore's study (1998) households richer in livestock, income and grain, were actually smaller than poorer households (*ibid.*:45).

<sup>8</sup> Tropical Livestock units (TLU) combine various livestock into one standard unit based on weight or milk yields. There is variation in calculation. In this study camels are multiplied by 1, cattle by 0.7, sheep/goats by 0.1; 1 TLU representing approximately 250 kg of weight (cf. Dahl & Hjort 1976; Jahnke 1982; Swift *et al.* 1984; Homewood & Rogers 1987; Fratkin & Roth 1990).

marriage and divorce will be discussed. Most of these factors were similar, if not equal, among all three Fulbe groups studied here. Where differences occur they will be noted.

### *Marriage*

In this research area, as elsewhere among most Fulbe groups, girls were married, engaged or at least promised from early childhood onwards, although they did not usually move to their husband's compound (patrilocal marriage rules) until they reached sexual maturity. The first months in these new surroundings were, in many ways, the most difficult ones in a young woman's life. Being young and low in social standing in the compound of her in-laws, a newly-wedded woman had to do everything asked of her to show respect to her in-laws and her husband. She did most of the domestic work, without the support of anyone she had previously been able to call upon (e.g. her sisters and her mother). By taking on board a larger than normal workload she gave her mother-in-law time to engage more in the life of the wider social group. If her husband had married brothers living in the same compound, the newly-wedded woman could share certain tasks with their wives (e.g. cooking for the mother-in law), but being the newcomer and probably one of the youngest women, she first had to try to gain their respect. At this point in her life a woman was most secluded. She was not supposed to frequent the markets or even go to neighbouring compounds; both were considered unseemly.

The first marriage of Fulbe in the research area was usually arranged by the parents of the couple, particularly by their fathers. The ideal marriage for all three Fulbe groups was between cross or parallel cousins. If among cross or parallel cousins no marriage partner could be found, other relatives were considered as marriage partners. This preferred marriage pattern for first marriages applies to many rural Fulbe groups in West Africa (e.g. Stenning 1959; Dupire 1970; Riesman 1977; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995; Burnham 1996; Hagberg 1998). However, individuals were often related to each other in various ways, due to the endogamous nature of their marriage patterns.

44 women in the sample were asked about their marriage history. The survey revealed that out of all their first husbands, only 8 were non-relatives. Some authors emphasise that this preference for marriage among close kin stems from the desire to strengthen family ties (Riesman 1977). In the research sample, economic incentives to keep wealth, i.e. cattle, within the local descent group were just as important (cf. Dupire 1970:506;

Burnham 1996; Hagberg 1998). In fact, a variety of political and economic factors may equally have influenced marital relations (cf. Burnham 1987:43).

Some women in all research villages preferred marriages between kin, arguing that then they were not complete strangers when they entered their new surrounding and, thus, they had more social security. Other women argued that a marriage among kin was problematic once a woman wanted a divorce, as it might result in a much larger family dispute.

The opinions on whether marriage among kin was desirable or not, were strongly influenced by what had happened recently in the respondent's village or among their family members. For example, in Aliakoum most women surveyed were against marriage among kin, but in the course of the discussions all referred to one particular incident that had recently transpired in the village: a woman had wanted to divorce her husband for reasons that were acceptable to the other Fulbe women, but her father would not allow it because the husband was close kin.

Only rarely were girls asked for their opinion about their father's choice of groom. Most of the time, first marriages were arranged when girls were still in their early childhood (cf. Dupire 1963; 1970). The usual way for a woman to show her disagreement with the proposed marriage was to run away from her husband, once they had married. Her relatives, in particular her father and/or brothers or uncles, usually tried to negotiate and make the marriage work, but if this was impossible, women could divorce. Many women expressed an opinion that when a girl was forced to marry someone against her will, divorce was frequently the result. Only after a divorce from their first husband were women generally free to choose their subsequent marriage partners for themselves.

Among the Fulbe of this study, a mother could sometimes reject or at least influence her husband's choice of groom for their daughter:

***Box 4.2: Mother's disapproval of daughter's marriage partner***

*In Baaga a mother refused to agree to the marriage of her 14-year old daughter to an elderly man, a non-relative from a neighbouring village. He had offered the father a considerable bride price. Even the girl had agreed to the marriage. And yet, the mother would not "allow her child to be sold". She considered the girl too young to be married,*

*certainly to an old man who already had a wife. This resulted in a big family row which lasted for several weeks but the father eventually gave in and the girl was not married.*

It was not only the parents who controlled the choice of a marriage partner for their daughter, but their daughter's brothers also had some influence, particularly for her second and subsequent marriages. Once a woman's father grew old, one of her brothers gradually became the household head<sup>9</sup> (cf. Dupire 1963:57). In the case of a divorced woman who went back to her natal family following the break-up of her marriage, her brothers then took on the responsibility of arranging for their sister's divorce and subsequent marriage. A woman, who was dependent on this fall-back option would always try to keep good relations with the responsible members of her family (in particular her elder brothers and father). Thus, she in general accepted her brothers' will to a degree in numerous matters, but she also had the right to refuse it, if she so wished.

### ***Endogamy***

Fulbe marriages in the sample were usually group endogamous (cf. Stenning 1959:41 *et seq.*). Marriages between Fulbe and non-Fulbe (including Rimaibe) or between Fulbe of different sub-ethnic origin rarely took place and were generally frowned upon by both Fulbe men and women alike. In the whole sample not one person was married to a Pullo from another sub-ethnic group. Only two sampled were married to non-Fulbe. This trend was confirmed by a demographic survey of the same area (Hampshire 1998). The following examples illustrate how marriages to non-Fulbe were generally spurned, but nevertheless occasionally took place:

#### ***Box 4.3: 'Wrong' husbands***

*A woman in Banguil married a man from a local sedentary non-Fulbe group, a Gourmantche, during this field study. Previously, she had been married to a Pullo, but he had permanently out-migrated to Côte d'Ivoire, without taking care of her and their three children. During his absence she gave birth to an illegitimate child. After a divorce from her Fulbe husband she agreed to marry this Gourmantche, although she had to accept becoming a second wife and suffer the disapproval of her brothers, who*

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<sup>9</sup> Usually the first son becomes the household head, once a father gets too old. However, there were two households in the sample where the second son became household head. Seniority is important but capability also plays a role.

*were not happy about her choice. Her chances of finding a respectable Fulbe man willing to marry her under these circumstances were, however, not good.*

*A young girl in Aliakoum became the mother of twins before she was married. Her father subsequently beat her and kept her under strong supervision - she was prevented from leaving the compound at any time. Although she was fully aware of the shame she had brought upon the household, she refused to reveal the identity of the children's father. A local Gourmantche man insisted that he was the father and proposed marriage. Yet the father of the girl refused. He said that he preferred to suffer the shame of having a daughter with illegitimate children to that of having one married to a non-Fulbe.*

### ***Polygyny***

Most households were found to be monogamous. 13% of the women (n = 92) were married polygamously at the time of the survey. The distribution of polygynous households per research village was: two households, or 4 out of 25 women in Ngoundam; two households, or 6 out of 32 women in Banguil; one household, or 2 of 18 women in Aliakoum; and none out of 16 women in Baaga.

Five out of the six men who married polygynously were among the richest in the sample. This may indicate that only wealthy men could afford a second wife with the suggestion that poor men could not pay the bridewealth twice (cf. Dupire 1970:82). However, the bridewealth in this research area was rather low (see Chapter 5) and the more likely obstacle to taking a second wife was rather the limited ability of most household heads in this area to procure food and clothing in sufficient quantity for more than one wife and her children.

While among east African pastoralist groups polygyny is frequently practised (e.g. Talle 1988), it has been argued that Fulbe have fewer polygynous marriages as a consequence of their pastoral economy. Dupire, in her comparative study of Fulbe social systems, observed that the more a Fulbe group is attached to the pastoral way of life, the fewer polygynous marriages occur, and that polygyny increases with sedentarisation (Dupire 1970:80). In a pastoral society where women tend not to engage in agricultural work, nor in trade, but only in the management of milk and dairy products, for a man to be married to more than one woman is not necessarily advantageous from an economic point of

view (Burnham 1987:46-47<sup>10</sup>). Co-wives will always be competing over a limited resource, namely the milking rights to their husband's cows (Stenning 1959; Riesman 1977; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:371 *et seq.*). Sharing domestic tasks so that each woman can diversify her activities (Toulmin 1992:245; Monimart 1989) was not seen as an advantage among those Fulbe women I interviewed.

In my sample, in three of the five polygynous households, co-wives did not co-operate at all; they did not even take turns in cooking. It is somewhat surprising that among the most Islamised, sedentary and agriculturally-oriented Fulbe group in the sample, the Liptako, polygyny was the least frequent. My own sample size is too small to make any general statements on this observation, but the large scale demographic survey of the same area found that of all married men 9.1% of the Djelgobe, 6.3% of the Gaobe and 8.7% of the Liptako were polygynous (Hampshire 1998). Thus economic orientation of the household –agriculture or pastoralism - may not have such a strong impact on decisions whether to take a second wife as could be expected.

Although none of the women who were married polygynously in the sample spoke ill of their co-wives, not one of them wanted their daughters to share the same fate. Nor did they like being in a polygynous marriage. They justified this dislike not only in economic terms but also in emotional terms for reasons of jealousy towards co-wives. Many monogamously married women said that such a state would be a reason for divorce, should their husbands dare to take a second wife. It was hard to establish whether a divorce would in fact easily be obtained for this reason alone.

### ***Birth of children***

A woman usually went back to her own mother's compound when she gave birth for the first time and she stayed there for several months after the birth. In her own parent's compound she had a much stronger social standing. Once the woman returned to her husband's compound with her first child she was usually less secluded. However, other factors that will be discussed in Chapter 8 also contributed to the level of seclusion. With every child born to a woman, her status rose. A woman might be allocated more cattle to be milked for her if available, she was allowed to frequent the market, and she was freer

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<sup>10</sup> Burnham states that economic considerations are often paramount in the decision to take a second or third wife, but polygyny may also serve to symbolise high status (Burnham 1987:46-47)

to express her opinion vis-à-vis other women. Furthermore, once she had grown-up daughters or daughters-in-law, they were obliged to help her in domestic tasks.

### *Divorce*

As discussed in Chapter 1, divorce rates are usually high among Fulbe (Stenning 1958; Dupire 1963), although de Bruijn & van Dijk (1995) have argued that this easy divorce situation has changed in recent years due to impoverishment.

In my research villages divorce was perceived to have been more frequent in former times. When discussing the situation today, the general perception was much the same: none of the women reported seeing divorce as being any more difficult than before, in spite of any possible changes in social values or increasing economic hardship (cf. Hampshire 1998). A woman who had married according to Islamic law had the freedom to leave her husband and this was sanctioned through the rules of society (cf. Stenning 1959:173). Only when the bride price paid was very high, did women find it difficult to leave their husbands, as their family were rarely able to repay it (cf. Toulmin 1992; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:290). But then, none of the women sampled wanted to get divorced from a rich husband, as he provided them with food, milk, clothes, and money to make their mats, decorate their houses and buy silver jewellery for themselves and their daughters. Through their material wealth, including their high bride price, they gained considerable prestige in front of other women.

*“A Pullo woman marries where she gets milk”* (Stenning 1959:188). *“A wife expects from her husband milk; a husband expects from his wife children. The whole stability of Wodaabe marriage, and the economic efficiency of the family of which it is the origin, is bound up with the fulfilment of these expectations.”* (Stenning 1959:124).

Although Stenning’s statements seem somewhat oversimplified, they are nevertheless well-founded. This research revealed that economic security in a marriage, not necessarily limited to milk rights, but to sufficient food and clothes provided by the husband in order to not be ashamed in front of other women, was of primary importance for women in all villages sampled. Likewise, a man’s demands were first and foremost for his wife to bear children, in particular sons (cf. Burnham 1987:49). Women were just as dependent on having sons as men were, not only to be helped by their daughters-in-law in domestic tasks, but also when they were old, as women and men alike lived with

an adult son who had to take care of them. For both men and women, sons were the primary source of future economic security<sup>11</sup>.

These quotes from women in the research area, and an example from Banguil, taken together, illustrate the full importance of the economic security partners provide for one another in Fulbe marriage in the research sample:

*“A woman needs to bear children and a husband must provide well for his wife.”*

(Liptako)

*“A man has to give his wife clothes, so that she is not embarrassed in front of other women.”* (Liptako)

*“If a woman does not have children, her husband will eventually divorce or take another wife.”* (Gaobe)

***Box 4.4: Importance of children***

*A young woman in Banguil was very upset, and probably very depressed, after the fourth miscarriage she had suffered. Although her husband seemed to be very fond of her, she was extremely worried that he would take a second wife, or rather, as he was not very wealthy, divorce her to marry someone else. Her chances of finding a good husband after being divorced for assumed sterility, were very bad. Many women seemed to mock her for her inability to fulfil her primary marital obligation to her husband (and to herself).*

Dupire (1970:212) argues that for some Fulbe groups, only after the birth of the first child has a husband the right to demand exclusive access to his wife’s sexuality. Before being married and until giving birth for the first time, women seem to have had a certain freedom to choose their sexual partners in the Fulbe groups Dupire compared. She suggests that Islam had not yet restricted the sexual liberty of these groups in the 1960s.

Such sexual liberty of Fulbe women was not confirmed in the research area. However, there seemed to be a discrepancy between moral codes and actual adherence in practice. Girls were supposed to be virgins when married for the first time. A woman’s primary duty was considered to be to her husband, never contradicting him and always being

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<sup>11</sup> The importance of adult sons is common in many societies cross-culturally (e.g. Talle 1988; Cain 1988; Greenhalgh 1988).

faithful. The lengths to which some men went to ensure the fidelity of their wives - e.g. some women were forbidden to construct their tents when their husband was migrating or on transhumance so that they could not receive lovers there - and the eagerness of women to talk about affairs, implies that these publicly expressed ideals were not always successfully maintained in private. This is borne out by the commonplace stories of jealous husbands stabbing their wives' lovers. Although difficult to ascertain, it seemed that Liptako women in Baaga were more restricted and influenced by ideals of faithfulness due to their somewhat stronger adherence to Islamic ideals.

By contrast, women usually tolerated their husband's infidelities as long as this did not jeopardise the economic security he provided for his wife(s). A husband's infidelity was never considered grounds for divorce among the Fulbe women sampled. The reasons mentioned by Fulbe women in the study area for wanting a divorce from their husbands were: failing to provide the girls and women of the household with clothes for particular occasions and with sufficient food, favouring a co-wife, or the use of severe physical violence against a wife.

Reasons for a Pullo man in the study area to want a divorce were: a wife's real or assumed sterility, incompatibility with her co-wives, insubordination to her husband, acts bringing him into public disrepute, and sometimes her infidelity.

### ***Old age***

Once a woman was old, her daughters-in-law did most, if not all of the domestic work, leaving her free to visit other compounds and become more involved in the social life of the rest of the community. A few old but still healthy women sometimes went to the market for the mere pleasure of socialising, something unthinkable for women of child-bearing age. In general, older women were usually less criticised for behaviour that was frowned upon when shown by younger women. This will become more apparent in the course of this study.

### **“Laawol *Pulaaku*”, the Fulbe way**

By far the greatest influence on *pulaaku*, the Fulbe way, in this research area was Islam. The Fulbe in the northern part of Burkina Faso considered themselves as both Moslem and Fulbe at the same time. To them the two formed an inseparable identity. Islam was

considered by the Fulbe as an integral part of *pulaaku*. Being a Pullo inevitably meant being a Moslem (cf. Burnham 1996:48). This was more so among Fulbe Liptako than among Fulbe Djelgobe and Gaobe, although this is more an impression based on historical facts and observation of daily, casual behaviour, than anything I can determine in concrete acts<sup>12</sup>.

In all villages it was difficult at all times during the field study to separate Islam and *pulaaku* in discussions about culture and all its social manifestations. Very often, when asked whether particular expressions of their culture (e.g. inheritance rules) were based on *pulaaku* or Islamic rules, informants were not able to make a distinction and, more important, did not consider this distinction to be an important issue (cf. Burnham 1996).

If Islam has indeed been fully integrated into the concepts of *pulaaku* then the two have to be treated as a single unit. To what extent this amalgamation of Islam and *pulaaku* has been a historical development, and to what degree it has been encouraged in recent years by modernisation, impoverishment and various other external factors, is very much open to debate (cf. Burnham 1996; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1996).

### *The cultural flexibility of pulaaku*

Riesman (1977) states that if one acts completely in accordance with *pulaaku* it would mean that one has to neglect any “natural” needs of human existence, in other words “*being entirely cultural and independent of nature*” (Riesman 1977:129). Clearly this would not be possible all the time; therefore there are spheres of life when a Pullo can let the mask fall.

The respondents in my research sample emphasised that while the codes and rules of *pulaaku* particularly applied to behaviour within the confines of the homestead, once a Pullo leaves his own domain - e.g. to spend time in a Rimaibe village or, especially, to go on migration - he may behave in a slightly different fashion, in a manner not in full accordance with *pulaaku*. As an example of this change in behaviour given by informants: away from his village a man could eat in front of others, while in his own

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<sup>12</sup> For example, in the Liptako village there is a mosque, while in the other villages men and women pray in front of their houses. This may be purely due to the fact that Liptako have long been sedentary.

All Fulbe groups fasted during Ramadan and prayed five times a day. But, in daily behaviour, for example, Djelgobe women were much more relaxed sitting with their skirts up than Gaobe and especially Liptako, who would always be careful covering their legs. Djelgobe and Gaobe women were also somewhat freer in their ways to express themselves vis-à-vis men.

village he was not supposed to eat in front of women. Or, a man would not be able to do certain work in his home-village or adjacent areas, and yet, once he was far away from his home area, i.e. on migration, he felt free to do the sort of work that suited his situation best, whether 'p.c.' (*pulaaku*-correct) or not.

In general as a concept, *pulaaku* seemed to be rather flexible. Not only did some components of the code vary according to time and place, and to particular individuals or households, but often these codes were given more lipservice than adherence in practice. This is clearly evident when looking at the socio-economic behaviour of Fulbe in the research area.

### ***'Traditional' production strategies?***

Concerning production, all Fulbe in the research area regarded themselves, at least theoretically, primarily as pastoralists, more so in the Djelgobe and Gaobe villages than in the Liptako village, where agriculture had been practised for a long time. Most other production strategies were considered inappropriate for a Pullo and only taken up due to recent socio-economic changes. This was at least the expressed opinion of the majority of the Fulbe in the research area. However, it was difficult to judge to what extent this was merely a glorification of the Fulbe's past tradition, especially considering the fact that virtually all men in the study sample, at some point in their lives, had taken up economic activities that were considered culturally inappropriate. It was widely accepted that without this diversification of economic strategies, neither herd recovery nor household security could be attained under the present conditions in which most Sahelian Burkinabe Fulbe now find themselves. For many however, non-pastoral activities were not just taken up as a 'means to survival' but as an optimising strategy.

Activities commonly taken up, but potentially frowned upon as contravening *pulaaku*, included agricultural work, seasonal labour migration, cattle trading, and prospecting for gold. Table 4.2 and Figure 4.2 show the economic activities, outside the pastoral sector, that sampled male adult householders had taken up. In this table all economic activities pursued by male informants in the last 10 years are noted, irrespective of the frequency with which the activity was pursued. Multiple answers were possible.

Figure 4.2: Economic activities of male householders (n=74) in all research villages pursued between 1987 and 1996<sup>13</sup>

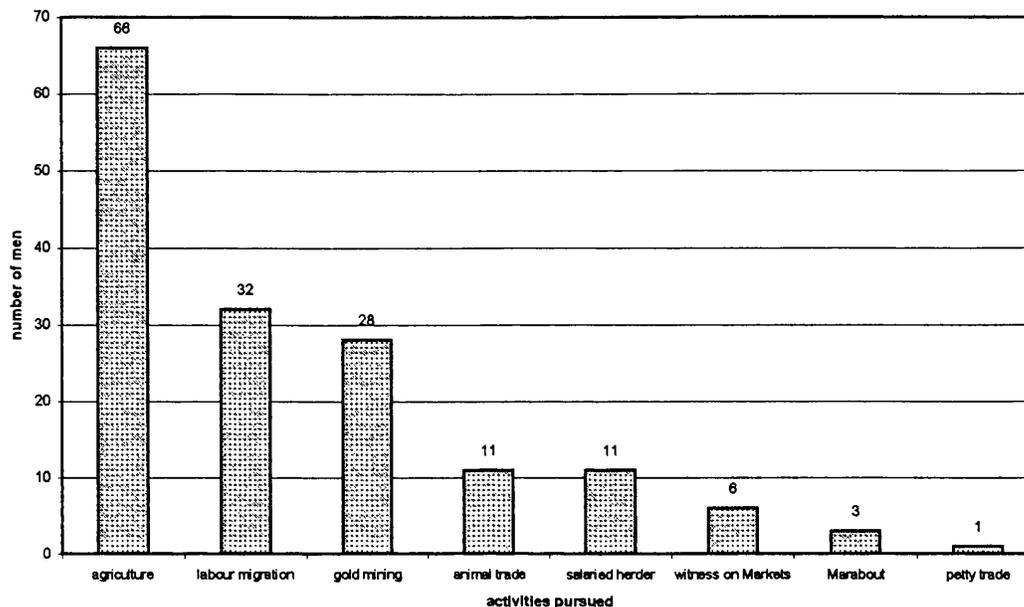


Table 4.2: Economic strategies of male householders (n=74) pursued between 1987 and 1996<sup>14</sup>

Village (number of informants)	Agriculture	Labour migration	Gold mining	Animal trade	Salaried herder	Witness on market	Marabout	Petty trade
Ngoundam (Djélgobe) (n=16)	8 (50%)	2 (12%)	6 (38%)	0	1 (6%)	0	1 (6%)	0
Banguil (Gaobe) (n=28)	28 (100%)	18 (64%)	10 (36%)	10 (36%)	6 (21%)	2 (7%)	0	0
Aliakoum (Gaobe) (n=18)	18 (100%)	7 (39%)	6 (33%)	1 (6%)	3 (17%)	4 (22%)	1 (6%)	1 (6%)
Baaga (Liptako) (n=12)	12 (100%)	5 (43%)	6 (50%)	0	1 (8%)	0	1 (8%)	0
Total (n=74)	66 (89%)	32 (43%)	28 (38%)	11 (16%)	11 (16%)	6 (8%)	3 (4%)	1 (1%)

<sup>13</sup> Although going to gold mines is a form of seasonal labour migration, those two activities are differentiated in Table 4.2 and Graph 4.2. When informants mentioned migration it was not always clear what activity they pursued during that time; often a variety of occupations were taken up. However, gold-mining was a clearly defined activity.

The category 'salaried herder' does not include those who have entrusted animals together with their own animals in one herd. I will call this 'contract herding', discussed in Chapter 6. A salaried herder is one who herds for a regular salary only the animals of someone else.

<sup>14</sup> The number of people who had mentioned pursuing this activity is noted below the activities; percentages per village are in brackets.

Table 4.2 and Figure 4.2 show clearly the diversity of alternative economic activities pursued by Fulbe men, despite the fact that according to *pulaaku* many of these activities were considered inappropriate. The notion that a Fulbe regards himself as someone who only raises cattle is an ideal to which many Fulbe in the sampled households might have aspired, but were rarely able to achieve.

#### *A closer look at production strategies*

**Agriculture:** Most of the Fulbe (89% of all male informants) in the research area practised a significant amount of agriculture. Only among the Djelgobe was there a substantial group (50%), who had never cultivated in the last 10 years (Table 4.2). Djelgobe regarded themselves primarily as pastoralists, wanting to adhere to a purely pastoral way of life if possible, irrespective of the number of cattle they owned. Most other Fulbe in the region accepted that nowadays their subsistence was mainly secured through engaging in agriculture, and therefore they saw themselves primarily as agro-pastoralists (see Chapter 7).

**Seasonal labour migration:** Seasonal labour migration was usually pursued by young men between the age of 20 and 35 (cf. Hampshire 1998). This was by no means a 'new' strategy among the Fulbe studied. Some of the elders revealed that many of them had been on migration themselves when they were young. In former times the preferred destination for migrants was Ghana where many worked for logging companies. At the time of the study most migrants headed for the south-west of Burkina Faso, the capital Ouagadougou or Côte d'Ivoire<sup>15</sup>. Although some migrants stayed for a longer period, most came back for the agricultural season<sup>16</sup>.

The extent to which seasonal labour migration was practised in the research sample varied from village to village. All study villages included, 43% of males had been on migration at some stage in their lives. Whereas labour migration was not as widely practised in Ngoundam as it was in the other villages, in Banguil it was considerable, with nearly two-thirds of male informants having been on migration. This may be due to distant social networks, established by earlier migrants from Banguil, now open to others that have followed their lead. However, cultural differences between the three sub-ethnic

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<sup>15</sup> Breusers' (1998:180) study of migratory movements on the Plateau Central in Burkina Faso also found that the Mossi changed their preferred migration destinations from Ghana to the more profitable Côte d'Ivoire.

<sup>16</sup> This is different from the observations in the Hayre, where migration is stated to be permanent in most cases, thus leading to a disintegration of households (de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:153).

groups may also have played a role. Djelgobe were generally less likely to go on seasonal labour migration than Gaobe or Liptako (cf. Hampshire 1998).

In asserting the cultural ideals of *pulaaku*, elderly men did not always approve of their sons going on seasonal labour migration, where they knew that their sons attempted to find work, for example, as butchers, middlemen for traders, hired herders, or even begging. Nevertheless, labour migration was considered necessary, and sometimes the only way to secure the livelihood of the household (cf. Sawadogo 1996; Thébaud 1998). Even if the migrant did not bring any money back, he lightened the load for the household by not eating from the home cereal stock during his absence (cf. Swift *et al.* 1984). However, migration was not always a last resort, an action taken in distress, but also an optimising strategy (cf. Hampshire 1998). In my study, men from all strata of Fulbe society left for labour migration, rich and poor alike. Some young men who went on migration were not always primarily motivated by economic considerations and went certainly not for the household's collective interest, but for purely personal reasons (cf. Breusers 1998; Hampshire 1998).

Women appeared to have no say in whether their husbands went on labour migration or not. All a Pullo woman could demand was to be left enough millet for herself and her children. In some cases, if her husband did not have the means to support her while he was on migration, she would be taken to her parents who would then take care of her during her husband's absence.

**Work in gold mines:** There are various places in Oudalan, Seno and Sebba, where people can individually prospect for gold. The places most frequently mentioned by the men in the research sample were: Takabangou, for those from Ngoundam and Banguil; Essakane, for those from Aliakoum and Baaga; Hoor<sup>17</sup> and the area around Falagountou, for those from Baaga (see Map 3).

Of all Fulbe men sampled 36% had gone to work in gold mines at least once in the last 10 years. They usually only went to the gold mines for a few weeks at a time during the dry season (cf. Bolwig & Paarup-Laurson 1998; Hampshire 1998). Although Djelgobe did not usually go on seasonal labour migration further away from the area, they did go gold prospecting in similar proportions to the other groups (Table 4.2).

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<sup>17</sup> Hoor<sup>17</sup> could not be found on any official map, therefore it is not on the maps presented in Chapter 2.

The majority of Fulbe only found enough gold to maintain their livelihoods while prospecting. Only few were lucky in their finds and earned enough money to buy extra millet and clothes for the household, or even animals for themselves.

**Animal trade:** Those Fulbe who had sufficient capital, tended to engage in animal trading. Most men in the sample from all three sub-ethnic groups seemed to aspire to be animal traders, but only few were able to start up this activity. Many Fulbe throughout the research area expressed a desire to receive a credit to start animal trading, at least on a small scale; i.e. buying small ruminant stock or cattle in villages or on markets where prices were generally lower (e.g. Tin Akoff, Markoye) and then selling them for a profit on bigger markets (e.g. Gorom Gorom, Dori).

The richest traders in Banguil went as far as Niger to buy cattle or small ruminants and then transported them to the south of Burkina Faso or to Côte d'Ivoire, where prices for cattle were 100 – 150% higher than in the Burkinabe Sahel (Zaal 1998; Quarles van Ufford 1997). It proved very difficult to obtain information on how much a trader could earn through this form of transnational animal commerce. The cattle being traded were usually brought first to Ouagadougou by one or two herders, depending on the size of the herd. For this trip, which took around 6 – 8 days, each herder was paid anything between 12,500 and 20,000 FCFA. From Ouagadougou the cattle were then taken by train or lorry to the south of Burkina Faso or further still to Côte d'Ivoire (cf. Thébaud 1998:46). Despite the fact that these successful traders were engaging in an activity that contravened *pulaaku*, they themselves aspired to some of the highest ideals of *pulaaku* in various other respects (see chapter 8).

**Salaried herders:** If unable to trade in livestock, some Fulbe men transported animals for others, from one market to another, and were paid per head of livestock (e.g. 100-200 FCFA per sheep from Markoye to Gorom Gorom). This market herding was very labour- and time-consuming work and was only taken up when there were enough adult men in the household to fulfil all the other male tasks.

Alternatively, some Fulbe men were employed as full-time hired herders. Usually, young men who did not have any animals of their own and were not yet married, herded the animals of a non-relative. The monthly salary for this activity in the research area ranged from 3,500 FCFA in the dry season to 6,000 – 7,500 FCFA in the wet season.

Both of these activities, market herding and hired herding, although different, are combined in Table 4.2 as ‘salaried herder’.

**Witnessing on markets:** Several respected elderly men, reputed for their honesty, earned money on a more or less regular basis as witnesses at markets (Table 4.2). They witnessed the sale of an animal and guaranteed the new owner that it was not a stolen animal. For each cow sold, the witness received 2,500 FCFA, for a sheep 500 FCFA and for a goat 250 FCFA (approximate figures). In the event of an animal later turning out to be stolen, the witness would then be held responsible and liable to pay ‘damages’.

**Marabout (Islamic teacher):** In every village there was at least one marabout (*mooDiBo*) (Table 4.2). Some had studied the Koran and worked as Islamic tutors, while others were specialised in herbal medicine, healing or influencing the destiny of others with the help of means that did not necessarily reflect a strong Islamic belief (cf. Burnham 1996). Those who tried to heal by means of herbs or other spiritual practices were sometimes able to make a considerable income, if not in their own village, then on migration or travelling within the region.

**Other activities:** Only one Gaobe in the sample from Aliakoum had engaged in petty trade (Table 4.2). He had once set up a small table with matches, cigarettes, candies, kerosene and other such provisions. He expressed the desire to pursue this activity again, but lacked the start-up capital.

As only freeborn Fulbe were included in the survey sample<sup>18</sup>, none of the men reported engaging in any form of craft-based activity for the purpose of trade, although many made ropes for their own use and many sewed their own clothes.

Some men in Aliakoum (not included in the sample) were privileged enough to have had some sort of formal education, and had since taken up ‘modern’ professions, such as a driver or nurse. This opportunity arose out of the fact that Aliakoum is extremely close to the provincial capital of Gorom Gorom.

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<sup>18</sup> No castes, who tend to specialise in handicraft, were included in the survey (see Chapter 1).

### *Changing cultural attitudes of men*

Even with the exclusion of the various activities pursued by men while on seasonal labour migration<sup>19</sup>, it is apparent from Figure 4.2 that the stereotype of the Fulbe as herdsmen is not necessarily a reflection of the present way of life of the Fulbe in the research area, especially not for Gaobe and Liptako. What is more, most Fulbe men in the study area showed little reluctance to undertake work that contradicted the ideals of *pulaaku*. While discussing the topic with the male respondents it became clear that the majority considered a diversification in their mode of production important, and lived their lives according to economic needs rather than cultural ideals, especially when on migration. The commonly held view in the study area was that a Pullo man could do anything for a living when he was not in his home village.

In further contradiction to *pulaaku* cultural ideals, there was even, for some, a sense of anger felt about not pursuing certain types of work while in the home village. Several Fulbe men in the research area openly criticised themselves and others for not engaging in such activities for no other reason than being Fulbe<sup>20</sup>:

*“If the Fulbe do not change their way they will suffer.”* (Liptako)

*“What makes the Fulbe backwards is their pride.”* (Liptako)

*“A man should not say he doesn't do this or that work. It is God who will decide what man has to do, not man himself.”* (Djelgobe)

*“Fulbe should overcome their prejudice against certain activities and try to succeed in whatever activity.”* (Gaobe)

*“It is only the Rimaibe who come back from migration with full hands, as they can pursue any labour. A Pullo cannot, and he therefore often comes back empty-handed.”* (Liptako)

There were only three men who considered it categorically unacceptable for Fulbe to engage in work that was formerly done by Rimaibe or other non-Fulbe ethnic groups. One of the three had studied the Koran for three years in Niger and insisted that the Holy Book mentioned explicitly that Fulbe should not do anything else but herd animals. Such conservative opinions, however, were rare.

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<sup>19</sup> For further details see Hampshire (1998).

<sup>20</sup> In a similar context Bolwig & Paarup-Laursen (1998) quote a Pullo Liptako saying “*Pulaaku? It is a very tight shirt that you can't take off.*”

So far we have seen that Fulbe men in the research sample, despite their cultural ideals and popular stereotype, actually engaged in a wide range of economic activities. What of Fulbe women? Did they have such a wide range of alternative economic activities as Fulbe men?

### *Culturally appropriate activities for Fulbe women*

A questionnaire similar to that addressed to the men was given to 90 women in the sample villages. The questionnaire enquired into economic activities taken up and attitudes shown towards what is considered culturally appropriate for Fulbe women in terms of production strategies. In Table 4.3 and Figure 4.3, only those activities not directly linked to the pastoral sector are included. Multiple answers were possible.

Figure 4.3: Economic activities of female householders (n=90) pursued between 1987 and 1996

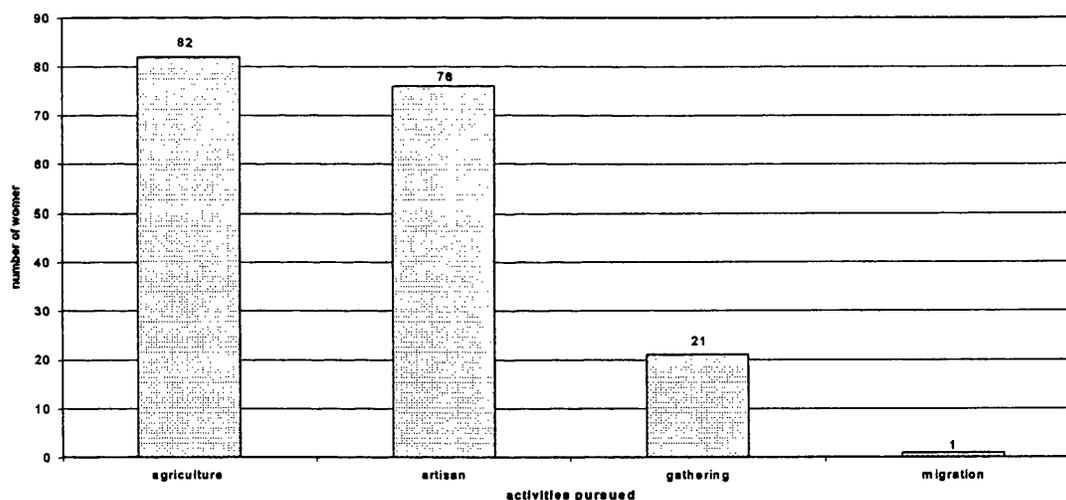


Table 4.3: Economic activities of female householders (n=90) pursued between 1987 and 1996<sup>21</sup>

Village	Agriculture	Artisan	Gathering	Migration
Ngoundam ( <i>Djelgobe</i> ) (n=22)	16 (73%)	22 (100%)	2 (9%)	0
Banguil ( <i>Gaobe</i> ) (n=34)	32 (94%)	34 (100%)	4 (12%)	1 (3%)
Aliakoum ( <i>Gaobe</i> ) (n=18)	18 (100%)	18 (100%)	3 (17%)	0
Baaga ( <i>Liptako</i> ) (n=16)	16 (100%)	2 (13%)	12 (75%)	0
Total (n=90)	82 (91%)	76 (84%)	21 (23%)	1 (1%)

<sup>21</sup> The number of people who had mentioned pursuing this activity is noted below the activities; percentages per village are in brackets.

**Agriculture:** Most women in the sample villages helped, to a degree, in agricultural activities (Table 4.3). This is quite different from the findings of other studies on Fulbe women's involvement in agriculture (e.g. de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995; Castle 1992). However, as will be discussed in Chapter 7, women's contribution to agriculture was still quite marginal.

**Artisanal work:** The main craft-based activities pursued by all Fulbe Djelgobe and Gaobe, but no Liptako women in the study involved weaving mats to construct their tents and those of their daughters (Table 4.3). It was exceptional for a woman to be able to weave more than she needed for herself and her daughters and to be in a position to sell mats.

Some women from each Fulbe group also made lids for calabashes (*mbedi*), from the leaves of the doum-palm. However, none of the women made more than two a year; some even worked two years on one. Rarely were any of these sold.

Two elderly Liptako women in the study villages made mats out of millet stalks (*secco*, pl. *cekke*). These two women, individually, were paid 150 FCFA per mat if women from the village asked them to make mats for them. The customers had to buy the raw materials (millet stalks and leather ropes) themselves. Neither of the two women made more than 4 or 5 a year, thus the activity did not contribute much to their income.

No other forms of artisanal work, such as those practised by women from other ethnic groups in this area, like weaving blankets or cotton spinning (Thébaud 1998:53), were pursued by Fulbe women in the research area.

**Gathering:** The gathering of wild food, especially in the rainy season before the harvest is in, has great importance for many Sahelian populations (Monimart 1989; Claude *et al.* 1991:155 *et seq.*). However, this was not the case for the Fulbe in the research area; neither Fulbe women nor men in the sample openly admitted to collecting wild plants, as it was considered highly inappropriate for Fulbe to engage in such an activity. Only in the Liptako village, in the rainy season, could it be observed that most women collected wild plants growing on their fields to use as condiments in the preparation of sauces.

*Box 4.5: Collecting fonio is shameful*

*One day on a visit to Banguil I came across a 28-year old woman preparing fonio (*Panicum laetum*) that her husband had collected. There was a crowd of women standing around her, making fun of her, saying that Fulbe are not supposed to collect and prepare fonio. "Fonio is poor man's food, not worthy of a Pullo of Banguil." Although the scarcity of millet that year warranted the gathering of wild products as a fall-back measure, the shame and the loss of status that it brought, made it difficult for that woman and her husband to continue this activity. I never observed her preparing fonio again.*

In all villages, old women occasionally gathered herbs to make medicinal teas, mainly for sick children. In interviews they did not always admit to it, but when questioned while preparing those teas, they discussed the subject openly. None of these or any other of the wild products collected during the course of the research year were used as a source of income.

**Seasonal labour migration:** Seasonal labour migration was quite clearly a strategy exclusively taken up by men. With very few exceptions, the wives were generally left behind. During the research year, only one woman of the sample from Banguil accompanied her husband on a seasonal migration to Ouagadougou where they stayed with relatives for several months, but she did not pursue any paid work there. They had only one cow left and their millet had finished. Going to see relatives while the man tried to get some work, was their only way to overcome this period until the next harvest was in. No other woman of the research villages went on seasonal labour migration.

On various occasions problems occurred when the husband did not take sufficient precautions for the wife he left behind.

*Box 4.6: The husband in Côte d'Ivoire and the wife?*

*One woman's husband had left for Côte d'Ivoire and was not heard of again for several years. On awaiting his return she had first stayed with her family-in-law, but after some time returned to her family of origin. Her situation worsened without much prospect of*

*improvement; unable to remarry both her economic and social status in the village remained low.*

Only when the migration became permanent rather than seasonal, did some men fetch their wives and children to stay with them<sup>22</sup>.

Some elderly Gaobe women reported that when they were younger they had occasionally gone with a group of women to the Plateau Central to collect *Andropogon* grass for their mat-making activities. At the time of the survey, the women in the research villages not only considered this journey risky and extremely tiring, but also fairly unprofitable. They reported that the Mossi from the Plateau Central tend to sell the *Andropogon* now, rather than leave it to be collected by Fulbe women journeying to the area. Nevertheless, during the research year two groups of Gaobe women from outside the study villages were met returning from such a trip. Despite the hardship it entailed, they obviously enjoyed the freedom of being away from their villages and far from the control of their families. It seemed they felt liberated from having to behave like Fulbe women<sup>23</sup>, from having to adhere to the strict patterns of *pulaaku*, just as men did when they 'escaped' by going on seasonal migration.

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<sup>22</sup> The survey revealed that two women (who were not part of the sample, but were reported by those who were) had left the research area and gone to stay in the south of Burkina Faso indefinitely. One woman from Aliakoum had married a Pullo who worked as a nurse in Pô. The other woman was from Baaga and had married a salaried herdsman who had settled in the area of Bobo-Dioulasso. Both came back to their home village occasionally.

<sup>23</sup> These women insisted on being taken for a ride on my motorbike if I wanted to interview them, and their boisterousness resulted in a bad fall. The wild gesticulations and strange exercises they performed while being passengered were as incompatible with their cultural code as with my ability to ride a bike in the sand.

Plate 4.5: Gaobe women on their way from the Plateau Central



On a visit to the gold-mining areas frequented by men from the research area, I met some Fulbe women prospecting for gold. However, none were from the research villages and not a single woman interviewed in the research villages admitted to contemplating going there. For all sub-ethnic groups sampled, men and women considered this to be exclusively men's work.

***Domestic work, milk selling and animal sales***

Women's primary obligations were to keep house, prepare food for the household members, fetch drinking water for household members and any animals that were kept in the compound, collect firewood, millet stalks or cow dung as fuel, and bear and raise children. Although no time budget study was pursued, it seems safe to say that domestic tasks took up the greatest part of women's productive time.

None of the above mentioned activities actually provided women themselves with a substantial income. Apart from selling her own animals (cf. Chapter 6), the only income-raising activity that virtually all of the women in the research area pursued at some stage in their life, was the selling of milk products (cf. Chapter 8). This activity was considered highly appropriate for a Pullo woman by most women and men in the sample.

### ***Changing cultural attitudes of women?***

It might be assumed that Fulbe women would suffer unnecessarily from, and have good reason to complain about, the limited range of activities they currently pursue, whether as a result of their cultural code, a lack of start-up capital, because of male dominance, or even the lack of knowledge to be able to start a new activity. However, when interviewed about their aspirations, needs and self-definitions, Fulbe women made perfectly clear what it meant for them to exhibit the 'good' characteristics of Fulbe women, and just how ingrained this notion of being a good Fulbe woman really is:

*"God made the Fulbe woman as she is; she cannot change and do things that she is not supposed to do."* (Liptako )

*"A good Fulbe woman sells her milk, but does not do any other handicraft".* (Gaobe)

*"A good woman obeys her husband, is faithful, stays at home and doesn't go to festivities. She has to take care of the animals when the husband is not around. She has to take good care of the cereal in the granaries."* (Liptako)

*"A good woman has to have children and do whatever her husband wants her to do".*(Djelgobe)

*"A woman acquires higher standing if she is not, or rarely seen on the market."* (Gaobe)

*"A woman who goes to the market for no reason, is not considered to be good."*

(Djelgobe)

Rarely would a Pullo woman complain about the restricted range of activities she was able to pursue. Every woman interviewed merely wanted, if possible, to only do those activities that were 'culturally' assigned to Fulbe women, because the status she gained from behaving in a culturally appropriate way was more precious to her than anything else.

### **Conclusions and discussion**

At the beginning of this chapter the problems of defining the Fulbe household were discussed. The Fulbe households in the research area proved to be fluid in composition over time. It was shown that they were not merely units of pastoral or agricultural production and consumption, but that within these households there were various levels of decision-making for a variety of production strategies. This will become more apparent in the course of the thesis.

It has been suggested, for Maasai, that once solid constructions owned by men take over and replace the tent that is usually owned by the women, women may find themselves in a more vulnerable position, reducing their bargaining power within the household (Talle 1988). There might be a tendency enough to confirm this for the populations studied in this thesis. Among Gaobe and Djelgobe women, in the event of divorce, a wife would take her own tent with her and the husband would be left without shelter if he had not constructed a house for himself. Liptako women did not own the house and might find themselves in a more vulnerable situation after a divorce. However, this was only one side of the coin. For women it was, equally as for men, a matter of prestige and wealth to live in a mud-brick house rather than a tent. Furthermore, the raw materials used to construct a tent had to be purchased, and Gaobe and Djelgobe women were faced with ever increasing costs due to environmental change (cf. Monimart 1989; Joeckes & Pointing 1991). In many ways, although difficult to substantiate, Djelgobe and Gaobe women seemed to have a degree of freedom and independence that Liptako women who lived in houses owned by men, did not have. It would be impossible to assess at this point whether this was in fact linked to housing, and how various other factors, e.g. degree of adherence to Islamic ideals, sedentarisation, economic orientation, wealth of individuals, contributed to this.

During her lifecycle a woman has different rights and obligations. Although women in the sample could not chose their first marriage partner, they had the relative freedom in decisions taken about divorce and their choice of subsequent marriage partners. There was no immediate link between impoverishment and the subsequent loss of women's bargaining power in the marital contract in the households studied, contrary to de Bruijn & van Dijk's findings (1995:389).

*Pulaaku*, the principal component of Fulbe culture, was discussed in this chapter with specific consideration to production strategies. Fulbe men had taken up a range of economic activities deemed culturally inappropriate, more among the Liptako and Gaobe than among Djelgobe. Women, by contrast, in all villages seemed to be restricted in their choice of economic activities and adhered more to their interpretation of the ideals of *pulaaku*.

*"...to behave like a Fulbe means especially, and before anything else, to act like the others, to act in such a way that the others don't detect any difference between the actor*

*and themselves*” (Riesman 1977:128). One of the most frequent reasons given by respondents for not pursuing certain activities was that “*the others do not do it, therefore it cannot be done.*” This applied to women more than to men. There was a constant dilemma of carefully balancing social status and economic advantage. One woman used a proverb to illustrate the situation: “*If you come to a village and everybody dances on their heads, you yourself have to dance on your head as well.*”

I have mentioned that *pulaaku* was particularly important for behaviour within the boundaries of the homestead. Women’s work was mainly based inside the compound. Women did not migrate and even the markets they frequented were in close proximity to their home villages and were therefore regularly visited by Fulbe who knew these women and their families. If the homestead was the place where the ideals of *pulaaku* needed to be upheld, it is only logical that women were more subject to these ideals, and in a more continuous way, than men who frequently had the opportunity to slip out of their residential and cultural settings.

Nevertheless, culturally appropriate activities and obligations of both men and women have been and probably will always be subject to a process of gradual change. For such a change to occur it often needs either a courageous enough person to override cultural norms and ideals or a desperate enough person to disregard them in order to pursue an activity that is generally considered inappropriate. Only then might it gradually be taken up by others, and integrated into the normal code of behaviour.

In this chapter, the example of the woman who prepared fonio showed that her desperately poor situation made her do something that was frowned upon by other women in the village. The woman was still young and she obviously felt terrible as a result of the ridicule of her friends and neighbours. Consequently, at least while I stayed in the research area, she never dared to prepare fonio again. In the next chapter, I will introduce Ramsatou, an exceptionally courageous woman, wealthy in livestock, cultivating her own field and still not being criticised by other women for daring to ‘break the rules’; maybe because she was elderly - 64 years old, maybe because she was wealthy. However, so far with few exceptions, women in the sample were still eager to live according to their interpretation of *pulaaku*.

The ideals of Fulbe women’s mannerisms seemed to be much valued, especially by women themselves. Many women would not do work that was considered below their

status as Fulbe. This is borne out by de Bruijn & van Dijk's (1995:204) findings in Mali, where women likewise derived their status from the work they did or refused to do. The limited range of economic opportunities that Fulbe women in my research sample could choose from as a result of this status consciousness, might have restricted their possibilities of acquiring a monetary income independent from their husbands. The resulting dependence on their husbands or on their own kin did not seem to pose a problem for these Fulbe women; potentially losing status vis-à-vis other women, however, did.

# 5

## THE HERD: ACCESS, LABOUR AND EXPENDITURE

### Introduction

In this Chapter I will discuss animal ownership at both household and individual level. Studies have suggested that in some Fulbe groups women are not supposed to own cattle (Hopen 1958; Stenning 1959). Others found that even where women 'traditionally' have this right, they are discriminated against in terms of their access to cattle due to impoverishment (de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995). I will therefore, in this chapter, examine the factors that govern an individual's, especially women's, access to livestock in the Fulbe households sampled.

Labour allocation, decision-making rights and expenditure obligations in the pastoral sector will also be examined with particular emphasis on how these obligations and rights towards livestock differ for the genders in their lifecycle.

### Livestock holdings of the sample households

In this research area, as in many other areas of the Sahel, most households suffered a tremendous loss of livestock during the droughts of the 1970s and 1980s (cf. Swift *et al.* 1984). As a result, approximately half (46%) of the Fulbe households studied had ten or fewer cattle at the time of the study. This distribution was confirmed by the broader study in which just over 50% of Fulbe households for whom cattle numbers could be established were found to have ten or fewer cattle (Hampshire 1998). Some households in my sample had as many as fifty cattle and a very small number of exceptionally rich households had between one hundred and three hundred cattle. Three such households, successful large-

scale cattle traders, were found within the Banguil sample. Their unusually high livestock holdings affect the variability of the sample - hence the high standard deviation for the Gaobe in Banguil (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1: Cattle holdings of Fulbe households (percentages of households in brackets)

Village (number of households in brackets)	Sub-ethnic group	No. of households with ...					Mean no. cattle owned per household $\pm$ SD <sup>1</sup>
		0 cattle	1-10 cattle	11-50 cattle	51-100 cattle	101-400 cattle	
Ngoundam (n=11)	Djelgobe	1 (9%)	2 (18%)	8 (73%)	0	0	21 $\pm$ 17.6
Banguil (n=11)	Gaobe	0	5 (46%)	3 (27%)	0	3 (27%)	26 <sup>2</sup> $\pm$ 37.6
Aliakoum (n=6)	Gaobe	0	3 (50%)	3 (50%)	0	0	24 $\pm$ 22.6
Baaga (n=11)	Liptako	0	8 (73%)	2 (18%)	1 (9%)	0	15 $\pm$ 18.5
Total (n=39)	-	1 (3%)	18 (46%)	16 (41%)	1 (3%)	3 (7%)	21 $\pm$ 24.2

Similar figures were reported by Thébaud (1998) for the Fulbe in Seno province. In her sample, around 60% of all households had less than 15 cattle and only 10% had more than 40. Those with more than 40 were mostly Fulbe Djawambe from Touka Bayel (see Chapter 3) and Fulbe Gaobe (*ibid*:31). De Bruijn & van Dijk's Jallube sample showed slightly smaller numbers: the average herd size per family was 15 head of cattle. If the two largest herds were excluded, the average herd size dropped to 9 (de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:133-134). Swift *et al.*'s (1984:350) study in Central Niger among pastoral WoDaaBe showed that the mean household herd size was 23 cattle (or 25 if the entrusted animals herded were included), with no extreme differences in wealth between families in the sample, but with a wide range of 0.5 to 3.9 TLU per person. In a study of sedentary Fulbe agropastoralists in a sub-humid area of Nigeria, all the households sampled owned roughly twice as many cattle as the average values in the present study. The mean number of cattle per household was 45 with a standard deviation of  $\pm$ 19 (Waters-Bayer 1985).

<sup>1</sup> SD = Standard deviation of the sample mean.

<sup>2</sup> The mean number drops to 14 if the richest 3 households are excluded.

In my sample it is surprising that the mean cattle holding per village was similar for all the groups sampled, despite the Liptako in Baaga being much more sedentary and engaging in agriculture far more than the Djelgobe or Gaobe (cf. Chapter 7). Also, those Gaobe in Aliakoum, close to a semi-urban centre did not differ greatly in terms of cattle holdings. It is important to note, however, that among the Djelgobe in Ngoundam, three-quarters of all households had a relative wealth of 11-50 cattle. The Djelgobe sampled aspired to living almost entirely on fresh milk during the rainy season and some of them did not cultivate at all.

Similar observations were made by Beauvilain in his study of the Tolebe and Bororo in Dallol Bosso. These two groups, on average, had no more cattle than the other Fulbe groups in the region in spite of their reputation for pursuing a more pastoral oriented lifestyle than the other groups and never engaging in agriculture (Beauvilain 1977:188). This was explained partly by their involvement in contract herding, which allowed Tolebe and Bororo to remain fully within the pastoral sector without farming. Orientation of production strategies towards pastoralism may therefore not necessarily be an indicator of an increased size of cattle holdings. Quite the opposite, the diversification of economic strategies, including agriculture, may be a powerful means to increasing or at least maintaining herd sizes. For example, the high mean number of cattle per household in Waters-Bayer's (1985) study of sedentary Fulbe agropastoralists in a sub-humid area of Nigeria, could be due to a difference in climate. Equally, it could well be that, due to their greater involvement in cultivation, fewer of their animals have to be sold in order to purchase cereals. At the same time, agriculture can compete for labour input with the pastoral sector and thus hinder herd growth. For example, if labour to undertake transhumance is not available because of involvement in agricultural production, access to good pasture may be sacrificed. Degradation of rangeland around settlements may be another negative result (cf. Chapter 1).

All households, apart from three in my sample, claimed that before the recent Sahelian droughts they had owned more animals than at present and that only a few households in the region had fully recovered from the animal losses incurred following the drought. In Ngoundam, for example, it was said that before the last drought the poorest household had owned as many animals as the richest owned, at the time of this survey.

Another result of the droughts was that the wealth hierarchy in some of the research villages appeared to have changed. For example, the richest three households in Banguil were not among the wealthiest there before the last drought. The household heads of these three were simply lucky enough to have been left with a greater number of livestock than most after the drought. They then each started a successful trade in livestock, buying animals during the immediate post-drought years and building up their own herds to their present levels. These households were now renowned for their cattle wealth, not only in comparison to the other households within the village, but also throughout the region. Conversely, others, such as Banguil's village chief, were rich in cattle before the drought, but having then lost heavily, were at the time of the study among the poorer households.

Cattle wealth certainly influenced the social structure and power relations within the village to a considerable degree<sup>3</sup>. The village chief in Banguil complained that since the droughts had taken his herd he had hardly any political power left within his village, while the household head of the richest household had gained greatly in political influence.

Besides cattle, most households also kept small ruminants. This diversification of the herd was widely regarded as an effective strategy for spreading risks (cf. Dahl & Hjort 1976:232; Mortimore 1998:45,46). Very poor households, with only a small number of cattle, also found it much easier to invest the small sums of money they were able to acquire in sheep or goats rather than in cattle (cf. Dahl & Hjort 1976:233, 268; Mortimore 1998:46) but often with the long-term aim of rebuilding their cattle herds. In general, both rich and poor households in the study appreciated small ruminants because of their high reproductive rate and the ease with which they could be converted into cash. This phenomena has been observed in various other pastoral studies (e.g. Dupire 1962b:336; Dahl & Hjort 1976:232; Beauvilain 1977:218; Fratkin & Smith 1994; Juul 1996:12).

In my own sample, most households who specialised in small stock did so mainly out of lacking the financial means to invest in cattle. Only one household had developed a particular preference for small livestock, while still in a position to invest in cattle (Box 5.1).

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<sup>3</sup> As it was not focus of my study, I could not establish the exact importance of wealth, among other factors, in influencing political structure in the village. It was more an impression confirmed by informal discussions.

**Box 5.1: Goats or cattle?**

*Djibilirou, from Banguil, had started goat and sheep husbandry after the last drought. During the time of the field study he had more than 80 small ruminants; goats and sheep mixed. A close relative herded Djibilirou's three cattle for him. Although by now Djibilirou could have invested in cattle by selling some of his small ruminants, he did not because he could not herd cattle and small ruminants together and his children were still too young to share separate herding responsibilities. Also, over the last few years he had become more experienced in herding and breeding small ruminants and did not want to go back to cattle rearing at all, not even if his children were older and able to manage two separate herds.*

Only one man in the whole sample, the deputy of Aliakoum, owned a camel. The only other two household heads who were wealthy enough to be able to afford a camel for their own private use, preferred instead to buy a motorbike or a small moped. Nobody in the sample owned a horse. Chickens were occasionally owned by both men and women.

Taking all livestock per household into consideration, the mean TLU per village was calculated. The results are indicated in Table 5.2.

**Table 5.2: Livestock holdings for sample households**

Village	Sub-ethnic group	No. of cattle per household (mean $\pm$ SD)	No. of small ruminants per household (mean $\pm$ SD)	TLU per household (mean $\pm$ SD)
Ngoundam (n=11)	Djelgobe	21 $\pm$ 17.6	19 $\pm$ 19.5	17 $\pm$ 13
Banguil (n=11)	Gaobe	26 $\pm$ 37.6	58 $\pm$ 46.8	59 $\pm$ 89
Aliakoum (n=6)	Gaobe	24 $\pm$ 22.6	27 $\pm$ 15.1	19 $\pm$ 17
Baaga (n=11)	Liptako	15 $\pm$ 18.5	26 $\pm$ 58.2	13 $\pm$ 18
Total (n=39)	-	21 $\pm$ 24.2	33 $\pm$ 43	28 $\pm$ 51

Although mean TLU per household can give a strong indication of the difference in household wealth between villages, and the standard deviation of the mean (SD) an indication of the range of household wealth within each village, household sizes vary considerably. When looked at 'per capita', related to numbers of individuals rather than

households, a very different and therefore more meaningful pattern of wealth distribution may emerge.

Swift *et al.* (1984:350) and Dahl & Hjort (1976) calculate the theoretical poverty threshold to be 3 TLU per capita to ensure the biological survival of a household's herds and its human members<sup>4</sup>. Fratkin & Roth (1990) calculate for Ariaal in Kenya that 4.6 TLU per capita are needed to provide an individual with 1600 Kcal per day. According to de Bruijn & van Dijk (1995:134) 1.5 TLU per capita are needed if agricultural products secure the livelihood for half a year. However, the validity of these minimum herd calculations on a general level is questionable. First of all, the calculation of TLU is often very vague and does not take into account all relevant aspects, such as, for example, the condition of the herd, the composition of their diet, the proportion of milk sold, a household's dietary preferences, etc. The calculations focus on a single theoretical number of animals at a given moment in time rather than on the dynamic processes by which each household over time achieves or does not achieve subsistence in terms of food (Swift 1986). Most pastoral societies live in high-risk environments and their herd dynamics are therefore linked to a variety of ecological, economic, social and political factors, which combine to provoke a high degree of annual variation in pastoralists' economic wellbeing. Moreover, the availability of millet (proximity to markets, seasonality, individual preferences) makes statements about minimum herd sizes a rather risky enterprise (*ibid.*). Furthermore, as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6, many of these pastoralists engage in contract herding. Their herds may not therefore have the 'typical' herd composition, i.e. a high proportion of females, that is expected for pastoralists' herds. It is also difficult for most researchers to establish the number of animals herded for others.

I will not attempt to establish minimum herd sizes of the Fulbe studied, as I do not have enough data on: firstly, the exact proportion of milk consumed and sold; secondly, the proportion of milk-based food products consumed; thirdly, the reproduction rates of animals from a long term perspective; and fourthly, the number of animals entrusted through herding

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<sup>4</sup> In order to evaluate the minimum herd size for a family, Dahl & Hjort (1976:157 *et seq.*) proposed a reference family of 4.9 adult equivalents. If milk was the only nourishment of that reference family, 16.6 kg of milk daily would be needed, i.e. a total herd size of 73 head of cattle would be required, composed of: bull and heifer calves: 20%; young males age 1-4: 20.9%; heifers: 20.9%; bullocks for slaughter: 5.4%; bulls of ages 4-10: 0.8%; fertile cows: 29.5%; old cows: 2.5%.

arrangements. I will, however, show in Table 5.3 the mean TLU per capita for the sampled households to facilitate a broad comparison of the data.

**Table 5.3: Mean TLU holdings in the sample per capita**

Village	Sub-ethnic group	Mean TLU per capita $\pm$ SD
Ngoundam (n=11)	Djelgobe	2.7 $\pm$ 2.4
Banguil (n=11)	Gaobe	4.5 $\pm$ 4.3 (2.4 $\pm$ 2.1 <sup>5</sup> )
Aliakoum (n=6)	Gaobe	1.5 $\pm$ 1.2
Baaga (n=11)	Liptako	2.3 $\pm$ 2.1
Total (n=39)	-	2.9 $\pm$ 3 (2.3 $\pm$ 2)

The mean TLU per capita per village ranged from 2.7 in the Djelgobe village of Ngoundam to 1.5 in the Gaobe village of Aliakoum (excluding the three very richest households in Banguil) (Table 5.3). Even without specifying a minimum herd size, it is apparent that most households in my sample would not have been capable of living off their own pastoral resources, i.e. milk, alone<sup>6</sup> and some of them, especially among the Liptako had no aspiration to do so. As I have stated previously, the Djelgobe sampled particularly expressed a wish to limit themselves to pastoral production to the extent that some of them did not engage in agriculture at all. It is surprising then, that the TLU per capita in many ways confirmed the results of Table 5.2 (TLU per household) and suggests that Djelgobe were not that much wealthier in livestock than Liptako and Gaobe that engaged much more in agriculture (see Chapter 7) and tended to diversify their income more (see Chapter 4). A possible explanation for this is that Djelgobe had a higher proportion of entrusted animals in their herds (see Chapter 6) thus enabling them to stay in the pastoral economy without cultivating much, despite their comparatively low cattle holdings.

### *Livestock holdings of women*

So far only the number of animals owned per household has been discussed. Among all Fulbe groups in the research area, as elsewhere, animals were invariably owned by

<sup>5</sup> Figures derived when the three richest households are excluded.

individuals, not by households or groups (cf. Hopen 1958; Riesman 1977; Swift *et al.* 1984). With the widespread assumption that cattle are mainly owned by male members of the household (e.g. de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995), a key concern of this research was whether or not the women in the research sample owned cattle.

In the research villages, informants agreed that both men and women were entitled to own cattle. According to respondents, women could, in principle, own as many cattle as men (cf. Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:150). Table 5.4 and Figure 5.1 show animal ownership among the women in the sampled households.

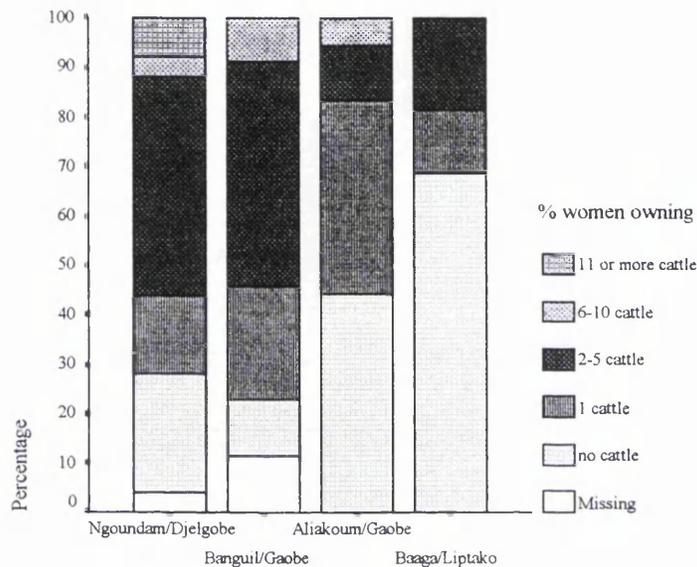
**Table 5.4: Ownership of cattle among women (n=89) in the sample villages**

Village	Sub-ethnic group	No. of women owning ...				
		0 cattle	1cattle	2-5 cattle	6-9 cattle	10+ cattle
Ngoundam (n=24)	Djelgobe	6 (25%)	4 (17%)	11 (46%)	1 (4%)	2 (8%)
Banguil (n=31) (n=11)	Gaobe	4 (13%) 4 (37%) <sup>7</sup>	8 (26%) 5 (45%)	16 (52%) 2 (18%)	3 (9%) 0	0 0
Aliakoum (n=18)	Gaobe	8 (44%)	7 (39%)	2 (11%)	1 (6%)	0
Baaga (n=16)	Liptako	11 (69%)	2 (12%)	3 (19%)	0	0
Total (n=89)		29 (33%)	21 (24%)	32 (35%)	5 (6%)	2 (2%)
Total (n=69)		29 (44%)	18 (28%)	18 (24%)	2 (2%)	2 (2%)

<sup>6</sup> For average milk yields in the seasonal cycle see Chapter 2, Table 2.2.

<sup>7</sup> Figures derived when the women of the richest 3 households are excluded.

Figure 5.1: Ownership of cattle among women in the sample villages (n=89)



If all women in the sample were included, more than half of them either owned no cattle at all or only one cow. A third of the women sampled owned 2-5 cattle and almost a tenth possessed more than 5 (Table 5.4). Considering the mean TLU per capita is 2.9 for all the sampled villages combined (Table 5.3), it might be argued that the women in the research area held a considerable proportion of the households' cattle. However, if the women of the 3 very rich households in Banguil (n=20) are excluded, the pattern is very different. Then, only a quarter of the women in the sample owned more than one cow, leaving a quarter owning only one and nearly half (44%) owning none (Table 5.4).

Assuming that these extremely rich households are the exception rather than the rule, and can thus be disregarded for the moment, it could be inferred that Gaobe and Liptako women were more disadvantaged in accessing animals than Djelgobe women. The richest woman in Baaga, for example, was reported to own 3 cows (although she was not part of the research sample). In Ngoundam more than half of the sampled women owned at least 2 cows. It is important to note here that in two of the richest households in Ngoundam it was the women that owned most of the cattle. In one, one woman owned approximately 50 cattle; in the

other, this woman's daughter, living in an independent household with a husband and children, owned around 30 cattle.

*Box 5.2: The exceptionally wealthy Djelgobe women: Ramsatou and Djenaba*

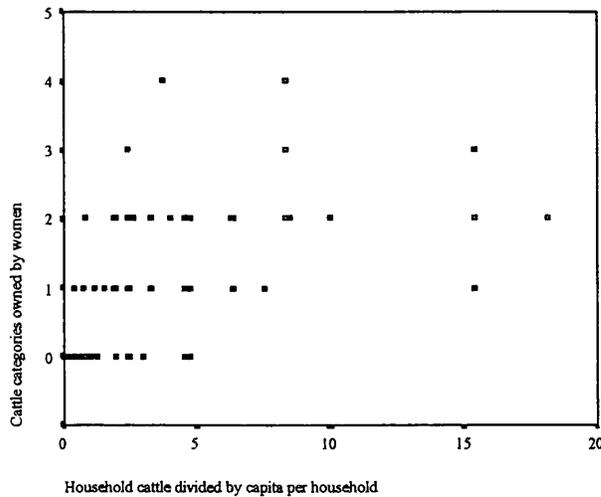
*Ramsatou (age 64) was the widow of a Djelgobe man who died 4 years ago. Ramsatou's household consisted of her older sister, that sister's daughter, a deceased sister's son (Wuri), his wife and their baby. Nominally, Ramsatou's nephew Wuri (age 28) was the household head.*

*Even while Ramsatou's husband was still alive she owned almost all of the households' animals. It was never completely clear to me how she had acquired all that cattle wealth as she herself did not like to talk about it. Her neighbours and friends said that she was the only child of a relatively wealthy man and that she had lost many or most of her relatives. She had nearly 50 cattle her own and was regarded as the second or third richest person in the village. She had one daughter Djenaba, age 35, living with a husband and three children in a separate household but in the same village. Ramsatou gave her daughter around 30 cattle as part of a pre-mortem inheritance.*

Given that the mean TLU per capita was very similar in Ngoundam, Banguil and Baaga, although slightly lower in Aliakoum (see Table 5.3), this marked difference in women's access to cattle in Ngoundam, as opposed to the other villages, cannot be explained in terms of wealth differences. It is more likely to be due to cultural differences between Djelgobe, Gaobe and Liptako society.

The fact that animal ownership among the exceptionally rich households was relatively high (in these households every woman owned at least 1 cow and 17 out of 20 owned 2 or more), nevertheless raises the question of whether women's access to livestock is correlated to animal wealth of the household in which women live. The scatterplot below suggests that there might be a relationship. However, the sample structure does not permit a statistical analysis of this sort to be made with any degree of certainty.

Figure 5.2: Relationship between household wealth/capita and female livestock ownership (n=89)



Y-axis: 0=no cows, 1=1 cow, 2=2-5 cows, 3=6-10 cows, 4=11+ cows

Cattle ownership among women is not correlated with their age or the number of children they have. In fact, due to the custom of distributing animals among one's children (see discussion below), it is quite likely that cattle numbers per woman decline with age and parity.

Many of the women in the sample had at some stage in their life owned goats or sheep. It was not possible, however, to ascertain the number of small livestock owned by each of them during the research year.

Some Gaobe and Djelgobe women in Ngoundam and Banguil, though none of the men, owned donkeys. The women used them for carrying water from distant ponds or wells to their camps for domestic use in the dry season. Donkeys were also used to transport the material for tents when whole households went on transhumance. Only two elderly women in Banguil rode on their donkeys to the market from time to time; all the other women used to walk these often long distances. Donkeys were usually left on their own grazing in the bush and therefore frequently got lost. On numerous occasions a male household member was sent to look for a lost donkey in the bush. There was always great relief when it was found, as donkey thefts appear to be common in this region. Donkeys do not need to be replaced as often as most other livestock, as their working life is usually between 10 and 15

years (Swift *et al.* 1984:383). No household reported buying a donkey during the time of this study.

We have seen that according to this small sample, some Fulbe women, especially Liptako women, appear to be disadvantaged in their access to cattle. Unfortunately, no comparative data for individual men in the households sampled could be collected to confirm this by quantitative means. One could argue that maybe a household's cattle are always concentrated in the hands of a single individual, the household head, and therefore that women are not disadvantaged in accessing cattle when compared to the other men of a household. However, although there is a concentration of wealth among key individuals within the household to a certain extent, when looking at the qualitative data of the determinants and the mechanisms that regulate individual access to animals, there is reason enough to suggest that women are indeed disadvantaged. Most Fulbe women in the sample, apart from Djelgobe women and those women in extremely rich households, have very few possibilities to own cattle at all.

## Access to livestock

### ***Gifts at the naming ceremony: sukude***

Traditionally, in the research area every parent is supposed, where possible, to give animals to their newly born child at the time of its naming ceremony (*inndeeri*), which takes place seven days after birth. The Fulbe word for the custom of giving animals to a child at this time is *sukude* (deriving from the word *suka*, which means child). A similar practice is described by various other authors for different Fulbe groups (e.g. Dupire 1962b:343; 1963:56; Riesman 1977:38; Swift *et al.* 1984:309).

The Djelgobe in the research sample reported that before the last drought every child, no matter whether a boy or a girl, first born or not, received around 3 cows from his or her father and 1 heifer from his or her mother. In the Liptako and Gaobe villages, informants reported that even in former times it was rare for children to be given more than one animal. In all villages, most men and women insisted that for *sukude* boys were not meant to be given preferential treatment over girls. In the past, and in wealthier families, this may well

have been the case. However, current practice in all villages showed that those families who did not have the means to give *sukude* animals to every child, preferred giving cattle to boys rather than girls. This is supported by de Bruijn & van Dijk's observations in Mali (*ibid.* 1995:192).

In the past, other family members, particularly the child's paternal relatives, often gave animals to a newly born. However, there was only one household sampled during the research year in which a relative other than the parents gave an animal to a new-born child, when a paternal grandfather gave a heifer to his grandson.

The widespread opinion among all respondents was that the number of *sukude* animals had declined drastically over the years, especially after the last drought, due to reduced animal numbers per household. Considering the small number of animals owned per household, and given that these Fulbe women had a completed fertility of seven children on average and may easily have up to 10 births in their lifetime (Hampshire 1998), it seems a logical consequence that not every child was likely to benefit from such a gift. During the time of the study, more often than not, small ruminants were substituted for cattle, or *sukude* was not practised at all, depending on how well off, in terms of animal ownership the parents were. In many cases "*not even a chicken*" was given, as some Fulbe would remark. This tendency seemed to be more accentuated among Gaobe and Liptako than among Djelgobe.

### ***Pre-mortem inheritance: hokkude***

Fulbe parents have been known to distribute most of their cattle among their children before they die (Hopen 1958; Stenning 1959:46; Burnham 1996:108). Stenning (1959:47), for example, states that traditionally among the WoDaaBe, the moment a man's last son has married, all his cattle will be distributed among his sons. By allotting animals before his death, a household head can minimise the "*possibility of disputes among the sons*" (Hopen 1958:139). Another reason for practising pre-mortem inheritance, rather than having all animals distributed after the death of a herd owner is, among pastoral Fulbe described by Hopen (1958), to minimise "*the likelihood of daughters receiving a large share*" (*ibid.*:139).

The Fulbe word used in this research area for this practice is simply *hokkude*, meaning ‘to give’. The English term ‘pre-mortem inheritance’ used here comprises more interpretation than just ‘to give’, but comes closest to the meaning of this gift.

In the sample, fathers found it difficult to practice pre-mortem inheritance if their herds were as small as 10 head or fewer. Many of them thus did not distribute all of their animals among their children but kept some for themselves until they died. Even relatively rich fathers rarely reported the distribution of all their animals pre-mortem. This was attributed to the widespread opinion that as family ties disintegrated, the father had less confidence in being provided for by his sons in his old age (cf. de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:2).

Although, theoretically, girls could also be given animals through pre-mortem inheritance, boys were usually privileged. Only among very rich households were girls given animals, and even then small stock rather than cattle. Also, contrary to Hopen’s (1958) findings, informants insisted that not only seniority of brothers, but also character and confidence of the individual, were decisive factors for receiving animals in this way.

The animals distributed before an individual’s death were not considered part of the post-mortem inheritance and could not be redistributed among the heirs after the original owner’s death.

### ***Post-mortem inheritance: ronude***

In some Fulbe societies where Islamic inheritance rules are not practised women find it difficult to inherit animals (Stenning 1959:48; Dupire 1963:86; 1970:93,115, 292), mainly “*because they marry elsewhere*” (Dupire 1963:86). If any part of the cattle inheritance is allotted to women, this is considered a mere concession on the part of the male inheritors towards their kinswomen. In these groups, women do not inherit any animals when their husband dies (Dupire 1963:86). These findings suggest that any discrimination in inheritance, including pre-mortem inheritance, among the groups studied is not recent or due to drought and impoverishment but very long standing.

In this research area, a man’s or woman’s children were considered the legitimate heirs to his or her animals. According to Moslem law, which was applied, in theory, among all

Fulbe groups in the research area, daughters should inherit the equivalent of half of what their brothers receive. However, it is clear from discussing this topic with both the men and women in the research area, that women rarely knew what their rightful inheritance should be, and that they were often given less than prescribed by Moslem law. Some of the men, understandably therefore, did not want inheritance to be discussed with their wives. They claimed that women did not know anything about this topic and therefore it would be a waste of time to discuss it with them. Similarly, some women were reluctant to talk about this subject and recommended I should instead refer my questions to a *MooDiBo*.

It is rare, and would be generally frowned upon by both men and women, for a woman to complain about the inheritance allocated to her<sup>8</sup>. I was only told of one woman in Baaga, who had nevertheless complained successfully about her inheritance (Box 5.3).

*Box 5.3: Successful complaint about inheritance*

*In Baaga, a woman, approximately 40 years old, who was not part of the research sample, complained about her inheritance. She even went to the local law court in Dori to take issue over her grievance. She was well respected by the men and women in the village for her behaviour towards her family and her conduct in the village in general, prior to this incident. Most of the men and women were, therefore, accepting of her complaint, obviously justified, and the vigour with which she complained against her unjust treatment.*

A proverb mentioned in this context was, *“If one woman does something she will be slaughtered for having done it. If another woman does the same thing one will slaughter an animal for her”*. If a woman, especially in older age, was well respected by her kin and by the more influential people in her village, she may complain successfully about her inheritance without losing the support or respect of either her kin and/or her immediate social environment. If not, she would certainly be criticised for it and stand to lose more than she might have gained.

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<sup>8</sup> Dupire (1963:57) found among the WoDaaBe in Niger, that a woman could complain about her inheritance, and she might do so even if it meant disturbing the harmony of the consanguineous family. Only when the complaint was against her direct brother (same mother, same father) though, was she unlikely to do so.

Interviews on morally acceptable behaviour for men and women revealed that the individual character and the acceptance of the individual within society play an important role in influencing their social status. Behaviour that would be frowned upon when shown by certain people, can indeed be excused when shown by others.

A woman must by all means keep good relations with her family of origin, especially when divorce rates are high. Complaining about her inheritance might put a strain on the relationship with her family, in particular with her brothers (cf. Agarwal 1994), and thus reduce the likelihood of being able to return as a dependant to her natal kin after a divorce.

In all research villages it was found that whether a widow was given an animal on her husband's death depended entirely on the good will of the husband's relatives and to some degree on the widow's age. If she was old, she would most likely stay with one of her adult sons and be taken care of by him. She then benefited indirectly from her son's inheritance. If she was of an age that she was likely to be married again, she would leave the deceased husband's compound after the mourning period and return to her natal kin. In this case, her husband's kin would avoid giving her any livestock, as the animals would in effect be leaving the patrilineage of the deceased husband.

### ***Bridewealth: futte***

Within the research area, the *futte* was the most essential aspect of the marriage gifts from the future husband's side. Other gifts were often reduced to symbolic gestures<sup>9</sup>. The *futte* are the animals or cash payments given by the husband or his father either to the bride or to her family. No fixed rule seemed to dominate, as to whether the bride or her family benefited from the bridewealth, but the difference in arrangements depended mainly on wealth of both the future husband's and the bride's household.

The amount of bridewealth reported varied from village to village according to ethnic group, the wealth of both households concerned, whether or not a woman had been married before, whether there was a high level of competition for a particularly beautiful or well-appreciated woman and whether groom and bride were closely related. As all or at least some of these

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<sup>9</sup> For an elaborate discussion of bridewealth among WoDaaBe, see Dupire 1963; 1970.

factors are often intertwined, and therefore confounding, it is difficult to draw generalisations from the information gathered as to the primary determinants of bridewealth. In general though, bridewealth was said to have decreased since the last drought due to the drop in animal numbers now owned per household (cf. de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:377).

Informants in all the villages agreed that in former times the *futte* was always paid in cattle. At the time of the study, cash payments were often substituted for cattle, more so in Liptako than in Djelgobe and Gaobe society, and more so among those households owning only a few head of cattle. Small ruminants were never given as *futte*, even though animals were always preferred to money by all ethnic groups, and by both men and women.

In general, marriages among kin were said to be cheaper, as the importance of these alliances was said to lie in the further strengthening of family ties (cf. Riesman 1977). However, some of those interviewed argued that nowadays even closely related families were only interested in a high *futte*. Others suggested that even though, publicly, it was likely that the same amount of animals would be announced as the *futte* in kin as in non-kin marriages, privately there would always be the possibility of credit among relatives, or even no eventual payment at all.

For a woman who had already been married, the bridewealth might go down, but this was not necessarily always the case. The important criterion was that she could still have children. Her age, beauty, character and the number of other interested followers (potential competition) then determined her new bridewealth (cf. Box 5.4).

***Box 5.4: Bridewealth***

*One exceptionally rich man in the research sample was challenged to pay an extremely high futte and gave an enormous amount of presents (rumours said, several hundred thousands of FCFA), even before the marriage was decided, for a woman who did not want to marry him in the first place. Everybody praised her for her beauty and the fact that, if he was such a rich man, he should be able to pay more than all her other followers. He did, and now, 15 years later, people were still talking about the amount of futte and preceding money that he gave to her family.*

In Ngoundam, before the drought, it was said to be common to give at least 3 heifers or cows and 1 bull as *futte*. At the time of the study most husbands paid 2 heifers and 1 bull for a virgin bride. Those who did not have animals paid between 75,000 and 100,000 FCFA.

In Banguil, the average and expected bridewealth was 1 bull and 1 heifer, plus approximately 10,000 FCFA, for marriages among relatives. If the families were not related though, up to 10 animals might have to be paid. Poor households, however, were reported to have paid between 25,000 and 50,000 FCFA, with no gift of any animals.

In Aliakoum, 5 cows were the stated norm for a virgin's bride-price. By contrast 1 cow plus 25,000 FCFA were reported to be enough for a divorced woman. Those who did not have animals had to pay between 150,000 and 250,000 FCFA.

In Baaga, according to interviewees, approximately 3 cows were given as bridewealth in former times. At the time of the study, it was more common not to give animals at all, only money, ranging between 30,000 and 75,000 FCFA. None of the women in Baaga that had married since the last drought, received animals as bridewealth.

Some women expressed the opinion that it was an advantage for the bridewealth to be low. The husband would be more likely to treat his wife better, knowing that she could more easily repay the bridewealth and leave him. On the other hand, women appreciated the prestige attached to achieving a high bridewealth, as this not only made a statement about the value of the woman but also indicated the wealth of her husband's household. Rich husbands were definitely preferred. The respect women accorded to other women was heavily influenced by the sum of bridewealth paid for each. Women married for a small bridewealth were very reluctant even to talk about this topic. Many said that a woman who achieved a high price was allowed to say anything in front of other women without being criticised. Fulbe women seemed generally to be very jealous of each other's bridewealth.

The question I would like to discuss here is whether or not the *futte* is a potential opportunity for Fulbe women to start a small herd of their own. For most households in the study, the bull, given as part of the bridewealth, was usually sold immediately by the bride's father on receipt. The proceeds from this sale were then used to complete the dowry – mainly the bed and, among Gaobe and Djelgobe, mats for the tent (cf. Chapter 4) - or the

bride's mother might buy silver for making bracelets or for decorating her daughter's hair. Wedding expenses were also paid for with the money from the sale of the bull. Very often though, younger women, especially those from economically impoverished Fulbe households, complained that a large proportion of the profits from the sale were used to meet their father's immediate needs in providing food for his own household, and were not invested in their dowry (cf. Castle 1992).

Where additional cattle were given as *futte*, they often stayed in the herd of the bride's father, especially when the bride was still very young and being married for the first time. As young married women were not supposed to go to the market to sell milk, they would receive no immediate economic benefit from having their own cows in their husband's herd. Once the new bride had given birth, her father (not the woman herself) would decide on whether or not to move the cows from his own herd to the husband's herd<sup>10</sup>, that is, if they had not been sold already or died in the meantime. If the groom was a close relative, and if a woman's kin were well off, the bride's father was more likely to allow the cattle to join his son-in-law's herd. On the other hand, if the husband was wealthy enough to provide his wife with all that she needed, the wife did usually not mind if her father kept the animals. Also, some, certainly not all, women wanted to keep their animals in their father's herd as they usually had more confidence in their father than in their husband (cf. Dupire 1963:78; cf. Chapter 6).

Where the *futte* had been paid in cash, it was recommended that the father invested the money in cattle before spending it on household needs or on other items for his own personal benefit. However, according to interviews with women, this was never done.

Parents who sold cows and heifers given as part of the bridewealth were generally considered unwise. Firstly, this deprived the woman of being able to give *sukude* to her own children (cf. de Bruijn 1997:635). Secondly, the animals or money given as bridewealth had to be returned by the family of the woman if she wanted a divorce, even if she had already had a child with her husband (cf. de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:321, 377). Only if the couple

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<sup>10</sup> This is contrary to the findings reported in a recent article by de Bruijn, in which she states that "A woman herself decides whether she wants to leave her own animals in her parent's herd, or whether she wants to take them into her husband's herd" (de Bruijn 1997:635).

had several children, or if the husband wanted a divorce and did not accuse his wife of unseemly behaviour (unfaithfulness, disrespect, etc.), she might keep the *futte* given to her.

### ***Animal loans: juptugol***

Among the WoDaaBe, so-called *habbanaaji* loans are described as being an important feature of the pastoral economy used to manifest solidarity between Fulbe, to help a household that has become destitute, or to give a helping hand to a young man starting up his own herd (Stenning 1959:41; Dupire 1962b:344; Beauvilain 1977:207; Swift *et al.* 1984:469). In such an event, a cow is lent to an individual until it produces three calves, which then become the property of the borrower. Sometimes milk cows are lent to cover short-term subsistence shortfalls. According to Swift *et al.* (1984) both types of loans were still practised among relatively impoverished pastoralist WoDaaBe in Niger in the early 1980s, despite the animal shortages that had affected the group as a whole at that time.

As was observed among impoverished Fulbe in Mali (cf. de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:322 *et seq.*; Castle 1992:27), *habbanaaji* loans were not practised at all in the research villages of my study. Only very rarely, and only among family members, a milk cow was lent to a destitute household to be milked for a specified length of time and then given back to the owner, without the borrower keeping any offspring of this animal. This practice was called *juptude* in my research area. The richest households in the sample in Banguil (those with 100 cattle and more) were often talked about critically for not sharing their wealth with poorer village members in this way, not even with their own relatives, and for even trying to physically separate themselves from others by constructing mud-brick houses far from their original village setting. During the research year only 3 out of the 39 households sampled reported lending a cow to families who had not a single cow they could milk. Interestingly, these 3 households were by no means among the richest in the sample. The women in the receiving households hardly benefited at all, at least not directly, from these animal loans because only a very small part of the milk could be sold; most was needed for human consumption.

### *Islamic charity: zaka*

One of the five pillars of Islam, alongside confession of faith, ritual prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage, as ideal behaviour, is to give alms for charitable purposes, either to those who are poor and helpless (*miskiine*<sup>11</sup>) or to a marabout (*mooDiBo*), a holy man (cf. Riesman 1977:185-186). In the research area this was called *zaka*, coming from the Arabic term *zakat* (cf. Iliffe 1987:30 *et seq.*).

De Bruijn & van Dijk state, that for the Fulbe in the Hayre these forms of social security may have existed in former times but have gradually eroded with increasing impoverishment (de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:28). In their own Fulbe sample, nobody paid *zaka* in the form of animals because “*nobody feels he has got enough to share*” (de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:404).

In my sample, reports of the percentage of a man’s animal holdings that have to be given as *zaka* differed widely among those interviewed. One informant (a very poor marabout, owning only a few goats and sheep) claimed that no matter how many animals one owned, 10% had to be given as alms. However, it is possible that some personal interest, or at least wishful thinking, coloured the information he gave. Some claimed that only if a Pullo had more than 30 cattle, was he or she obliged to give *zaka* (cf. de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:322). Others claimed that there was no obligation at all to give *zaka* in the form of animals.

Sadou and Schenk (1986) describe the practice common in Oudalan and Seno as follows: if a Pullo man owns 30 cattle, he is supposed to give a 2 year old bull calf every year. If he has 40 head, a heifer is required. 60 head requires 2 bull calves of 2 years to be given, 70 head, 1 bull calf and 1 heifer, and so on (Sadou & Schenk 1986:5).

It is true that Fulbe in the research area did, with very few exceptions, take the duty of giving *zaka* very seriously, particularly in relation to agricultural produce (Chapter 7). However, bearing in mind the low number of cattle per household, it is evident that

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<sup>11</sup> The Fulbe in the research area distinguish between two forms of poverty: the adjective *miskiine* is used for those who are structurally poor, those who not only lack material wealth but also physical strength and social ties. This includes destitute individuals, for example elderly widows or widowers without family and animals and handicapped people without the support of relatives. Contrarily, the *TalkaBe* (adj. *talka*) are those who are poor in resources, but still physically able to work, and therefore not helpless (cf. de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:401).

household heads were very reluctant to give up any of their animals for such a purpose. Only a few households, and even fewer individuals, owned more than 30 cattle.

During the 16 months of field research, only the richest household head of all (with around 300 cattle to his name) gave animals as *zaka* (the same household that was most heavily criticised for not practising *juptude*). He made it very public exactly what and how much he gave, obviously expecting to be praised and admired for it, and hoping to gain political and social influence in the process. Four other households also claimed to have given animals recently, or at least indicated that they were preparing to. The women in the sample never gave *zaka*, but then nor were they often the beneficiaries of *zaka* alms.

### ***Purchase of animals: soodugol***

The study by Swift *et al.* among the WoDaaBe in Niger showed that, despite a considerable level of impoverishment, a large proportion (41%) of annual household spending was on animal purchases (Swift *et al.* 1984:379 *et seq.*). Swift *et al.* explain these surprisingly high animal purchases by the WoDaaBe's need to keep an optimal age and sex structure in the herd. Categories of animals not necessary or favourable for reproduction, such as old females, adult males or animals with undesirable qualities, are sold in order to buy replacement animals such as young females or males ready for fattening. If a young animal is needed for slaughter, e.g. for a marriage, an old animal may be sold and two young ones bought in order to keep one of them in the herd (*ibid.* 1984:381). Swift *et al.* assume that the higher the expenditure on animals, the poorer the household must be in terms of its herd size, as a sufficiently large herd should reproduce enough suitable animals for the household to have adequate milk and guarantee the natural reproduction of the herd (*ibid.*:381).

In my sample, this was clearly not the case. Those households who engaged in animal trade on a large scale earned enough money to invest in livestock on a regular basis. Only very few other men earned enough cash to buy animals during the research year and were hardly in a position to be replacing animals.

For Fulbe women in my sample, whose only income was the sale of milk products, it was virtually impossible to buy animals, even goats. None of the women sampled bought an animal during the research year. This is different from the situation observed among

WoDaaBe nearly 40 years ago by Dupire (1962b) or that observed more recently among settled agropastoralist Fulbe dairywomen in Nigeria, who were commonly able to purchase small stock, and on occasions also cattle, with their earnings from selling milk (Waters-Bayer 1985).

### ***Herd reproduction***

According to those interviewed, the natural reproduction of cattle was, for most men and women, the most important strategy employed to increase animal numbers. Fertility rates among cattle, as well as the timing of the beginning and end of their fertile period, vary depending on partially interdependent factors: nutritional status of fodder, rainfall, soil quality, species, ability to buy extra fodder, etc. (Dahl & Hjort 1976:33; Jahnke 1982). If additional fodder is given to a cow, milk yields are higher and calf survival is more likely.

The most important factor though, according to interviewees, was “*God’s will*”. Individuals might have owned animals from early childhood onwards. As they got older, those animals given to them for their naming ceremony or as part of pre-mortem inheritance might, as indicated earlier, have either died, been sold or alternatively grown to small herds in their own right. All the Fulbe of my sample said that this long-term process of herd dynamics was solely in the hands of God, and tended to account for the variation in success rates in terms of an individual’s good fortune.

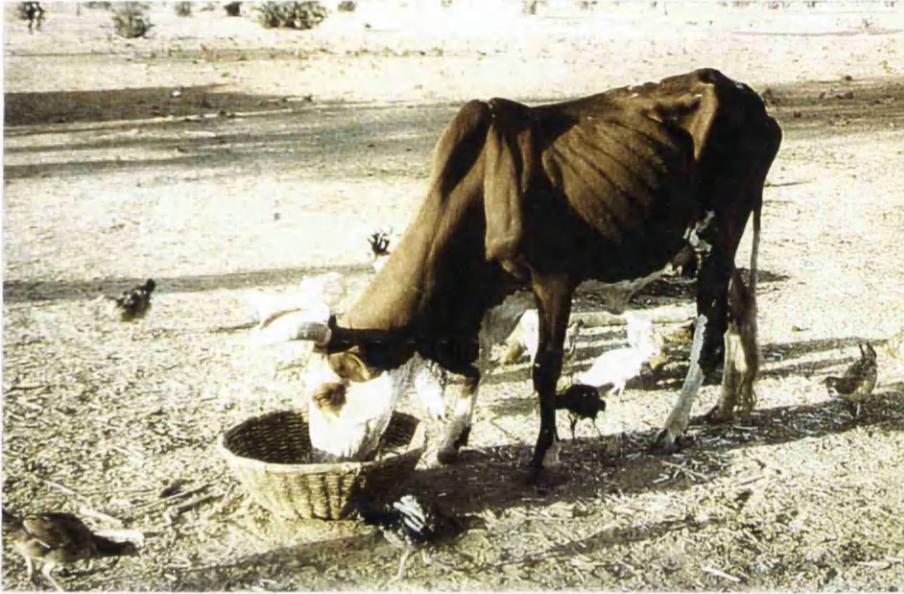
As for the woman, no woman I interviewed, complained that her husband, or any other male family members, cared less well for her animals than for his. Rates of natural increase were therefore unlikely to differ for animals owned by women and those owned by men.

### **Expenditure obligations**

In the research area expenditure for livestock included food supplements like bran, cotton seeds or hay. Food supplements were usually only given in the hot dry season to milk cows or animals that were weaker than others. In general, these Fulbe tried to avoid feeding their cattle with supplements, as they assumed that this would result in their cattle coping less well later in life with the natural scarcity of pasture. The more a household’s herd was on transhumance the less food supplements were given. Consequently, the expenditure for such

items was much less for households in Ngoundam, whose Fulbe Djelgobe were highly mobile, than it was in Aliakoum and Baaga and for those less mobile households in Banguil.

**Plate 5.1: Hungry cow eating bran, Ngoundam**



Goats and sheep might be given food supplements when they were kept in the homestead for fattening. More often though, they were fed household residues rather than purchased fodder (see Chapter 6).

In places where salt was in short supply, it had to be purchased for the herd during the wet season. This was the case in all villages but Baaga. Then, in the hot dry season, water for the herd was badly needed and those who helped digging wells sometimes had to be paid. Salt and hired labour were therefore important seasonal expenditure obligations for most Fulbe in the research area.

Another expenditure item was the regular vaccination of cattle. Virtually all households in the sample had all their cattle vaccinated on a regular basis.

In terms of individual expenditure obligations, a father might buy supplementary food for his wife's or his daughter's animals, as long as the animals were kept in his herd. A daughter whose animals were kept with her father, even after having been married and moved to her

husband's compound, did not have to contribute to this expenditure. Once a son had grown up he was gradually asked to contribute to the purchase of food supplements, especially if he was able to earn cash by salaried herding or through labour activities while on seasonal migration. The extent of his contribution depended on the economic situation of the household and the individuals concerned. When a daughter's animals had moved to her husband's herd, the husband then took care of these expenses. A wife might then also contribute towards these costs by selling a small ruminant or by exchanging milk for bran, if she wished, but she was not obliged to do this. Interviews revealed that, in particular, women living in destitute households, or women who had moved back to their parental household after divorce, were more likely to contribute to these expenses. Women who had stayed with their husband for a very long time, were also more likely to contribute to these expenses. This was often an indication that they had built up a good working relationship with their husband.

For the 2 households in Ngoundam in which women (Ramsatou and Djenabe, see Box 5.2) owned virtually all the household's animals, it was women who were responsible for taking care of cattle-related expenditure.

## **Decision-making rights on herd management**

In all research villages adult Fulbe men took most management decisions over herding strategies (e.g. transhumance patterns) and decisions on whether or not to give animals additional fodder. As a young Fulbe boy grew up, he would gradually take more decisions over his own animals and bear more responsibility concerning herding both cattle and small ruminants that belonged to him and those of the other household members.

The Fulbe women in the sample did not admit to taking decisions about herding techniques or patterns of transhumance (cf. de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995: 150). Even in the two households in Ngoundam in which most animals were owned by women, those women claimed that they never contributed to the management of the herd. Participant observation revealed that, at least for the elder of the two women, involvement in herd management did occur (Box 5.5).

***Box 5.5: Decision-making over animals***

*After having come to know Ramsatou's household more intimately and observing them over a period of time, it became obvious that Ramsatou took most, if not all decisions concerning herd management, although she would not openly admit to it when being asked directly. However, she rather openly gave her nephew who was the official household head instruction on issues such as transhumance and animal sales. The reason was very simple. Wuri had a reputation within the village, well justified, of being neither clever nor hard-working.*

*Concerning Ramsatou's daughter, Djenaba, although she owned most of the household's animals I never observed her openly giving her husband any instructions concerning herd management. This was due to the fact that the relationship, being that of husband and wife, put her in a lower position than was the case for Ramsatou who had an aunt- nephew relationship with Wuri, the household head, and much younger than her.*

In general decision-making and control over livestock by Fulbe in the present study was very much a male affair, although occasionally older women, seemed to be able to exert some influence. Women's answers to my questions on whether they took decisions on herd management seemed sometimes to be more a reflection of the 'norm' rather than of the practice. The extent to which women can influence their husband's decision is, however, as an outsider, difficult to assess and certainly also depends on the mutual understanding of the couple.

## **Labour allocation**

Recent studies in pastoral societies in Africa have shown that women contribute a considerable part of the labour involved in production within the pastoral sector (e.g. Little 1985; White 1986; Dahl 1987b; Fratkin & Smith 1994). In the present sample, as elsewhere, not only gender, but also age and household demography are seen as influencing an individual's labour contribution.

There are two peaks of labour in the seasonal calendar of most Sahelian agro-pastoral groups: the dry season when cattle have to be watered, and in the rainy season when labour

has to be freed for agricultural production while still taking sufficient care of the pastoral sector (cf. Thébaud 1998:40). Unlike most agricultural societies, labour in pastoral and agropastoral societies is needed on a continual basis throughout the year to take care of the herd (cf. Swift 1986). In the following section labour allocation in herding, watering and transhumance will be discussed.

### ***Herding***

Within the research sample, young boys often started herding small ruminants from around the age of six. Where there was sufficient adult household labour this starting age was sometimes a bit older. Where there was a household labour shortage, young girls also helped in herding.

Once a boy reached around the age of twelve, he helped in herding and watering the family's cattle, especially taking them to the wells in the dry season. Girls also helped in this, more so in Ngoundam than in any of the other villages. The older a boy became, the more work he was expected to undertake in the pastoral sector, while for girls the opposite applied; they focused more on 'female', domestic tasks, primarily helping their mothers. If a man had adult sons he was likely to delegate most of the work to them. He was then freer to work on establishing, maintaining or improving social relations.

No adult woman in the sample helped in herding. Herding was particularly labour intensive in the wet season, when cattle or small stock can damage fields and strain the relationship between field owners and herders (e.g. Breusers 1998:264 *et seq.*). The situation in the research area was not as bad as that described by Beauvilain (1977:58) in the Dallol Bosso valley of Niger or by Bassett (1994) in Côte d'Ivoire, where because of uncompensated crop damage, the relationships between Fulbe and sedentary farmers were very bad and conflicts regularly erupted into violent clashes. Nevertheless, problems of this type did occur in the research area, as the following examples reveal (Box 5.6).

***Box 5.6: Crop damage***

*In 1995, 53 cattle of a household in Ngoundam caused considerable damage to a Bella's field. The cattle were caught and taken to the deputy of Ngoundam. The Pullo held*

*responsible for the damage officially had to pay 500 FCFA per cow to get them back, but after discussions the fine was dropped to 15,000 FCFA in total.*

*Again in Ngoundam, a crop-damage incident occurred and the Fulbe and the Bella involved in the ensuing dispute could not agree on the amount of compensation to be paid, so they ended up taking the matter to the authorities. The Pullo held responsible for the damage, was then obliged to pay 10,000 FCFA to the Bella whose farm was affected and 44,000 FCFA to the authorities.*

*In 1996 a Pullo in Ngoundam had just sown his own field. A few weeks later his herd damaged the field of a Bella. He was forced to pay 25,000 FCFA to the Bella as compensation. However, he didn't want to pay this sum at that time and decided instead to go on transhumance and leave his field unattended. By the time I left the research area, 8 months later, he still hadn't returned to Ngoundam – and still hadn't paid the fine.*

*In Banguil, the richest household head (with around 300 cattle) had to pay 100,000 FCFA as compensation to a local farmer a few years ago. Since then he chose to keep most of his animals in Mali.*

*In Baaga one household had to pay 8000 FCFA twice during the research year as compensation for crop damage.*

These examples show that compensation and fines can be severe, although often, if the damage had been caused by a herd for the first time, there would only be a warning. Conflicts between field owners and herders were seldom brought before the administrative authorities, partly because the procedure is cumbersome and not least because of the additional costs involved. The herder, if found guilty, not only has to pay compensation to the field owner but also a so-called '*frais de divagation*' to the administration (cf. Breusers 1998:265). In Markoye, the administrative cost of impounding an animal was reported to be 500 FCFA per cow per day and for goats and sheep 1000 to 1500 FCFA per day. In Gorom Gorom these fines were even higher: 1250 – 1500 FCFA per cow and 1800 –2000 FCFA per goat<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> The fines for small stock were higher as they were considered to inflict more damage.

The Fulbe of Ngoundam judged the situation to be getting worse, as the local Bella had progressively extended their cultivation into the wetlands<sup>13</sup>. Most Djelgobe in Ngoundam therefore preferred to undertake transhumance every rainy season rather than risk conflict with the sedentary population.

Great care, therefore, was needed in all the research villages when herding, especially during the rainy season. This season is the time when labour was most needed in the agricultural sector. One might assume that either herds were herded communally at this time or outside labour was hired to free household labour for farming. Only in Baaga did Liptako organise a rotation system to herd their animals during the agricultural season. Young men, from within one section of the village, took turns in collectively herding the animals of several households both day and night, to prevent them damaging fields, thus allowing individuals to pursue agricultural tasks. Elsewhere in the research villages, no such arrangement was reported or observed. Likewise, the use of hired labour was rarely found among the households sampled. Only the two richest households in the sample occasionally hired Fulbe herders from the same village, paying 3,500 FCFA per herder per month. One other rich household head used family members from other households to herd for him, thus avoiding having to pay a regular herding salary. All the other households reported not having the means to pay for hired herders.

### ***Watering***

Within the pastoral sector, in this study area at least, the dry season was the time of hardest work. Cattle and small ruminants had to be watered regularly at hand-dug wells or pumps. By May, at the latest, fodder availability became a serious problem. Fulbe often, therefore, only watered their animals every second day in order to be able to take them further into the bush to look for better grazing. Around the wells, vegetation quickly became sparse.

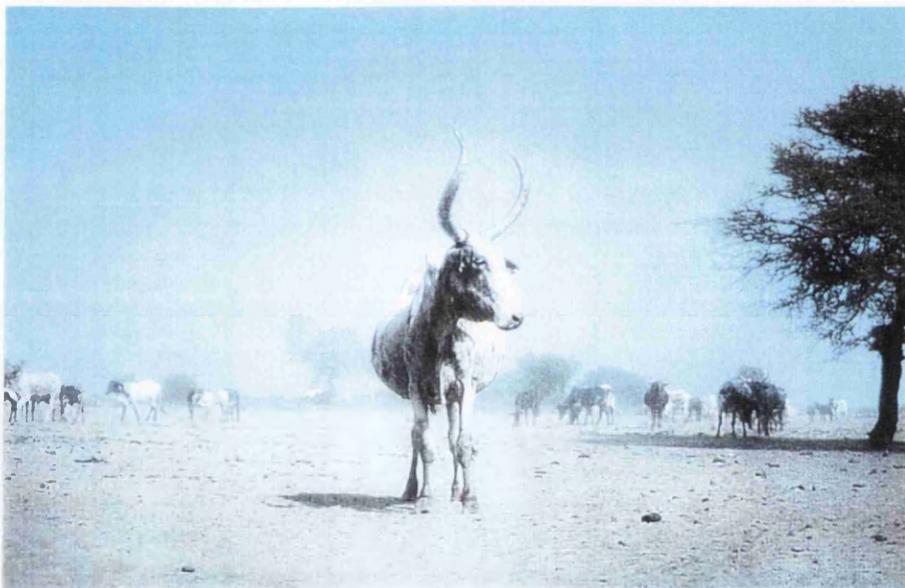
In the households sampled, boys, sometimes girls, and all adult men (never adult women) helped in watering the cattle at wells. Women in all villages transported water from wells to their homesteads to water those animals that were kept at home (cf. Dahl & Hjort 1976).

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<sup>13</sup> Breusers (1998:266 *et seq.*) found, by analysing historical sources and interviewing local people, that in the area around Kaya on the Plateau Central in Burkina Faso crop damage was just as prominent an issue during colonial times as it is today. However, the locals' perception indicated a rise in incidences.

Where there was more than one adult male in the household, the one who herded the animals during the night would usually rest during the day, while the others took care of watering the animals in the morning and sometimes again in the evening, depending on water availability and grazing patterns. None of the households in my sample employed hired labour for watering. Likewise, those households that herded the animals of others (cf. Chapter 6), received no help from the owners of those animals.

**Plate 5.2: Cattle herd in the dry season, Ngoundam**



**Plate 5.3: Watering animals, Ngoundam**



## ***Transhumance***

Whether a household and its animals went on transhumance, and on what scale and when, depended not only on ecological factors but also on a combination of social, economic and political factors, including ethnic group, size of the household, size of the herd, engagement of males in activities other than pastoralism, and expansion of agriculture in the area of settlement (e.g. Milleville 1991b:159 *et seq.*; McCabe 1994; Welte 1997).

For the households of the Djelgobe sample in Ngoundam, usually whole households went on transhumance. For all the Liptako households sampled in Baaga and most of the Gaobe in Aliakoum and Banguil, transhumance was not a household undertaking but was pursued by individual household members. Both Riesman (1977) and Welte (1997:18) observed that usually the youngest adult male goes on transhumance with the household's animals. If he is unable to do so, older brothers will then take on the responsibility. In this research sample, there appeared to be individual specialisation within most households. Often it was an elder son, and not the youngest, who went on transhumance because he was considered the most responsible and experienced for this difficult task.

Many Djelgobe and Gaobe women reported a preference for going on transhumance, despite the hardships these journeys entailed. The main reason why they liked going on transhumance was that there was usually more milk for individual women. Also, the household head would more often buy rice instead of millet and sometimes it was possible to live off milk alone for some time, therefore women had to pound less millet - an arduous task. Furthermore, depending on the number of women participating in the transhumance, and the number of milk-cows going with them, women may be in a position to sell more milk *en route* than would have been possible while staying in the home village (see Chapter 7) (cf. Welte 1989:38; Riesman 1977:72).

## **Conclusions and discussion**

In this Chapter I have discussed animal holdings among Fulbe in the research area. Nearly half of the sample households had fewer than 10 cattle. The mean cattle holdings per household were similar in the 4 sample villages, ranging from 15 to 26, with that of the Liptako village Baaga being the lowest. When examined in terms of TLU per capita, the

Djelgobe sample were marginally wealthier, if the exceptionally rich cattle traders in Banguil are excluded from the Banguil mean. Still, there is little difference between the research villages, despite the fact that Djelgobe engage less in agriculture (see Chapter 7) and income diversification (see Chapter 4).

In general, most households were relatively poor, especially in comparison to the reported wealth households had before the droughts. Only three households in Banguil managed to accumulate an extraordinary wealth in cattle by successfully engaging in large-scale cattle trading.

Contrary to some studies (Hopen 1958; Stenning 1959) Fulbe women in my research sample theoretically have the right to own animals (cf. de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995). Nevertheless, few women had livestock holdings. Nearly 60% of the women sampled had none or only 1 cow and only 2% had more than 10. The distribution of cattle owned by women was not even across the four villages, nor within them. In this respect two observations may enable us to shed light on factors influencing women's access to cattle ownership. Firstly, the fact that more than half of the women in Ngoundam were relatively rich, owning 2 or more cows. Secondly, the fact that elsewhere the only women who had considerable livestock holdings were those in the households of wealthy cattle traders in Banguil.

Gifts of livestock are made at naming ceremonies, received through anticipatory inheritance and also distributed as inheritance on the death of the owner. In all of these transactions, women are clearly discriminated against in all villages, although more so among the Liptako than among the Djelgobe sampled. The bridewealth, if paid in cattle, can be an important means by which women access animals. In the Liptako village, bridewealth is nowadays always paid in cash and, in most cases, is spent by the bride's father for daily household needs. Thus Liptako bridewealth is of little benefit to the bride. By contrast, the bridewealth in Gaobe and especially Djelgobe villages represents a potential source of animals for women, although their fathers sometimes keep their bridewealth to meet pressing household needs caused by impoverishment.

There is reason to believe, therefore, that both cultural reasons (slightly different between the three sub-ethnic groups) and level of impoverishment play an important role in regulating women's access to animals. Why are women often denied animal ownership?

Firstly, with virilocal marriage rules, a woman would eventually leave her kin and live, almost certainly, in her husband's family. Once her animals were in the family of the husband they would no longer be accessible to her natal kin. If a woman died, but had children, all her animals would be inherited by her children and therefore become part of the husband's lineage's wealth. Only if she died before having had children would her animals be returned to her father or brothers. All Fulbe in the study tried to avoid animals leaving their own family and benefiting another family, especially when they were already relatively poor in livestock.

Secondly, contrary to some studies on other Fulbe before and after the droughts (e.g. Dupire 1970; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995) among the Fulbe of this research area, a man was supposed to provide for his family's subsistence needs (adequate food and clothing), and thus was considered to be more in need of capital than a woman. Given the strength of patrilineal and patrilocal patterns, together with the fact that a man was supposed to take care of a family, while women were taken care of, this preferential treatment of men in terms of access to animals is hardly surprising.

Women usually did not complain about the systematic denial of animals, because it would be frowned upon by both men and other women. Perhaps another, more important, reason was that women were heavily dependant on preserving good relationships with their natal kin. Divorce in Fulbe society is common and on either the death of a husband or in the event of divorce, women normally returned to their father's compound.

It is difficult to assess whether the difficulties that women face in accessing animals have been accentuated by impoverishment following the recent droughts. Women's own perception was that in former times they owned more animals than today. In families that were generally wealthier before the droughts this may well be true.

For both sexes, user rights and obligations towards the pastoral sector change during the lifecycle and are influenced by household demography. However, throughout their lifecycle

women have fewer decision rights than men over their animals, and less responsibility concerning expenditure on supplementary food and other forms of animal care, such as vaccination. In most households, almost all decisions on herd management are taken by men, even for those animals owned by women or their children.

Only in one case, Ramsatou's, was it obvious that she took most, if not all decisions over the herd. This was due to her wealth, but also because of her age and household demography – Ramsatou was the eldest member of the household and much older than the household head. Furthermore the household head did not have much authority in general, as discussed in Box 5.5. In her daughter's household, despite Djenaba being wealthier than her husband, it seemed to be her husband who exercised most control over herd management. However, it would not surprise me to learn that without my noticing, Ramsatou had a say as well.

# 6

## ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF LIVESTOCK HOLDINGS

### Introduction

This chapter discusses how the pastoral sector generates income for the household as a whole and how this income benefits its individual members.

Studies have suggested that herding animals belonging to non-family members (non-Fulbe ethnic groups, merchants, civil servants, farmers, etc.) was uncommon before the drought (e.g. Dupire 1962:139; 126-7; Swift *et al.* 1984; Bassett 1994:147), but is now a common practice despite its disadvantages (Swift *et al.* 1984:320 *et seq.*, 497 *et seq.*; Castle 1992:27; Toulmin 1992:190; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:325), (see Chapter 1). At the same time, a decrease in the amount a Pullo herder receives as payment for herding, can be observed in many areas (Beauvilain 1977; Swift *et al.* 1984:503; Castle 1992:27; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:325). In this Chapter I will discuss the various herding arrangements found in the study area. To what degree do herding contracts present a possibility for the Fulbe of this region to stay in the pastoral economy? What do Fulbe get for herding others' animals? Who benefits from herding contracts in the household? Who takes decisions on whether or not to herd someone's animals? How is the importance of such arrangements judged by Fulbe themselves?

Another potential source of income from within the pastoral sector is through the formation of manuring arrangements. Various studies give account of mutually beneficial manuring arrangements between Fulbe herders and both Fulbe and non-Fulbe cultivators (Hopen 1958; Beauvilain 1977; Claude *et al.* 1991; Toulmin 1992; Gefu 1992; Waters-Bayer and Bayer 1994; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995; Fraser 1997; Thébaud 1998). In this Chapter I present information on manure arrangements in the sampled households to show their relative importance to herders in this region. Are manure

contracts a way of raising an income for pastoral and agropastoral Fulbe? Who engages in it and who benefits from these arrangements within the Fulbe household?

The third part of this chapter discusses Fulbe animal sales in the research villages, as the most important means by which a household can obtain a monetary income. Whose animals are sold? Is it, as de Bruijn & van Dijk (1995) found, women's animals that are sold first? How is the income from animal sales spent by the different sexes?

## Herding contracts

In the present research sample roughly one-third of the households reported herding the animals of a non-family, non-household member (Table 6.1). The Fulfulde term used for this practice in the northern part of Burkina Faso is *halfinde*. Those animals herded for someone who is not a member of the family are called *kalifa*. Mutual short-term help in herding during times of labour shortage is not counted as a herding contract in the following table.

**Table 6.1: Involvement of households in contract herding (n=39)**

Village	Sub-ethnic group	No. of households (% in brackets) ...	
		with <i>kalifa</i> in their herds	without <i>kalifa</i> in their herds
Ngoundam (n=11)	Djelgobe	4 (36%)	7 (64%)
Banguil (n=11)	Gaobe	2 (18%)	9 (82%)
Aliakoum (n=6)	Gaobe	2 (33%)	4 (67%)
Baaga (n=11)	Liptako	4 (36%)	7 (64%)
Total (n=39)	-	12 (31%)	27 (69%)

The proportion of households per village who had *kalifa* animals in their herd were similar in the four research villages among the three ethnic groups; roughly one third of all households sampled. Only in Banguil was the percentage somewhat lower.

It is important to note here that 3 out of the 4 households in Ngoundam that herded animals for others were those that did not engage in agriculture at all. It may thus be suggested that herding animals for others might have been an effective means to help at least some households to stay more or less fully in the pastoral economy (cf. Swift *et*

al.1984). To understand why this may well be the case, the benefits a household gained from herding in the 4 research villages are presented.

### *Payment*

In Baaga all owners of *kalifa* animals were Rimaibe, in most cases those Rimaibe with whom each respective Fulbe family had a traditional association. Consequently, all these *kalifa* owners lived in the same village as their Fulbe Liptako herders. Usually the number of animals herded was small and did not exceed 15.

In Ngoundam, Banguil and Aliakoum the owners of entrusted animals included local Bella and civil servants or traders from semi-urban centres like Markoye and Gorom Gorom. Those households in Ngoundam that herded animals for others often had in excess of 100 animals entrusted to their care.

Payment for these herding arrangements among the Liptako and Rimaibe were based on reciprocal help. In return for herding their animals, all Rimaibe helped their Fulbe herders weeding their fields for one or two days in the rainy season. In one case the Rimaibe owner of the animals participated in sowing the fields, because the herder was still on transhumance. As Rimaibe were more likely to own a donkey cart than Fulbe (none of the Fulbe in the sample owned a donkey cart) they also assisted their Fulbe herders to transport the harvest to the compound. Furthermore, the Rimaibe often dug the wells needed to water the animals in the dry season.

In Baaga, as a result of co-residence in the same village, the Rimaibe owners usually did the milking of their own cows themselves or were brought the milk by the Fulbe herder every day. The Fulbe herder benefited only from the *kalifa* animals' milk when he was on transhumance or if given the owner's permission. This latter condition was rarely the case and only reported to have happened in one household in the Baaga sample.

Two Liptako herders particularly appreciated the increased amount of manure made available by adding *kalifa* animals to the herd. In nearly all arrangements between Liptako and Rimaibe in the sample, agreement was reached on taking turns in manuring the Fulbe's fields one year and the Rimaibe's the following year (cf. chapter 7). One Fulbe herder reported that when the herd stayed in the Rimaibe's field for the whole year he received 5,000 FCFA from the Rimaibe. It is likely that in this particular case the

Rimaibe had very few animals in this joint herd, while the Fulbe herder owned the majority.

When a *kalifa* animal was sold the herder might get 2,500 FCFA as a share of the profit, but this was not an obligation among Fulbe Liptako and Rimaibe in Baaga. In the event of a *kalifa* animal falling ill, it was slaughtered and the herder given some meat<sup>1</sup>.

In Ngoundam, Banguil and Aliakoum none of the *kalifa* owners compensated the herder with help in agricultural or other labour activities. Compensation differed widely between the households, as the following case studies indicate:

**Box 6.1: Kalifa animals**

*In Ngoundam most of the cattle in Djibilirou's herd were kalifa animals. The owner of the animals was a Malian trader who now lives in Markoye. Depending on where the herder went on transhumance he was somewhere between 8 and 40 km away from Markoye. He started herding the Malian's 28 head of cattle seven years ago. Now the herd had grown to more than 100 head. The workload had increased considerably, especially during the dry season, when watering the animals at the well was very arduous. However, Djibilirou complained that despite his increased labour he did not get a higher benefit apart from increased milk yields that he was allowed to keep. In addition to the milk, every market day in Markoye (once a week) he received 100g tea, 500g sugar, soap and tobacco from the trader if Djibilirou was present. Occasionally the kalifa owner bought clothes and millet for Djibilirou and his wife and their children. The salt that the kalifa owner supplied was also sufficient for Djibilirou's own animals. Supplementary food for the animals was bought separately. For each bull the owner sold, Djibilirou received 4000 FCFA.*

*Djibilirou complained that in former times he would be given a calf for occasionally herding the animals of someone else, but that this was no longer the case. He was of the opinion that, today, more Fulbe had kalifa animals in their herds than in former times, because Fulbe did not have many animals of their own any more. However, he did not consider this as a way to rebuild his herd, just a way to survive without cultivating. If he didn't herd these kalifa animals he would have been more able to cultivate, but having three sons who were still too young to herd on their own, he could not have done both activities at the same time. Therefore he was still forced to sell animals as his only means of generating cash to purchase grain.*

<sup>1</sup> Usually animals are slaughtered when there is no chance of recovery so that at least the meat can be consumed. Moslems do not eat the meat of animals that have died a natural death.

*Adama from Banguil had herded the animals of a Mauretanian family in Markoye for 20 years. He grew up with the son of this family. Adama occasionally got gifts of clothes and shoes for his family. He did not receive any millet, but when he kept the animals during the agricultural season he was given 4000 FCFA to make up for the loss of labour. He was allowed to keep the milk of the kalifa animals, but he sometimes brought some milk to the owner in Markoye. For every animal that was sold he was given some money.*

*He also had kalifa animals in his small ruminant herd, usually for a limited time. He got 250 FCFA per sheep or goat, regardless of the length of time he kept them.*

*He would have liked to herd more animals belonging to other people, but did not know of any more people who would have lent animals to him.*

*In Aliakoum, Oumarou herded some cattle for two Mossi civil servants and some Bella cultivators from Gorom Gorom. In return the owners of the entrusted animals sent two or three people each year to help with Oumarou's agricultural work for a day and gave him occasional gifts of shoes, clothes tea and sugar.*

*For herding sheep he got 50 FCFA per sheep weekly*

In Ngoundam, Banguil and Aliakoum, there was no fixed price for herding; all arrangements depended on the individuals concerned and involved less formalised exchanges of gifts (cf. Thébaud 1998). *Kalifa* herders of cattle occasionally received goods like clothes or shoes for themselves or their families, cereals, and lump sums of cash. The payment fluctuated depending on the owner's economic situation. One of the main assets of herding contracts for Djelgobe and Gaobe in the sample was that they were entitled to keep the milk. This was of particular interest for the women in the households who were then able to sell '*kalifa*' milk together with that of their own household's cattle.

Two Djelgobe households claimed that the benefits they accrued from herding contracts were sufficient enough to permit them not to cultivate at all. Nevertheless they also reported not being happy with how little this benefit was, rarely paying them enough in cash or animals to build up their own herds and wealth.

Ouedraogo's (1995:12) study in the Sahel of Burkina Faso and Breusers's (1998:274) study on the Plateau Central both reported that it is still common practice for herders of

*kalifa* animals to be given a heifer every three years as payment. To the contrary, all informants in my sample insisted that this was no longer the case.

Only those who herded small livestock as *kalifa* were paid in cash on a regular basis. However, in the research area small stock were only herded for short periods of time because the owners usually wanted to sell them at short notice for cash.

### ***Decision-making***

Decisions over whether *kalifa* animals should be added into the herd were taken by the male household head, but might have been influenced by the herder (usually an elder son). Only in one exceptional case, where the Djelgobe woman, Ramsatou, owned most animals, did she decide whether or not to include other animals in the household's herd. She opted against it as she thought her own herd would suffer, especially as her nephew did not look after the animals they already had very well. Although her daughter also owned most of her household's animals, the decision on whether to add *kalifa* animals into her herd was taken by her husband. He added *kalifa* animals to the herd.

In general, it was the men, rather than the women who had the social network to approach cattle owners and negotiate terms of contract herding. Women would not have been able to talk to other men on such matters, even men from non-Fulbe groups. As women are rarely involved in herding, they would not have been the most appropriate person for cattle owners to approach within a herding household.

All informants agreed that the benefits of contract herding did not adequately compensate for the inconvenience and extra work involved. However, nearly half of those who engaged in contract herding felt obliged to do so for economic reasons. Others felt obliged to maintain their herding arrangements for personal reasons, such as long term friendships with the cattle owners concerned. None of those who considered they had sufficient animals and/or agricultural assets to meet the household's needs was willing to herd animals for others unless for reasons of moral obligation towards a needy relative or friend. At the other extreme, Fulbe Djelgobe and Gaobe argued, when a herder had very few animals of his own, non-herders were unlikely to entrust animals to this person as they feared their animals would be overmilked.

The reason given by some informants, particularly Gaobe and Liptako, for why they did not take *kalifa* animals into their herds, was the shortage of labour available in their

households. A household was not likely to accept *kalifa* animals if this hindered the pursuit of other, more profitable or beneficial work - such as seasonal labour migration or agriculture - unless it had been a long standing arrangement that could not easily be broken. Non-herders, likewise, were not willing to entrust their animals to a household that was likely to experience labour shortage resulting in children and adolescents herding their animals.

It is not clear whether impoverishment has made the custom of *halfinde* more common now than it was before. Contrary to general opinion held in the literature (e.g. Beauvilain 1977; Swift *et al.* 1984; Castle 1992; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995) one old Gaobe man claimed that in former times Fulbe were more, not less, involved in *halfinde*, and that it had declined these days because there were hardly any benefits to be gained apart from the milk. He argued that the poorer households preferred to go to Côte d'Ivoire and buy one or two cows from the revenues they gained there, instead of herding for other people. Others claimed that only after the droughts, they had started doing *halfinde*, mainly in order to restore their own herds.

Despite their frequent involvement, nearly all Fulbe men interviewed in the research villages argued that there were more problems than benefits involved in herding someone else's. If an animal died or escaped herders were often suspected of having sold it and had to pay for the animal if they could not prove their innocence (cf. Swift *et al.* 1984:507).

***Box 6.2: Lack of confidence in the herder***

*One morning, while working in Aliakoum, a dead cow lay next to a compound. In the evening it was still there untouched. On enquiring about the animal, I was told that the animal was a kalifa animal. Prior to this, the herder had had problems with the owner when he slaughtered an ill cow while on transhumance. The owner accused the Fulbe herder of having sold the animal or at least unnecessarily having slaughtered it. This time when one of the entrusted animals became severely ill, the Fulbe herder did not dare to slaughter it before having the owner's permission and had sent for him in the night. The owner did not appear before the animal had died in the early morning and had still not come by that evening. I was later told that the owner collected the cadaver in the night with a donkey cart, probably to let it waste in the bush.*

## Manure contracts

Within the research sample a variety of manuring arrangements could be observed. A manuring arrangement is defined as an agreement, arranged prior to the arrival on the field or not, which is paid for by the recipient, whether in cash, food (i.e. millet) or other goods. Arrangements with *kalifa* owners or an unpaid stay on someone's field (like a stay on a close relative's or the unauthorised staying on an unknown's field) are not included.

Often the Fulbe of the sample mentioned that they stayed on someone's field without any form of payment, merely as a place to stay with their tent and cattle. For example, the Gaobe from Banguil moved in the hot dry season into the vicinity of Markoye in order to approach the market and to facilitate the watering of animals at the nearby pond and hand dug-wells (see Chapter 3). Every year they stayed on a Bella's field for at least three months. The owner of the field complained that in dry years, an excess of manure burnt his crops and reduced his yields. He would have preferred the Fulbe not to stay on his field.

Others, particularly in Baaga, had arrangements with the owners of their *kalifa* animals. They stayed some time on the *kalifa* owner's fields and some time on their own fields. As both herders and *kalifa* owners, the Liptako and the Rimaibe often had more than one field, the small herds kept in Baaga were barely adequate for these two sets of fields and they therefore did not usually sell their manure to others.

Sometimes Fulbe in all villages had mutual arrangements with close relatives to manure each others' fields in turn without payment. This was particularly the case when their herds were joined together at certain times of the year.

All such cases, described above are not considered manure arrangements and are not included in Table 6.2.

In the research area annual rainfall increases in a southerly direction, and is on average around 100 mm higher in the most southern research village compared to the most northern one. Thus, in Ngoundam manure was hardly ever applied to fields for fear of harming the crops. Even in Banguil there were some households that considered it too risky to manure fields (cf. Riesman 1977; Toulmin 1992). However, in the densely populated area of Aliakoum and the most southern study village Baaga, manure was

highly sought after. Consequently the involvement in manure arrangements is expected to be lower, or even non-existent, in Ngoundam compared to the other villages merely for reasons of climate.

**Table 6.2: Involvement of households (n=39) in manure arrangements in 1996/97**

Village	Sub-ethnic group	No. of households that ...		
		made manure arrangements	made no manure arrangements	No information.
Ngoundam (n=11)	Djelgobe	0	11 (100%)	0
Banguil (n=11)	Gaobe	1 (9%)	9 (81%)	1 (9%)
Aliakoum (n=6)	Gaobe	2 (33%)	4 (67%)	0
Baaga (n=11)	Liptako	2 (18%)	8 (73%)	1 (9%)
Total (n=39)	-	5 (13%)	32 (82 %)	2 (5 %)

As expected, in Ngoundam none of the 11 sample households engaged in manuring arrangements. In all villages only 13% of households reported engaging in a manuring arrangement at some point during the study year. Others though reported that they had been involved in manuring arrangements in years previous to the study. For 2 households the information could not be obtained directly as, at the time of the survey, they were on transhumance. According to information obtained from other people in the villages concerned it can be inferred that these 2 households had not engaged in a manure contract that year.

### ***Payment***

Most Fulbe who had entered into a manure contract in past years or in the research year, installed themselves on someone's field in the hope that the owner would give them some millet in return, without having arranged any payment beforehand.

During the research year, only one household, from Banguil, moved south with its relatively large small-stock herd (approximately 80 ruminants) to Salmossi (cf. Map 3). The household head had pre-arranged to manure a field in return for millet. The Fulbe household's harvest was bad during the research year, so much so that the household head did not see a better opportunity than this to supply his household with millet, without having to sell too many of his animals. Having only young children, aged 6 and

4, he could not leave like many for seasonal migration, as this would leave his herd without herders.

In Aliakoum manure was in high demand due to a high density of fields. Those who engaged in manure arrangements received some small sums of money or millet.

Households in Baaga made manure arrangements only when they were on transhumance and far away from their own fields. The normal payment they received was a bowl of millet porridge in the evening or some uncooked millet from time to time. This was a welcome arrangement for the herders as they frequently complained about the relatively large food expenses they incurred when they were on transhumance. As they were far away from their granaries they were normally forced to purchase millet or rice regularly.

The sorts of payment made by the field owners to compensate the herder for their deposits of manure vary as much as the relationships between the two parties: sometimes it was millet, a meal per day, kola-nuts or simply money (cf. Fraser 1997; Thébaud 1998:42).

### ***Decision-making***

As with herding contracts women did not have a say in whether or not manure arrangements were made, except, again in Ramsatou's case, who opted against manure arrangements. Manure arrangements were normally arranged by the herder and/or household head and the field owner.

All male Fulbe in the sample - this topic was not discussed with women - agreed that it was only out of necessity that they manured someone else's fields (i.e. poverty, commitment to arrangement). They would have preferred either to manure their own fields (except Djelgobe and some Gaobe in Banguil) or to let the animals graze in the bush to get a more varied diet and improve their health, if not for the immediate benefits gained from a manuring arrangement. Clearly the benefits in terms of compensation or social relations in this region are not that great when weighed against the health of the herd, or the loss of manure to the herders' own fields.

Manure contracts seemed to be much less common in the research area than the literature suggests for areas further south with more rainfall (e.g. Fraser 1997). This

might be expected from the interplay of soil nutrient status with low rainfall totals and the hazard of burning the crop with a very high nutrient concentration.

## **Animal sales**

In most households in the research villages the sale of animals was the most important source of cash income. Almost all households reported having sold animals at some point during the research year. The exact quantities sold, for reasons stated earlier, were not ascertained. The three rich cattle traders were an exception in the sample. They hardly sold any of their own animals but had enough cash capital to buy and sell animals for trade and invest the profits in their growing herds.

Important to this investigation were the dynamics of the decision-making process involved in the sale of an animal and the extent to which different household members derived benefit from the profits.

### ***Decision-making***

The main reason for men in the sample to sell an animal was the need to purchase cereals. Supplementary food for animals (e.g. cotton seed) was mentioned as second most important and clothes for themselves, their wives and children as third. If possible, a Pullo man had to buy new clothes for all his family twice a year, for each of the two most important feasts in the Moslem calendar: *Tabaski* and the feast at the end of Ramadan. In the weeks leading up to these festivities, men were often worried about how to buy new clothes as the women gave their husbands a hard time if they could not fulfil this important obligation, which was often the case.

The purchase of these items - cereals, supplements and clothes - was considered men's responsibility, therefore it was generally the men's animals that were sold for these purposes. Women would be asked to contribute to these expenditures only in exceptional circumstances, for example: where their husband had no means to acquire cash, if there was a good understanding between the couple or when most of the animals in the household were owned by women, i.e. Ramsatou's case or that of her daughter. If this contribution was in the form of an animal sale, the husband would have to first ask permission to sell his wife's animals. According to both men and women, a wife could refuse the sale of one of her animals and would indeed be likely to do so. It was difficult

to ascertain whether this was simply because women in general had few animals or because they were in a relatively strong bargaining position towards their husbands, having the support of their kin, who were likely to disapprove vehemently the unnecessary sale of an animal that was linked in a way to their own line's wealth. Women seemed certainly to be firm about their right to refuse the sale of their animals for the provision of items that men were generally considered responsible for. This is contrary to the findings of de Bruijn & van Dijk's study (1995:378) where women's animals were sold first, whenever the household was badly in need of grain.

If, however, in my study area, a woman's animals were kept in her natal kin's herd, her animals could indeed be sold without her father or brother consulting her. With the high rate of divorce and the strong likelihood that a married woman might at some point again find herself dependent on her natal family for support, women needed to keep good relations with their family and would therefore not dispute the sale of one of their animals. Some women thus expressed the view that they preferred their animals to be in their husband's herd for this very reason. The advantage was not only that then a woman had access to more milk for sale or consumption but also because there, her animals were less likely to be sold.

A woman could request the sale of one of her animals in order to buy mat-making material, to pay for jewellery or the dowry for her daughters or to simply support her husband, if she wished. Nevertheless, she always had first to consult her husband or one of her relatives (usually her father) - depending on where the animal was kept - to ask for permission to sell an animal, even when this animal was her own. A member of either her husband's family or her family of origin could then sell the chosen animal for her, if the reasons why she wanted to sell the animal met with her husband's or relatives' approval. Following the sale, the woman herself decided how to dispose of the proceeds of the sale. She could of course be subject to varying pressure from her husband or kin depending upon the understanding between the individuals and the degree of poverty (cf. Swift *et al.* 1984:311).

A father also had the right to sell the animals of his children when they were young, no matter whether these animals were given by himself, by the mother of the child or other relatives, but he would always try to avoid this (cf. Dupire 1963:78). He usually only sold his children's animals if the household was in desperate need of cash, and then only

for the benefit of the whole household, not for his own personal interest. The community certainly objected to a father selling his child's animals to buy himself a bicycle, for example, but would tolerate and approve of him selling a child's animal for the household's provision of millet. A young son was very unlikely, though, to be allowed to sell any of his animals for reasons of his own, before getting married (cf. Dupire 1963:78), but could give his opinion if any of his animals needed to be sold for household requirements. Only when he intended to marry, the bridewealth was taken from his animals. Or, in case of cash payments to the bride's parents, he might have sold one of his animals. Once responsible for a family of his own, the son had the right to sell his animals, but he normally consulted his father before doing so.

### *Seasonal variations in sales*

For men, there were clear seasonal variations in expenditure. Especially among the Liptako and Gaobe households sampled, less so among the Djelgobe, supplementary food for animals had to be bought towards the end of the dry season when pasture became scarce. It was at this time that the need for cash became an even greater problem, because some households' granaries were almost empty and milk was in scarce supply. At the same time most energy was needed for labour intensive tasks in both the pastoral (watering of cattle, long distances to pasture) as well as in the agricultural sector a few months later (weeding) (cf. Mortimore 1998:102, 103). Grain often had to be purchased until the next harvest was in. Only those whose diet was more milk-based in the rainy season did not have to buy as much millet and were thus less likely to sell animals at that particular time of the year.

In purely economic terms, the sale and purchase of animals was best achieved shortly after the main harvest. Cereal prices were then low, the livestock were in good condition and fetched a good price so that less animals had to be sold for getting millet (cf. Bierschenk & Forster 1991). A 100kg sack of millet cost around 7000 FCFA after the harvest and increased in value from the end of dry season until the next harvest, up to 22,000 FCFA in some markets (Zaal 1998; cf. Thébaud 1998:51; Mortimore 1998:105). The price of sorghum similarly doubled or tripled<sup>2</sup>. However, very few households reacted to this fluctuation in grain prices. The majority waited until their millet stock was

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<sup>2</sup> Many household heads preferred to buy sorghum rather than millet, not only because it was slightly cheaper, but also because they assumed that sorghum lasts longer than the equivalent amount of millet as women did not like it as much and thus were more economical with it (cf. Thébaud 1998:23).

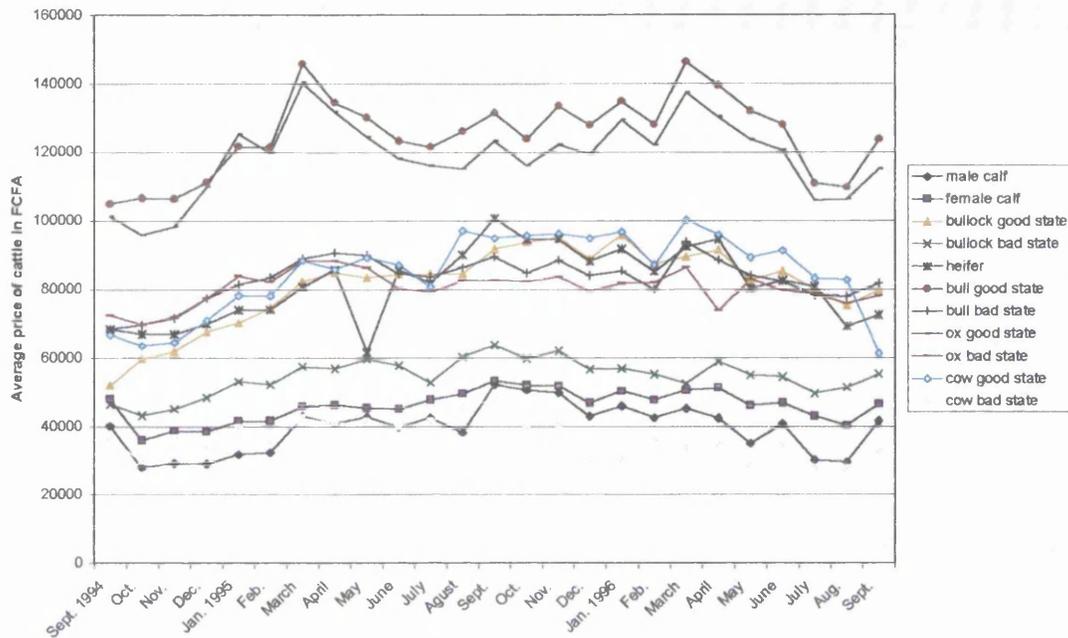
exhausted before making any purchases of cereals. Only two Liptako households in Baaga reported having stocked cereals early in the research year.

There are several reasons why Fulbe in the research area (and in some other areas as well, e.g. de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:291), did not invest in grain before the prices rose. Primarily, no Pullo man wanted to sell an animal when it was not a real necessity, despite the fact that he risked having to sell more if he waited for the cereal prices to go up. Another reason was that although it was perfectly legitimate for a Pullo to refuse to sell an animal if relatives and acquaintances asked him for grain he did not have, he could not refuse to give millet he had stored (cf. Riesman 1977:183). Thus buying millet for storage was often to the disadvantage of the storer. Moreover, for Djelgobe in particular who went on transhumance with their herds and some or all of their family, it would only be a further complication to have to transport a stock of millet.

All informants agreed that cattle were more likely to be sold to buy cereals for the household, while small ruminants tended to be sold to meet small needs, e.g. medicine, clothes (cf. Thébaud 1998:36).

Prices of animals on the market depended on breed, age and condition of the animal, neediness of the vendor, the season of the sale and the supply and demand of the market (Figures 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3) (cf. Beauvilain 1977:242; Quarles van Ufford 1997; Zaal 1998).

Figure 6.1: Average price of cattle in Gorom Gorom, Sept. 1994 – Sept.1996<sup>3</sup>



### *Sale of fattened animals*

Fattening of animals is considered an effective way of intensifying animal husbandry and a potential development option in direct response to market forces. Prices for well-fed sheep and goats can be high (see Figures 6.2 and 6.3), especially during Moslem festivities that guarantee a high demand (cf. Okali & Sumberg 1996:167).

<sup>3</sup> The average price was calculated in Gorom Gorom at weekly market interviews with cattle traders by an employee of SPE. Three animals per category were taken and the mean calculated. From these numbers the monthly mean was ascertained. The same method was used for the animal prices in Figure 6.2 and 6.3.

Figure 6.2: Average price of sheep in Gorom Gorom, Sept. 1994 – Sept.1996

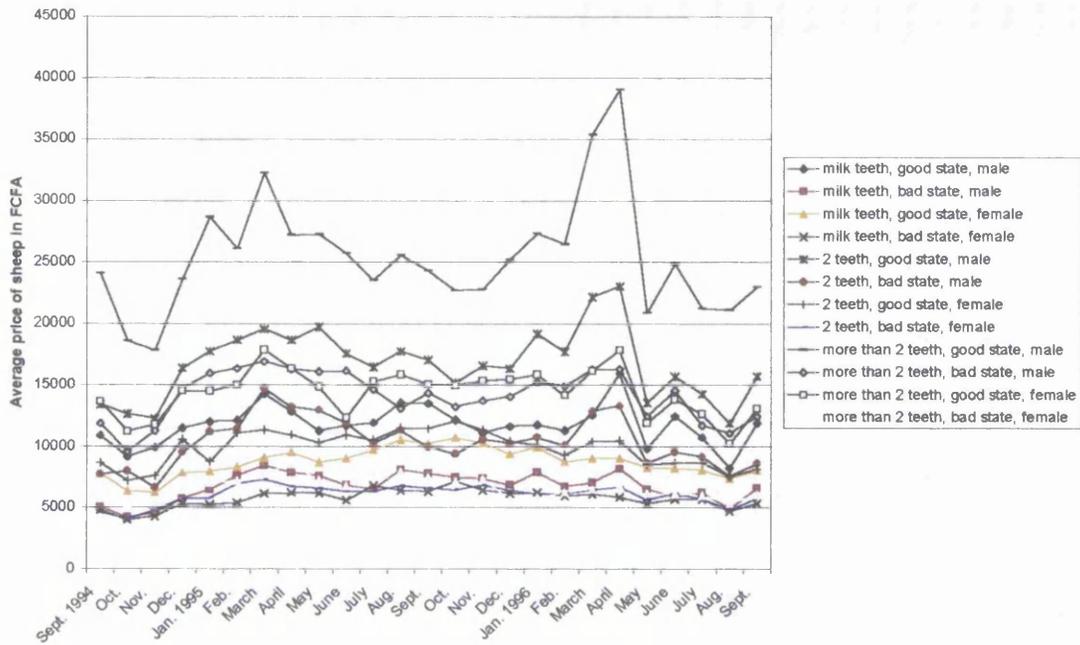
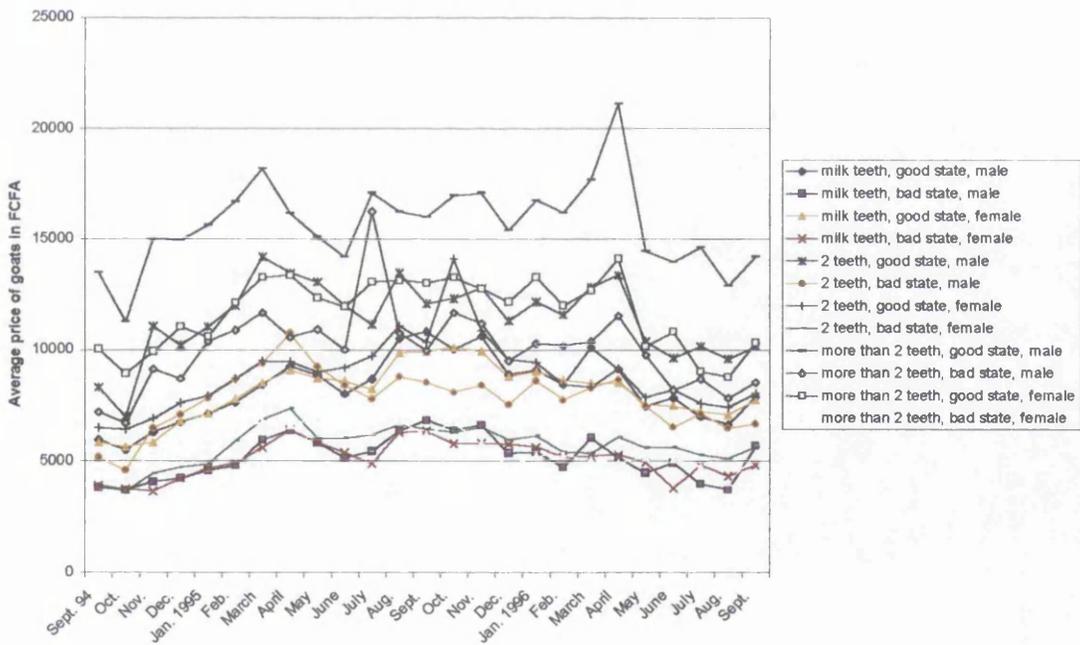


Figure 6.3: Average price of goats in Gorom Gorom, Sept. 1994 – Sept.1996



In the last decade, many projects and NGOs in Burkina Faso, as elsewhere in Africa, have advocated ruminant fattening, particularly as an activity for women to secure themselves a regular income (Buhl 1994; Okali & Sumberg 1996:169; Thébaud 1998). Women in rural areas can combine their food processing activities with goat or sheep production by feeding the animals with household wastes, maximising the use of food

resources available without the need for direct access to land or fodder crops and herding labour.

Only one man of the Djelgobe sample in Ngoundam fattened a goat during the research year. He was a very poor household head with no cow. Fattening a goat from time to time was one of his only means to raise an income. None of the other Djelgobe, neither men nor women fattened an animal during the research year and hardly ever done this before. Their highly transhumant lifestyle would make such activity difficult to pursue and therefore, although they acknowledged the potential economic benefits of such an activity, they did not engage in it.

All Gaobe and Liptako women and men in the sample valued fattening animals for sale as a way of raising an income, but very few actually engaged in this activity and never on a regular basis (i.e. as soon a ruminant is sold, fattening another one) (cf. Thébaud 1998:53). As for women, hardly any were in a position to buy small ruminants. They expressed an interest in gaining enough credit to buy ruminants for fattening, but if they had an animal of their own they still feared not being able to feed it properly. The millet bran they had to give was often not sufficient and they could not afford to buy additional fodder, as they preferred spending what money they had on other items. Nor did the women like to collect millet stalks as fodder from their husbands' fields. The stalks that the men collected were reserved exclusively for their own animals (see Chapter 7). A woman was not allowed to touch these unless it was for the purpose of feeding her husband's animals.

In Banguil, during the research year none of the men or women sampled kept an animal in the homestead to fatten. In Aliakoum one women and two men engaged in this activity. In Baaga, the Liptako village, 4 men and 2 women fattened goats while I stayed in the village.

If an animal was being fattened, women and children had to fetch and carry the water for it to drink - a very labour intensive task, especially in the dry season. Sheep and goats were fed on millet bran or millet stalks. If additional fodder was needed, the owner of the animal was obliged to buy it. If, as was usually the case, the fattened animal belonged to the household head or other male members of the household, the woman who took care of it was likely to receive a small amount of money from the sale to show appreciation of her labour input.

Prior to the research year, some women in one of the quarters in Aliakoum tried to organise a *tontine* to facilitate the buying of goats for fattening by its members. *Tontines* are an association of individuals who each contribute a certain amount of money at fixed intervals. Each time they contribute money, a different member of the group receives the combined sum. This is a form of co-operation that has proved to work well for many West African women in rural and urban areas. In Aliakoum, though, it failed after a very short time owing to delayed contributions, arguments and jealousy among its members. The women themselves admitted that organising the *tontine*, and indeed any group activity among Fulbe women, was extremely difficult.

## Conclusions and discussion

Whether or not a household decided to engage in herding contracts depended on several factors, such as their established contacts with sedentary cattle owners, the household's own animal holdings and the household size. Decisions on incorporating *kalifa* animals into the herd were exclusively taken by the household head and his adult sons, (with the one exception of the Djelgobe woman: Ramsatou).

In general, all household members benefited from contract herding directly or indirectly, especially among Djelgobe and Gaobe. For some Djelgobe households in Ngoundam, that already had considerable livestock of their own, entrusted animals effectively enabled them to remain entirely within the pastoral economy, without engaging in agriculture (cf. Swift *et al.* 1984; White 1991). Djelgobe and Gaobe women benefited considerably from these arrangements by having an increased amount of milk at their disposal to sell. The main beneficiary, however, was usually the household head. He received gifts such as shoes, clothes or millet from the *kalifa* owner. Although a household head distributed some of these gifts among his dependants, as it was his obligation to provide these items for them anyway, he was in fact the main beneficiary. Cash income from sold *kalifa* animals was exclusively paid to the household head, and he alone decided how to spend this money. Millet or gifts of tea and sugar received by the *kalifa* owner were kept and managed by him.

The form of 'payment' given to Liptako for herding Rimaibe's animals was mainly in exchange for labour in 'male' activities: agriculture, well-digging, house construction. As the Liptako herder in Baaga usually had no right to the milk of these *kalifa* animals,

Liptako women did not benefit from higher milk yields, neither in terms of sale nor consumption.

Manure arrangements played a minor role in the households sampled, especially in the northern village where manure was likely to burn crops. Nevertheless, they were sometimes important for herders as a last resort to receive cereals on a more or less regular basis from the field owner while manure was being deposited. Women therefore only benefited indirectly, as the purchase of food, including cereals, was a man's obligation.

Men usually sold their own animals for purposes that they were culturally perceived to be responsible for: cereals, supplementary fodder and clothes. In all villages a woman could effectively oppose the sale of one of her animals by her husband if this was to fulfil one of his customary obligations. This opposition was sanctioned by the woman's kin. Only if the men in the household either did not have any cattle of their own, or if there was good understanding between a couple, a woman might have contributed to man's obligatory expenditure. Relative impoverishment in cattle holdings has thus not changed the gender responsibilities in this respect, unlike that observed by de Bruijn & van Dijk (1995) among Jallube in Mali, where women's animals were sold first.

Nevertheless, a woman usually did not oppose the sale of one of her animals by her own kin. She was dependent on keeping good relationships with them, as they take care of her in case of divorce from, or the death of, her husband.

Fattening of animals might be an effective means for sedentary Fulbe women to gain an income, but if NGOs or projects give credits to encourage such activities, problems concerning fodder availability have to be tackled at the same time. Fulbe men are highly unlikely to contribute supplementary feed or crop residues from their farm to animals kept at home by their wives for fattening. Therefore, the extra female labour needed to collect fodder and residues, or income to purchase supplementary feed would need to be considered. Given the already excessive domestic workload of most Fulbe women in need of such schemes, and the meagre income they gain from milk-selling, neither option would prove very viable for these agropastoral women.

# 7

## AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

### **Introduction**

Most Fulbe in the research area do not secure their livelihoods from the pastoral sector alone and are in fact agro-pastoralists. In this Chapter I will focus on the agricultural sector. Most studies about Fulbe all over West Africa give accounts of Fulbe having taken up agriculture or at least shifting in and out of agriculture (Stenning 1959; Riesman 1977; Beauvilain 1977; Juul 1996; Thébaud 1998). Most households in this research sample also cultivated to a varying degree.

There are many important questions and issues that have to be addressed if gender and production strategies in the agricultural sector are to be understood. First of all, the factors that led Fulbe in the research area to cultivate will be discussed. Then the question of access to land: how is this regulated, do women have access to land and if not why not? How is the share of labour and decision-making over agriculture allocated within the household? What degree of importance does agricultural production now have in Fulbe household economy? If a household engages in agriculture, who benefits from the profits? What role do Fulbe women play in agricultural production? How do women see their future in the agricultural sector?

### **Reasons for taking up agriculture**

Informants in all villages agreed that agriculture has become more important for them since the droughts in the 1970s and 1980s. Not only economic but also socio-political reasons have contributed to an increasing involvement in agriculture. After the droughts, animal numbers in Fulbe households had, according to all informants,

drastically declined. Thus, most households started taking up agriculture to ensure household viability. Those that had cultivated before expanded their agricultural activities. Most men in the face of post-drought cattle losses expressed their desire to extend cultivation further, but access to additional labour or, in some cases, more agricultural land was the limiting factor<sup>1</sup>.

Fulbe men of all villages gave three main reasons for their engagement in cultivation. Firstly, and most importantly, to reduce the number of animal sales needed to buy cereals. Secondly, because 'traditional' cultivators now often have as many cattle as the Fulbe, making it difficult to exchange milk for millet, an exchange which was said to be more common in former times. Thirdly, because of recent socio-political changes, neither the Rimaibe nor the Bella would cultivate for them any more.

In all the study villages apart from Ngoundam, the Djelgobe village, every household cultivated at least one field during the research year. In Ngoundam four out of the eleven households sampled had never cultivated in their lives. One more had only cultivated up until 1984, while staying in his brother's household, but had stopped as soon as he formed his own independent household. As his sons were too young to help him in either herding or cultivating, he was unable to diversify, and thus concentrated solely on herding.

Those Djelgobe of Ngoundam who had cultivated, only started to cultivate by themselves recently. One or two generations ago Djelgobe household heads had fields, but paid Bella to cultivate for them. During the drought years in the 1970s and 1980s many Djelgobe left the area for a number of years. When they came back to Ngoundam, having already lost a considerable part of their herds, they found that their fields had been appropriated by Bella. In Ngoundam the deputy is a Bella and is responsible for allocating land. The Djelgobe, as relative newcomers to the area, felt they could not reclaim their land. The Bella, no longer being defined as slaves, then refused to cultivate for Djelgobe, not even for payment. Thus, some Djelgobe households started taking up agriculture themselves, especially, as they said, once they had enough labour in their household to combine herding and agriculture. However, many Djelgobe still

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<sup>1</sup> More than half of the households in Thébaud's sample (60 out of 110) declared that the size of their cultivated area had increased in the last 20 years. The reasons given were: growing family size, increased labour force within the household, impoverishment of soils and, a general decrease in yields (Thébaud 1998:21).

considered agriculture the work of slaves. They all agreed that even if a Djelgobe had 10 granaries full of millet, he would not boast of being rich. Wealth was only perceived in relation to animal holdings. Despite the fact that some households had hardly any animals at all and depended heavily on agriculture, they still regarded themselves as pastoralists, or at least strove for a pastoral way of life. The well-being of their herds always had preference over matters relating to agricultural production. Therefore, most households preferred to go on transhumance in the rainy season rather than engage in cultivation. This attitude was much less prevalent in the Gaobe and Liptako villages, even though average animal numbers owned per capita were very similar to those found in Ngoundam (see Chapter 5).

In Banguil, the Gaobe have cultivated for generations. In the 1980s, after the droughts, agriculture became more prominent for almost all households in the sample, apart from those rich households that specialised in animal trade. Only those who had insufficient labour had not enlarged their fields since the droughts (cf. Thébaud 1998). All Gaobe men of Banguil, apart from the animal traders, regarded themselves as agropastoralists. They recognised that their main income in non-drought years was derived from agriculture.

In Aliakoum, due to the close proximity to Gorom Gorom, male Gaobe had taken up a variety of non-pastoral income generating strategies (see Chapter 4). Agriculture was but one of them. They also considered themselves as agropastoralists. Even those who had a substantial herd would not entertain the idea of giving up agriculture.

In Baaga, according to all informants, agriculture had become more important than pastoralism. Fulbe Liptako in Baaga now considered themselves more as cultivators than pastoralists. One informant, Hama, described the situation in Baaga as follows: *“Around 30 years ago Fulbe started agriculture. In former times only the Rimaibe cultivated and the Fulbe mainly lived off milk. From time to time Fulbe women exchanged milk for millet. The Rimaibe had lots of millet, sold it and bought animals. Therefore they were no longer in need of milk from the Fulbe. The Fulbe thus had to start cultivating themselves. After the droughts, agriculture became more important. In former times the Fulbe owned the land and the Rimaibe cultivated, but during the drought of 1973 and in particular 1984, the Fulbe were so desperate that they*

*exchanged their fields for millet. Therefore, the Fulbe, especially those who didn't have much before, lost almost everything. Only those who had had much, had some fields left. Nowadays, most Fulbe in Baaga, if they have some fields and some animals, can live well so long as they do not live lavishly."*

Agriculture has thus become a necessity for almost all Fulbe men in the sample. Although none of them particularly liked agricultural work they all realised its importance for household viability and herd maintenance.

## **Access to agricultural land**

Fields, just as animals, were owned by individuals<sup>2</sup>. However, unlike animals, land is always owned by men. Women did not own agricultural land (cf. de Bruijn 1997) with one exception: Ramsatou, the wealthy woman in Ngoundam, I have already mentioned in Chapters 5 and 6. Usually fields were owned by the household head.

In total 72 fields were cultivated by the sampled households in all four study villages during the rainy season of 1996. More than half, 61% (n=44) of them were acquired through inheritance: 23% (n=17) were acquired through pre-inheritance, 7% (n=5) were cleared by the present user, 6% (n=4) were borrowed, and only 3% (n=2) were purchased (Table 7.1).

The data shows clearly that the majority of fields were acquired through either inheritance or pre-inheritance. When disaggregating the data per village, the picture changes somewhat. Two striking observations can be made. In Ngoundam, the vast majority of fields were acquired through being cleared by the present owner; none of

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<sup>2</sup> As in many other African countries there is a discrepancy between state law and customary law. The two types of law are not always internally consistent (Lund 1997). The official land tenure law in Burkina Faso is the 'Réorganisation Agricole et Foncière' (RAF) from 1984 (Fahrenhorst 1988). It declared that the land is property of the state. It was an attempt to break with customary rights, but resulted in fact in an uncontrolled extension of farmland and taking over of new areas by clearing forests and grazing land without fear of the customary guardian of these lands (Faure 1995). Thus in 1991 the RAF of 1984 was modified. Although the state was still the ultimate controller of land, it was increasingly recognised that decentralised and local management would be a more appropriate and feasible option for the state and the farmers (Lenz 1993; PNGT/CILLS 1993:21; Lund 1997). The RAF established local village commissions for distribution and retrieval of land. Although the tenure legislation still lacks appropriate procedures and does not address the problems of tenure security for the majority of the population, it reflects a growing recognition of local customs, and possibly customary chiefs (Lund 1997).

the fields were inherited. In Aliakoum a larger than average number of fields were either borrowed or bought (Table 7.1).

Table 7.1: Access to fields (total number of fields n=72)

Village (number of fields in brackets)	Way of acquiring a field in percentage (number of fields in brackets)				
	Inherited	Pre-mortem inherited	Cleared by present owner	Borrowed	Bought
Ngoundam ( <i>Djelgobe</i> ) (n=6)	17% (1)	0%	66% (4)	17% (1)	0%
Banguil ( <i>Gaobe</i> ) (n=18)	67% (12)	28% (5)	0%	5% (1)	0%
Aliakoum ( <i>Gaobe</i> ) (n=11)	46% (5)	18% (2)	0%	18% (2)	18% (2)
Baaga ( <i>Liptako</i> ) (n=37)	73% (27)	27% (10)	0%	0%	0%
Total (n=72)	62% (45)	23% (17)	6% (4)	6% (4)	3% (2)

### Clearing

In Banguil, Aliakoum and Baaga none of the households had cleared the fields presently under cultivation (Table 7.1). Informants in Banguil said the clearing of fields was possible, but not necessary, as every household already had sufficient fields. In Aliakoum all informants agreed that there was hardly any land left to clear. The “*Eaux et Forêts*”, the department of environment, also imposes heavy fines on anybody cutting trees, deterring many of the men in Aliakoum from clearing new land. Although these laws apply for the whole area, the risk of being fined in remote areas like Ngoundam and Banguil, is far lower than in Aliakoum, which is close to the provincial capital.

Only in Ngoundam, the area furthest north of all the study sites, had most households (66%), cleared the land they cultivated in the research year. One had borrowed the field from his brother, who had recently left the area to settle somewhere else. The other, Ramsatou, had inherited the field she cultivated.

As mentioned earlier, all Djelgobe started cultivating in this area only recently. Of the six Djelgobe households now cultivating, two started cultivating in 1987, three in 1992 and one in 1994. Some of their parents may have had fields but had lost them to the

Bella during the droughts when they had left the area temporarily. However, Fulbe Djelgobe didn't consider access to land for cultivation to be a problem. They simply asked the local deputy for permission to clear an area they had chosen and once cleared, it became theirs. Only one incidence of a conflict linked to the clearance of agricultural land was reported during the research year:

***Box 7.1: Problems in accessing land***

*Boureima, a Djelgobe man, had cleared an area close to Ngoundam in 1987. The village chief had approved it. He cultivated the area for 4 consecutive years. In 1991 he started sowing, but then decided to leave his field and go on transhumance. He asked a Bella man to take care of his field while he was away and left him with some money for his labour. When Boureima came back after the rainy season, the Bella not only refused to give him a portion of the harvest but also claimed the field to be his own. Boureima did not see any point in asking the village chief to resolve the dispute, because, as he put it: "The deputy is always on the side of the Bella". The following year he had to clear another area that was further away from the village.*

***Pre-mortem inheritance***

When a household head got old and could no longer cultivate, he usually distributed most or all of his fields among his sons in the presence of witnesses. A son would always consult his father over decisions made regarding the loan of the field to someone else. He would also not be able to sell the land without his father's consent, but all decisions made about what to cultivate and how to allocate labour on the field he would make himself. In return for being given a field, sons were obliged to provide their parents with cereals. In all villages but Ngoundam, pre-mortem inheritance was the second most common way to acquire a field (Table 7.1)

***Inheritance***

In all villages sons were regarded as the legitimate heirs of their deceased father's fields. Where there were no sons, the deceased's brothers or their sons would inherit the land. Usually the fields were distributed evenly among all sons, unlike in Riesman's study among the Djelgobe in Djelgodji where only the eldest son of the deceased inherited the field (Riesman 1977:40). However, sometimes those who had more dependants were

given a larger share. So far, no serious inheritance conflicts had occurred among the sample households<sup>3</sup>. In one Liptako household not included in the sample, however, a few years ago a son claimed that his father had given him a field before he died and did not agree to his brother inheriting the field. The dispute was resolved by the deputies of Baaga and Dori.

In Baaga and Aliakoum, the splitting up of fields through inheritance was regarded as a problem that may worsen in the near future. As fields are split among heirs, they gradually became too small for a single household to live on. The general view in all villages but Ngoundam, was therefore that inheritance of agricultural land had recently gained in importance. In no village, however, had it yet reached the same level of importance as cattle. "*A field can never replace animals*" was still the most widely held opinion.

### ***Commercialisation***

In many parts of sub-Saharan Africa access to arable land has become increasingly difficult. The result is that in many areas customary laws cannot sufficiently regulate the increasing demand and land, as a commodity has entered the market (Raynaud 1997a).

In both Ngoundam and Banguil, access to arable land so far has not been a problem and none of the fields were purchased or sold (Table 7.1). The situation was quite different in Aliakoum and Baaga. Here, land had entered the market economy. In Aliakoum and Baaga most male informants were concerned about the difficulty of acquiring fields. While some households were still in a position to lend fields to others, there were some seeking to buy a field, but without either the capital to buy or an offer of sale. Within the sample there were two household heads in Baaga who sought to buy land. In Aliakoum two household heads had recently bought fields. One of these, who bought the field in 1992, subsequently also lent two fields to relatives. Thus, it is not necessarily those who are desperate for land who buy fields. It may just as well be those who have the means to buy one and want to keep the land as security either for their children and/or to lend it in the meantime to needy households in order to increase their social or political influence or at least enhance their reputation. The other household head in Aliakoum who bought a field, was indeed desperate though. He had left Aliakoum

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<sup>3</sup> In Ngoundam among the Djelgobe this inheritance was never practised, but still regarded as the norm.

during the last drought and only came back in 1990. By that time his father had died but not being present in the village, his brother inherited the father's two fields, leaving the returning brother without land. He had to borrow a field for four agricultural seasons but finally bought a field for 100,000 FCFA in 1994. In Aliakoum the prices of fields varied between 50,000 and 200,000 FCFA, depending on size and quality. Here, fields with sandy soils, *seno*, were the most expensive (cf. Table 2.3).

From 1994 until 1996 there were at least 5 fields sold in Baaga. The prices ranged in between 15,000 and 150,000 FCFA<sup>4</sup>. Again, the most expensive fields were *seno* but also fields with loamy soils, *bolaaje* (cf. Table 2.3). Most household heads in Baaga sought to buy fields.

All informants from Baaga and Aliakoum agreed that only individuals who find themselves in truly desperate economic situations offer their fields for sale. Usually, if someone had more agricultural land than he was willing or able to cultivate, he would rather lend it to someone than sell it.

### ***Land loans***

In Baaga or Aliakoum, if a Pullo did not have the money and the opportunity to buy a field he could still borrow one. However, this was said to be more difficult now than in former times. In Banguil and Ngoundam by contrast, no such need had yet arisen.

In Aliakoum, most Fulbe who had originally lent a field to 'their' Rimaibe had since withdrawn them because they needed them themselves. The arrangement was usually that the borrower had to help the owner of the field weeding for at least a couple of days and/or give him one or two bundles of millet after the harvest. (One informant reported that he had had to give 10 bundles of millet after each harvest, but this was not confirmed by other interviewees).

In Baaga, only one household was in the position to lend land to a non-family member. It was reported that the field borrower may, on a voluntary basis, give the owner a

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<sup>4</sup> In comparison, Thébaud (1998:19) in her study in Seno was told that prices varied between 10,000 and 75,000 FCFA.

bundle of millet at the end of the year or help weeding for a day. No other financial transactions were said to take place<sup>5</sup>.

In the whole sample only four fields cultivated by the sample households were borrowed. Borrowing of land was usually done among friends or relatives. The four fields were all borrowed from relatives, brothers and uncles. Fields were borrowed for a variable length of time, some for decades, some just for a season. The owner could reclaim his field at any time, so long as he requested its return before the borrower had sown it.

### *Communally owned fields*

In all villages none of the Fulbe men (and women) interviewed was very much interested in a collectively owned and managed field. In 1990 in Baaga, as the result of a development project, 54 Fulbe and Rimaibe men were involved in a communal field. They had a profit of 85,000 FCFA, but the cashier took the money and never replaced it. Two men of the sample had participated in this activity. After this bad example they said they would only participate again if they had the guarantee that no such thing could happen again. And even then, they did not seem particularly keen.

### *Women and access to agricultural land*

Ownership of agricultural land is almost exclusive to male household heads; within the sample there was only one woman, in Ngoundam, who owned a field and cultivated it.

#### *Box 7.2: A woman owning a field*

*When Ramsatou's<sup>6</sup> husband died, the deputy wanted to withdraw her husband's field and give it to a Bella. Ramsatou, not wanting to give up the land, went to the court in Markoye and fought for the right to inherit her husband's field. The court granted her this right. Since then she had cultivated every year. She was the only woman, not only in Ngoundam but in the whole research sample, who cleared, sowed, weeded and harvested mostly by herself. Wuri, her nephew, who was nominally household head, only occasionally assisted (during the rainy season he was usually on transhumance*

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<sup>5</sup> This is borne out by Thébaud's study in Seno (1998:19).

<sup>6</sup> This refers to the same household described in Chapter 5, where the woman owns virtually all animals in the household.

*with the household's herd). When asked why she did all these tasks that were not usually the responsibility of a woman, she simply answered that it was necessary in order to rebuild the herd after losing so many cattle in the recent drought. If she did not cultivate, she argued, soon their animals would all have to be sold in order to purchase millet. At the time of the study her household was one of the richest in Ngoundam with a total of 56 TLU.*

In Chapter 5 it was observed that women had the right to inherit animals according to Moslem law. Why, therefore, do Fulbe not apply the same law to the inheritance of agricultural land?

The main reason given by both men and women was that it was a man's obligation to provide all household members with cereals, whether through cultivation or purchasing. Consequently, neither the women nor the men considered it necessary for women to inherit fields. When I asked women whether they would like to inherit fields, most of them answered in the negative. They claimed not to have any knowledge about how to cultivate and argued that men had always owned the land and cultivated. Most saw no use in women owning land. There were only a few women in each village, who seemed to be interested in having a small plot of their own for cultivating *Hibiscus sabdariffa* (roselle) and *Hibiscus esculentus* (okra) for use as condiments and to produce threads for use in mat-making. Only Ramsatou in Ngoundam, and one woman in Baaga, considered it important for a woman to have a field in which she could cultivate cereals, and thereby contribute grain to the household. The vast majority of women, though, were not in the least interested in cereal cultivation and nor in land, as it was not a woman's responsibility to provide grain.

Further, men argued that women usually left the village where their father's field was when they married and therefore they would have no use for it. If women inherited a field, men suspected, they would simply sell the land and use the benefits for their own individual purposes.

Finally, and maybe most importantly, women from all villages, possibly less so those from Baaga, feared that if they owned a patch of land to cultivate okra and roselle, or worse still a field to cultivate cereals, they would be heavily criticised and ridiculed by

other women. Despite the benefits that could be accrued by a women or her household through cultivation, Fulbe women feared the loss of social status that such action may bring upon them.

Ramsatou was very much an exception. None of the women in Ngoundam ridiculed her, but I had the impression that she was, on the one hand considered slightly odd, more so by other women than men. She was, however, respected because of her strength and determination. Some women pitied her as she did not have a husband or son to rely on, but because of her own cattle wealth, she was taken very seriously.

## Extent of cultivation

### *Area cultivated*

None of the Djelgobe households in Ngoundam cultivated more than one field, unlike the households in the other villages, that frequently cultivated two or more. The mean number of fields cultivated per household in 1996 in Banguil was 1.6 (SD=0.81), and in Aliakoum 1.8 (SD=0.98), while the Liptako in Baaga cultivated in average of 3.4 fields per household (SD=2.01)<sup>7</sup>.

Although total area cultivated was great for those with more fields, the average field size was similar in all four villages (Table 7.2).

**Table 7.2: Mean field size in the research villages**

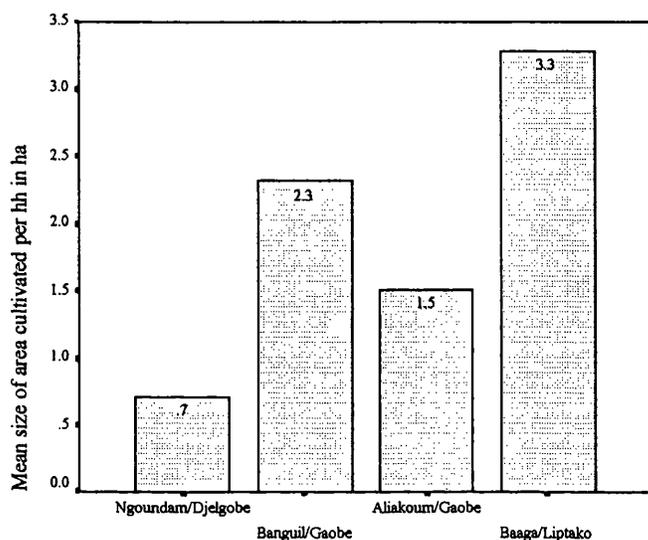
Village	Mean field size in ha $\pm$ SD
Ngoundam (n=6)	1.4 ha $\pm$ 0.3
Banguil (n=18)	1.3 ha $\pm$ 1.0
Aliakoum (n=11)	0.9 ha $\pm$ 0.4
Baaga (n=34)	1.1 ha $\pm$ 0.7

In Ngoundam the mean area cultivated per household was 0.7 ha (SD=0.72), when non-cultivating are included (n=11), and respectively 1.4 ha per household when they

<sup>7</sup> In comparison, Thébaud's study in Seno among various ethnic groups showed that the average number of fields cultivated per family was 2.6, ranging from 1 to 10 fields. Most of the Gaobe and Djawambe in her sample only cultivated one field (Thébaud 1998:18).

are excluded (n=6). In Banguil the mean area cultivated per household was 2.3 ha (n=11, SD=1.52) and in Aliakoum 1.5 ha (n=6, SD=0.95). The village furthest south, Baaga, had a significantly higher mean area cultivated per household of 3.3 ha (n=11, SD=2.2) (Figure 7.1)<sup>8</sup>.

Figure 7.1: Mean size of area cultivated, per household 1996 (in ha), by village



One reason why Liptako in Baaga cultivated an area nearly five times bigger than the Djelgobe in Ngoundam could be differences in average household size. When field sizes in the research area are compared to household sizes, in AEU and per capita, we realise that the Djelgobe in Ngoundam cultivated a much smaller area per capita or AEU than the Liptako in Baaga (Table 7.3). Also, when area cultivated is compared to the number of available workers per household<sup>9</sup>, we see that the Liptako still cultivated 5 times as much area per worker than the Djelgobe in Ngoundam. Only the Gaobe in Aliakoum have an area cultivated per AEU, capita and worker similar to that of the Djelgobe in Ngoundam (Table 7.3). This may be due to land scarcity in Aliakoum and potential diversification into urban activities.

<sup>8</sup> As a comparison, Thébaud's (1998) study sample revealed that the field sizes in Seno province ranged in between 0.6 and 7.8 ha.

<sup>9</sup> As we will see later, women hardly take part in agricultural production. Thus, for the number of workers all males from the age of 15 were counted as 1. Although young boys may not work as much as adult men, it was assumed that the small part played by women compensates for this factor. I am aware that this is a very vague way of calculating, but it may be accurate enough to give an indication of agricultural labour availability in a household.

Table 7.3: Field size in relation to AEU, capita and worker per household

Village and sub-ethnic group, number of households in brackets	Mean area (in ha) cultivated per...		
	AEU ± SD	Capita ± SD	worker ± SD
Ngoundam, <i>Djelgobe</i> (n=11)	0.13 ± 0.14	0.09 ± 0.15	0.53 ± 0.63
Banguil, <i>Gaobe</i> (n=11)	0.47 ± 0.43	0.31 ± 0.25	1.10 ± 1.06
Aliakoum, <i>Gaobe</i> (n=6)	0.24 ± 0.18	0.14 ± 0.08	0.74 ± 0.51
Baaga, <i>Liptakobe</i> (n=11)	1.05 ± 0.59	0.76 ± 0.55	2.46 ± 1.58
Total (n=39)	0.50 ± 0.54	0.35 ± 0.42	1.27 ± 1.31

Leaving out the two very wealthy households in Banguil, livestock holdings and area farmed per AEU are correlated ( $r^2=0.18$ ,  $F_{1,34}=7.55$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) for individual households in the sample.

### *Distance to fields*

The mean distance to fields in all villages was found to be 2.75 km. In the four sample villages the distances varied from a mean of 4.8 km in Ngoundam to a mean of 1,5 km in Banguil and Baaga<sup>10</sup> (Table 7.4).

Table 7.4: Mean distance to fields in the research villages

Village, number of observations in brackets	Sub-ethnic group	Mean distance to fields in km ± SD
Ngoundam (n=5, 1 unknown)	Djelgobe	4.8 km ± 0.79
Banguil (n=17, 1 unknown)	Gaobe	1.5 km ± 0.78
Aliakoum (n=11)	Gaobe	3.2 km ± 0.64
Baaga (n=32, 5 unknowns)	Liptakobe	1.5 km ± 0.71

The mean distance to fields was clearly greatest in Ngoundam, where most fields had only recently been brought into cultivation and had been cleared by the present owner (Table 7.1). The Bella of Ngoundam had acquired the fields closest to the village, which is itself close to a wetland. While the Bella generally liked to have at least some of their land close to wetlands, the Fulbe Djelgobe preferred not to cultivate there. The reasons

<sup>10</sup> In comparison, the distance to fields in Seno province was rarely more than 2 km (Thébaud 1998:17).

given for this where that they valued the importance of the wetlands more as a place to water their animals and because they did not like to cultivate loamy soils, which were the prevalent soils there. The sandy soils they preferred to cultivate are further away from the village. Nevertheless, because the Djelgobe in Ngoundam started cultivating rather recently, they have had to make do with plots further away from the village that were not already occupied by Bella. Also, due to the fact that the deputy was himself a Bella the Fulbe Djelgobe encountered problems in trying to keep land close to the village.

In Aliakoum, which had the second largest mean distance to fields (Table 7.4), scarcity of arable land was given as the reason for long distances to fields, particularly in view of the relatively high population density of nearby Gorom Gorom.

In Banguil, the mean distance to fields is relatively short (Table 7.4), because some households temporarily settled close to their fields during the agricultural season.

In Baaga most households had long been permanently settled and owned land for a relatively long time. Thus they had fields relatively close to their homesteads (Table 7.4).

## **Crops cultivated**

### ***Cultivation of grains***

The household head, who in most cases was also the owner or responsible borrower of the field, decided on the species of crops to be sown in his fields. The main crop cultivated by Fulbe in the research villages was millet (Claude *et al.* 1991:144; Thébaud 1998:16)<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> In 1978, 44% of the area around Oursi was cultivated with millet, 47% with both millet and sorghum and 9% with sorghum only (Claude *et al.* 1991:145).

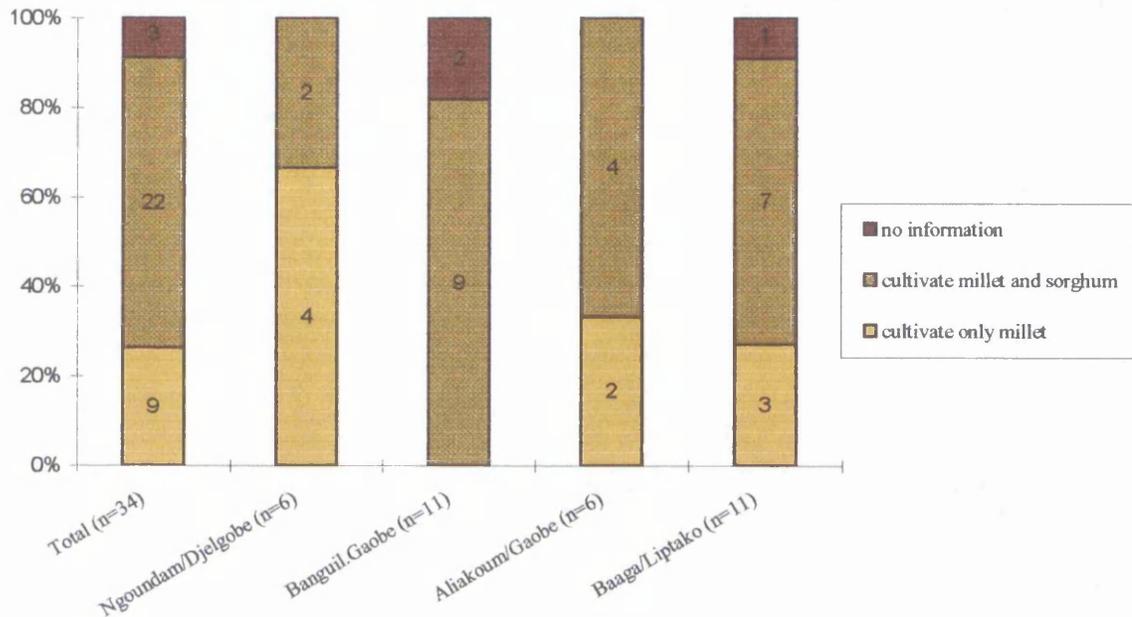
F further south, Thébaud's study in Seno province among different ethnic groups showed that of 110 households, only 20 cultivated millet alone. The 20 households included all the Diawambe of Touka Bayel, who mostly engage in the livestock trade and whose village is surrounded by *seeno*. All the other households, to varying degrees, also cultivated sorghum, cowpeas, condiments, peanuts and maize (Thébaud 1998).

**Plate 7.1: Millet field, Banguil**



Sorghum is, in general, less drought resistant than millet. This is why the majority of Djelgobe in Ngoundam, the northernmost study village, which normally receives less rainfall than the other villages, did not cultivate sorghum to a large extent. Two households in Ngoundam sowed a tiny amount of sorghum in the research year (Figure 7.2). Millet was the main crop sown. In the other study villages, most households sowed some sorghum in addition to millet. The cultivation of sorghum was usually restricted to small patches of loamy soils. Most of these fields were composed of sandy soils and were predominantly sown with millet. During the research year, rains across the region were extremely scarce at the beginning of the farming season and those households that had sown sorghum barely harvested any at all.

Figure 7.2: Cultivation of grains (millet and sorghum) in research villages (1996)



Intercropping of millet and cowpeas is common in Sahelian areas. Firstly, it maximises biomass production; cowpeas help to fix nitrogen in the soil. Secondly, intercropping minimises risks as not all plants are equally vulnerable to a variety of factors (Mortimore 1998:47-48).

In the research area only in 8 households, all in Baaga, were cowpeas sown with the millet. This was not so much for the harvest of cowpeas, but for the leaves that provided a valuable source of fodder for livestock (cf. Beauvilain 1977:136).

In the whole sample, only one household in Baaga attempted to grow peanuts. However, as peanuts do not grow well with less than 500 mm annual rainfall, although theoretically they can survive on as little as 350 mm (Pehaut 1970 in Franke 1980:92), the household concerned harvested nothing. Only the leaves were used, again, as fodder.

Maize is an important 'bridging crop' in the Sudano-Sahelian area as it matures in the 'hungry' season, at the time when food reserves have run out and millet or sorghum are

not yet ready to be harvested. In this research sample, only one household (that which sowed peanuts) in Baaga had tried unsuccessfully to sow maize once.

### *Cultivation of condiments*

Men decided what was sown in their fields. Since it was their obligation to provide the household with grain, they cultivated mostly millet or sorghum. With respect to other cultivated food items needed by the household, nowadays most women contributed to the purchase of condiments, although they were reluctant to admit it (cf. Chapter 3). Condiments regularly used in the preparation of meals were baobab leaves (of the tree *Adansonia digitata*), okra and roselle. Baobab leaves had to be bought as there were hardly any Baobab trees in any of the research villages. Okra and roselle, however, could theoretically be cultivated in the research area. Given the ambiguity over whose responsibility it was to provide these condiments, it was interesting to see whether any men or women grew them and how decision-making over the cultivation of condiments was achieved.

In Ngoundam, none of the households cultivated condiments (Figure 7.3). Women were interested in cultivating roselle, not so much for its use as a condiment but to use its fibre to make threads for mat-making. However, none of the women dared to suggest that their husbands cultivate roselle as they knew how much their men despised agricultural work. They themselves would not grow condiments for fear of mockery from other women, lack of time and, they added, because they would not know how. Ramsatou also did not cultivate condiments, not for fear of mockery, but more so because of a lack of time and because she did not consider it necessary as she preferred to buy these items whenever needed.

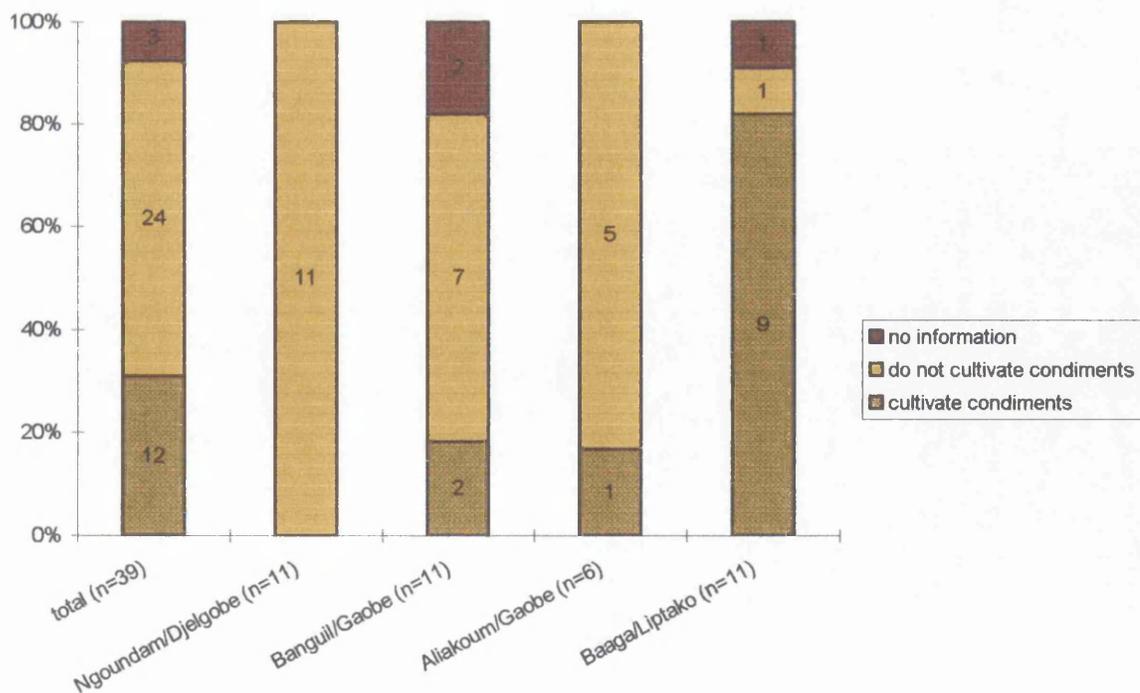
In Banguil, the women of two households sowed some roselle and okra, but the crops did not succeed in the research year. All women agreed that they would like their husbands to cultivate more condiments, but when asked, their husbands would refuse (Figure 7.3). As in Ngoundam, the women would not cultivate such crops themselves, they considered it unseemly for a Pullo woman to engage in any form of agricultural activity independent of her husband or male relatives. The two women that did sow some condiments were sometimes made fun of. However, one was a member of a very poor household with only one male able to provide labour. The other had been left

behind by her husband when he went on migration and she had not heard of him for nearly 2 years. Having an illegitimate child and being left by her husband, already brought enough shame on her, with or without engaging in cultivation.

In Aliakoum, 2 out of the 6 household heads cultivated condiments (Figure 7.3). Women of three households expressed a wish to have a small plot of condiments for themselves but, again, would not dare to cultivate themselves for fear of mockery.

In Baaga, the cultivation of condiments was most widespread and considered useful among both men and women from the households in the sample. Every household but one had a small plot behind the homestead where condiments were sown (Figure 7.3). Condiments were also sown at the edges of their fields. Those condiment crops in the fields tended to do better than those close to the homestead, because at the latter location poultry would eat a large proportion of the seed and very little would be harvested.

Figure 7.3: Cultivation of condiments in research villages (1996)



## Yields

In the farming season of 1996 hardly any sorghum, cowpea, okra or roselle were harvested in the households sampled due to the lack of rainfall early in the season. In terms of agricultural yields for that year, I will therefore only consider the harvest of millet.

Numerous varieties of millet could be found in the same field. Some millet hybrids have very small grains and can be harvested earlier than the others, helping to bridge the 'hungry' season. Likewise a small portion of the field yield is often harvested before fully ripening, to be dried over a fire and consumed immediately (cf. Claude *et al.* 1991:153). As this portion was usually small in relative terms, and its quantification was almost impossible, the amounts of millet consumed pre-harvest, were not included in the final calculations of the yield from a household's fields.

Table 7.5: Approximate mean millet yields ( $\pm$  SD) per ha in 1995 and 1996

1995		1996	
Village (number of cases)	Mean yield (in kg per ha $\pm$ SD <sup>12</sup> )	Village (number of cases)	Mean yield (in kg per ha $\pm$ SD)
Ngoundam (n=4)	174 $\pm$ 60	Ngoundam (n=3)	510 $\pm$ 246
Banguil (n=4)	457 $\pm$ 186	Banguil (n=10)	149 $\pm$ 92
Aliakoum (n=1)	89 $\pm$ 0	Aliakoum (n=6)	183 $\pm$ 132
Baaga (n=8)	607 $\pm$ 157	Baaga (n=11)	414 $\pm$ 209
Total (n=17)	439 $\pm$ 234	Total (n=30)	289 $\pm$ 212

If we compare the 1996 yields with those of the previous year, some striking observations can be made. Although the total mean yield was much higher in 1995 than in 1996, there was substantial variation at the village level. The yields per ha in 1996 were highest in Ngoundam, the northernmost village in the research area, where average rainfall tends to be lower than in the more southern villages. Yet, in 1996, the village closest to Ngoundam, Banguil, had the lowest yields of all sampled villages. Compared to 1995, the picture is reversed. Banguil recorded average yields nearly 3 times those of Ngoundam. In 1996, rains were generally better in the north than in the

<sup>12</sup> This data is based on recall data.

south, but at the beginning of the rainy season, rains were very sporadic in the area of Banguil and Aliakoum. While long term rainfall patterns favour the more southerly villages in this region, the higher rainfall variability in the north tends to have greater influence on the variation of yields between the villages.

The difference in yields between households (the high standard deviations recorded) indicates a high degree of variability even within the villages sampled<sup>13</sup>. This might suggest an even higher level of rainfall variability in time and space affecting fields differently according to the location within the village. In addition there are a variety of other factors that influence yields at the household level. Some of these factors will be discussed later on in this chapter.

### *Consumption*

Approximately 290 kg millet per capita per annum are needed if a diet is mainly based on cereals (WHO 1985). However, for the sample studied here, it is impossible to quantify the amount of millet needed per capita per year without carrying out a food intake survey over a calendar year. Fulbe generally supplement their diet with milk, but the amount of milk intake varies between sub-ethnic groups and households depending on milk availability and cultural and individual preferences. If a need of 200 kg of millet per person per year is assumed, which is equivalent to about 500 g per person day<sup>14</sup>, Table 7.6 shows that for those households in Baaga, self-sufficiency in cereals was more or less guaranteed in 1996 (and certainly in 1995), while Fulbe in the other villages had to buy additional millet<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Thébaud (1998) found in Seno in 1996 that yields per ha differed considerably, between 261 and 649 kg.

<sup>14</sup> De Bruijn & van Dijk (1995:292-3) estimate 0.47 kg per capita per day of millet (=172 kg per year) is required if a household has additional milk.

<sup>15</sup> By comparison, the mean crop production in 1990 in the Hayre for Jallube agropastoralists was 56 kg per capita per year (Rimaibe almost obtaining double). In 1991 yields rose to an average of 127 kg for Jallube and 180 kg for Rimaibe (de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:270).

**Table 7.6: Mean millet harvests in the research villages in 1996**

Village (number of households in brackets)	Mean yield in kg $\pm$ SD per...	
	Household	capita
Ngoundam (n=3)	703 $\pm$ 360	80 $\pm$ 44
Banguil (n=10)	442 $\pm$ 371	58 $\pm$ 60
Aliakoum (n=6)	241 $\pm$ 201	22 $\pm$ 17
Baaga (n=11)	1,313 $\pm$ 1,035	302 $\pm$ 189
Total (n=30)	747 $\pm$ 797	142 $\pm$ 171

In Baaga, most households claimed that in 1995 and 1994 their harvests were adequate for their needs and they did not have to buy any grain. Only in 1996 were some households worried that their harvest would not be for the coming year. Households in all the other 3 villages confirmed that they had to purchase additional millet every year, sometimes as early as November<sup>16</sup>.

### ***Sale***

Considering that most households were not self-sufficient in cereals, it is not surprising that millet was only sold in exceptional circumstances. For example, in Ngoundam a few years ago, a young man sold some millet and goats to buy his first and only cow. In Baaga, in 1995, a household head sold 14 bundles of millet to buy himself a bicycle and in 1994 the same man sold millet to buy clothes. His father did not approve of either of these purchases, at least, not through the sale of millet. Most household heads would only sell millet at the beginning of the rainy season and only if the buyer was purchasing seed.

### ***Alms (Zaka)***

After every harvest, in all Fulbe households one tenth of the harvest was usually given away as Islamic charity (*zaka*), providing a household harvested more than 30 bundles. Some household heads claimed that gifts of grains to relatives not living in the same

<sup>16</sup> Thébaud (1998:23 *et seq.*), in southern Seno found that in 1996, out of 109 households: 31 households had sufficient millet for 6 months, 41 households had sufficient for 7 to 9 months, and only 37 households had sufficient cereals for 9 months. The harvest in 1995 was somewhat better.

household could be regarded as *zaka*, others objected to this interpretation and claimed that *zaka* had to be given to non-relatives.

In Ngoundam, 4 out of 6 household that cultivated gave *zaka*. In Banguil, only 3 out of the 11 cultivating households gave *zaka* due to the bad harvest; similarly in Aliakoum only 2 out of 6. In Baaga, 8 households out of 11 gave *zaka*.

### ***Gifts and payments***

The male responsible for cultivating the field was the owner of the harvest, and he alone decided how the harvest was distributed and used. His wife or the women of his household had no say in this process. Men in Baaga, however, gave their wives one or two bundles of millet as “*tampirire*<sup>17</sup>” after the harvest to compensate them for their contribution to agricultural work. The wives were allowed to dispose of this millet as they wished. Most of them sold it in small quantities once the prices of millet went up later in the year and used the proceeds to buy soap, silver or satisfy small needs, i.e. kola.

In all villages it was expected that one gave at least one bundle of millet to one’s parents, parents-in law, and any other close relative who may be in need.

Any blacksmiths who had manufactured agricultural tools for Fulbe that year were usually given 1 or 2 bundles of millet as payment for their work. Also, those who had helped transporting the millet to the granary with a cart in Baaga were given some millet.

If the field was borrowed, some millet might be given to the owner of the field.

### **Economic benefit of crop residues**

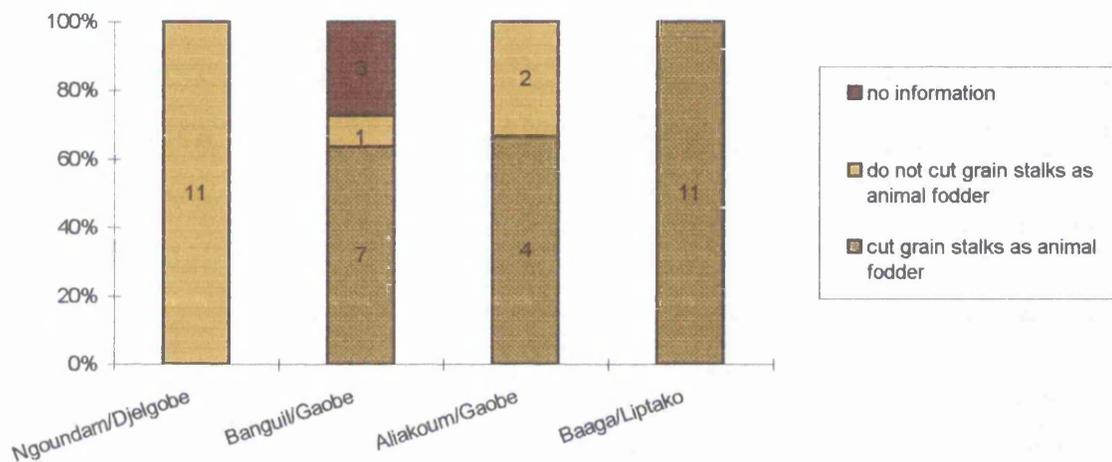
Millet and sorghum stalks and cowpea leaves were appreciated as animal fodder in all research villages except Ngoundam. Thus in 56% of households (22 out of 39), men cut millet and sorghum stalks as fodder for the animals of the household (Figure 7.4). In the same year, however, hardly any cowpea leaves could be harvested.

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<sup>17</sup> ‘*Tampi*’ means ‘tired’, and therefore could be interpreted as a compensation for the wife having ‘fatigued’ herself.

None of the households in Ngoundam ever harvested crop residues (Figure 7.4). They thought it better for their animals to transhume once pasture became scarce rather than stay in the village and make do with crop-residues. This opinion was shared by many Gaobe in Banguil (Figure 7.4). In Aliakoum though, around half of the Gaobe households cut crop residues, and in Baaga all Liptako did (Figure 7.4).

**Figure 7.4: Percentage of households (n=39) cutting grain stalks as animal fodder (1996)**



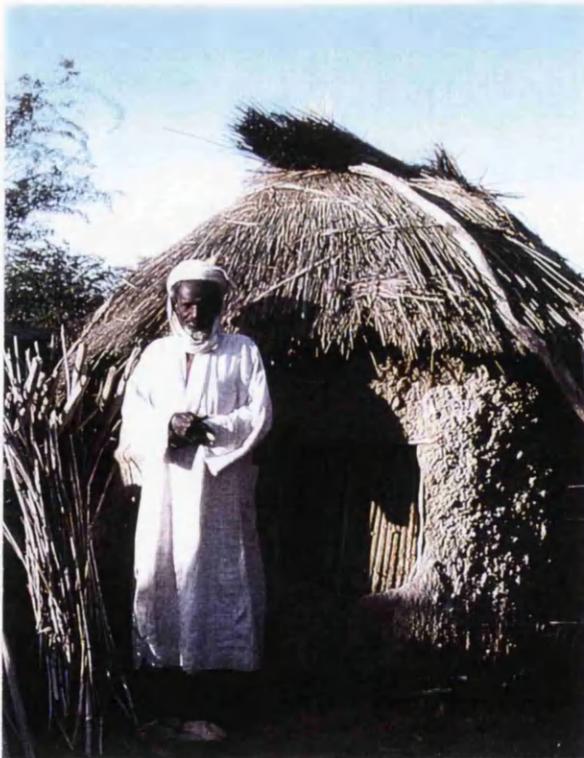
The majority of Gaobe men in Banguil crop stalks on their fields, guarded by thorny branches, any cowpea leaves were gathered and hung on trees. The household heads in Aliakoum and Baaga, however, preferred to transport their crop residues to their houses. As none of the Fulbe in the sample had any means of transport, they had to hire Rimaibe with donkey carts to bring the millet stalks to their compound.

Although they did not help to cut stalks for fodder, women and girls in both Banguil and Baaga collected sorghum and millet stalks as fuel, on a daily basis. Women in Aliakoum on the other hand, used wood as fuel and those in Ngoundam used dried dung, wood, grass and only occasionally used millet stalks for fuel.

Plate 7.2: Girls collecting crop stalks in Baaga



Plate 7.3: Fulbe Liptako in front of his granary, millet stalks leaning next to it, Baaga



In Baaga three elderly Liptako women also used millet stalks to make mats (*cekke*) (cf. Thébaud 1998:43) for mattresses and doors (see Chapter 4).

When men cut stalks in large amounts for animal fodder, they were usually restricted to their own field. When women and their daughters, however, collected stalks in small quantities for fuel or mat-making they were not restricted to their husbands' fields but could collect from any fields close to the compound.

None of the Fulbe sold any of these crop residues, a potential income source for other ethnic groups in the area.

## **Factors that potentially determine yields**

We have seen that the variability of yields in the research area is very high, not only from year to year but from village to village and that even within villages, at the household level, there is a considerable variation (Table 7.5, cf. Thébaud 1998). Many of the events that influence harvest are unpredictable, such as rainfall, insect and animal pests, and thus the input and output relations are different every year (cf. Mortimore 1988). The interplay of these factors together with labour input can have different results even on neighbouring fields that appear to have similar soils (cf. Beauvilain 1977:139). In this section I will shed light on some of the key factors that have the potential to influence crop yields in the research villages.

### ***Rainfall and soils***

In the context of both general aridity and rainfall variability how soils perform with regards to water is fundamental. Soil moisture performance is as significant as soil fertility.

We have already mentioned in Chapter 2 that all Fulbe in the sample preferred sandy soils (*seeno*) for cultivation (cf. Table 2.3) as opposed to compact or clay soils. These soils are easy to cultivate in comparison to the clay soils found around wet-lands. Given the techniques used by the Fulbe and low levels of rainfall, sandy soils are preferable because they make better use of precipitation (Krings 1980:10; Claude *et al.* 1991:151; Milleville 1991a:144; Toulmin 1992:57, 58; Koechlin 1997:19). As many of the fields used by the Fulbe in the research area contained a variety of soils, yields had the potential to differ within a single field.

### *Use of chemical fertilisers and manure*

30 household heads in the four study villages were asked about methods they used to improve or stabilise soil fertility and so improve yields. None applied any chemical fertilisers to their fields. Only the deputy of Aliakoum had once tried to use a chemical fertiliser a few years ago, because it was distributed by a development project. He had never used it since<sup>18</sup>.

By far the most important method used to increase yields was animal manure.

Information about the exact quantity of manure deposited on fields and the timing of manuring are essential to make any statements about its effectiveness in maintaining soil fertility and its impact on yields (Toulmin 1992; Ramisch 1998). Here, only information on whether or not manure was applied is presented (Table 7.7).

Out of 30 households in the sample, 22 (73%) used manure on their fields<sup>19</sup> (Table 7.7). Some of them left their animals on their fields for part of the dry season, others transported manure from their cattle camp near the homestead or from the bush to their fields. Only one household, the wealthiest in Banguil made a manure contract during the research year to have his fields manured by another's herd because most of his own animals were being herded in Mali.

**Table 7.7: Manure input in the agricultural season of 1996**

Village (number of households in brackets)	Percentage of households that manure using ...			
	their own animals only	only collected manure, manually transported to their fields	both their own animals and collected manure	others' animals through arrangements
Ngoundam (n=6)	16% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Banguil (n=8)	50% (4)	25% (2)	0% (0)	13% (1)
Aliakoum (n=6)	0% (0)	33% (2)	33% (2)	0% (0)
Baaga (n=10)	30% (3)	20% (2)	50% (5)	0% (0)
Total (n=30)	27% (8)	20% (6)	23% (7)	3% (1)

<sup>18</sup> Claude *et al.* (1991) confirm these findings. In the whole area around Oursi, neither Fulbe nor any other ethnic groups use chemical fertilisers, only manure.

<sup>19</sup> In Thébaud's study 95% of the households manured their fields whenever possible (Thébaud 1998:40). Some households, although they do not own animals, collect manure in the bush and transport it to their fields (*ibid*:41).

In Banguil, Aliakoum and Baaga almost all Fulbe agreed that manure was the best way to increase crop yields, especially when rains were good. Only a few were concerned about the effect manure might have in 'burning' the crops on their fields when rainfalls were low. In Ngoundam, however, all but one household head were convinced that manure would 'burn' the crop and thus, apart from this one household head, did not manure their fields at all (Table 7.7, see Chapter 6).

### *Fallow*

None of the sampled households left any fields systematically to fallow. Fallow was only practised when a family was moving or when a household head was on migration or when labour was short. The same phenomenon was observed by Claude in the area around Oursi (Claude *et al.* 1991:148). Thébaud, however, found in her study in Seno that nearly half (43%) of the households in her sample practised fallow, all ethnic groups included (Thébaud 1998:19, 20).

The reason that yields in Ngoundam were higher in 1996 than in the other villages may be due to the relatively short period of time these soils were cultivated, when compared with fields in other villages that have been cultivated for a long period of time without fallow.

### *Crop damage by livestock and pests*

Although normally birds are considered the main pestilence threat to crop yields, a large proportion of the harvest can also be destroyed by animals entering the fields. This problem rises with expanding agriculture (Riesman 1977; Claude *et al.* 1991; Toulmin 1992; Bassett 1994; Juul 1996). It was a concern in all research villages, but seemed particularly problematic in Aliakoum, due to the high animal and population density caused by the proximity to Gorom Gorom. Claude *et al.* (1991:149) found that around Oursi some cultivators tried to fence their fields to protect them from animals (cf. Riesman 1977:15). None of my sampled households fenced their fields. They did not have money to buy metal fences, and the environment officials would fine them if they cut bushes or trees to fence their fields. In Aliakoum, three household heads expressly wanted above all (apart from animals of course) metal fences for their fields.

It was interesting, however, that when discussing this problem, none of the Fulbe ever complained about damage that was done to their own fields by entering livestock. The conversation always turned to the problems their animals caused when entering non-Fulbe fields (see Chapter 5). Informants in all villages reported that Fulbe did not fine other Fulbe for damage caused in the fields by each other's livestock. Fines were only demanded by Fulbe of non-Fulbe.

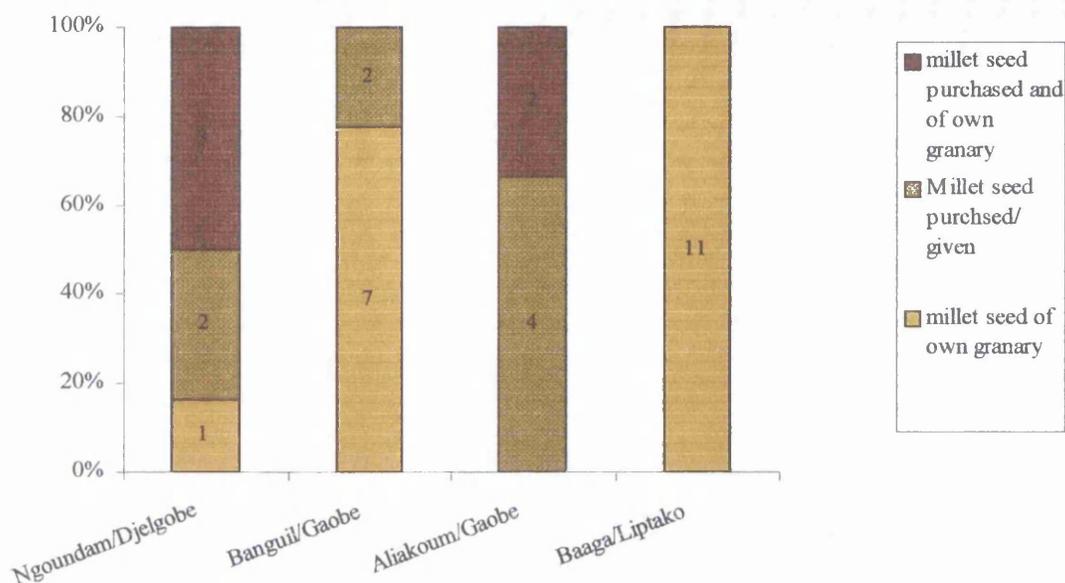
None of the households in the sample was much concerned about the threat of damage posed by either birds or locusts. Small insects were of far more concern. 20% of the households used insect powder on seeds before sowing to prevent damage in the early growing stages. In order to protect the stored harvest from termites, 63% (n=8) of households in Banguil and 67% (n=6) in Aliakoum added insect powder to their granaries. In Ngoundam and Baaga this was considered unnecessary.

### *Seed selection*

In 1996 nearly half of the households selected millet and sorghum seeds from the harvest of the previous year (Figure 7.5). As sowing had to be repeated up to six times in some households due to low rainfall at the beginning of the rainy season, some households had to purchase further seeds or were given them (Figure 7.5). A lack of seed can seriously affect the resulting yield, not only in terms of the quantity of seeds sown, but also its quality and its suitability to the type of land and soils of the particular field being cultivated. Generally speaking, seed selected from the harvest of the previous year, over a number of years, is chosen on the basis of its suitability to the prevailing conditions in which it is grown, and is therefore favoured over purchased seed.

If the data is disaggregated by village it shows that particularly in Baaga millet seeds were kept to be sown in the next year. This is only logical as it is the villages that cultivated most and was the least mobile.

Figure 7.5: Source of millet seeds in 1996 per village



### Labour

The amount of labour and its seasonal availability for investment in a field are crucial factors in determining agricultural production. While labour availability may determine a household's engagement in agriculture as some labour has to be reserved for the pastoral sector, in the sample there was no correlation found between labour available per household and yields per ha. This should, however, not be interpreted as meaning that labour is not a determining factor of yields (cf. Toulmin 1992:69-70; Mortimore 1998). As we will see in the next section, households can benefit from a variety of labour exchanges and some households also pay for labour. Therefore, the amount of workers per household alone is not an indicator of labour investment in a field.

### Labour allocation

For those Fulbe who cultivated, the rainy season represented a time of peak labour investment for sowing and above all weeding, tasks considered by all to be far more unpleasant than work in the pastoral sector. All Fulbe in the sample thoroughly disliked agricultural work and made no effort to hide their abhorrence and exhaustion when they came back from working in their fields.

Three households in the sample, one in Aliakoum and the two richest in Banguil, employed labour for all agricultural tasks apart from sowing. The cost for each individual household was 65,000, 130,000 and 150,000 FCFA respectively. All such costs were covered by the household head. None of the three households harvested much, but then 1996 was not a good year generally. Still, the two households from Banguil, who were successful cattle traders, were contemplating giving up agriculture altogether.

In the following I will briefly discuss inputs to agricultural labour.

**Sowing** was usually done the day after the first heavy rain of the rainy season (cf. Beauvilain 1977:15; Riesman 1977:15; Milleville 1997a:150). The rains were very weak and sporadic at the beginning of the 1996 agricultural season, and subsequently the mean frequency of sowing in all villages was almost 3 times higher than normal. In Aliakoum, households sowed on average 3.5 times. In Ngoundam, where the rains were much better that year, the mean frequency of sowing was only 1.8 times. Consequently, the amount of seeds needed per household varied considerably (cf. Milleville 1991a:151). In all but one household, it was the men's responsibility to provide the millet seeds.

As it is essential to finish sowing as quickly as possible – in 1 or 2 days (cf. de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:268), virtually every individual in the household took part in sowing: adult males, children above the age of 6 and all women. In each of Ngoundam and Aliakoum there was one household in which no woman participated in sowing. The woman in the household in Ngoundam categorically refused. In Aliakoum, in the household of the *mooDiBo*, none of the *mooDiBo*'s wives were supposed to be seen in the fields for reasons of seclusion. It is of interest that in the latter case the *mooDiBo*, as the household head and only male in the household, was not present at the time of sowing, so his *garibu* (Islamic scholars) did most of the agricultural work for him, including sowing. One other household head in Baaga was not present at the time of sowing and so 3 Rimaibe traditionally attached to his family helped his wife to sow his field.

Liptako women claimed that if they refused to participate in sowing, their husbands would beat them, but in the Djelgobe and Gaobe villages women's help was said to be on a more voluntary basis.

**Thinning** of millet has to be done after the first weeding, around the end of August, in years of good rain. In Ngoundam, Banguil and Aliakoum thinning was not considered an important issue as the millet there hardly ever grew too bushy. If at all, the crop was thinned while weeding. Some women might help, again on a voluntary basis.

In Baaga thinning was considered exclusively a female task, and could take several days. In 5 out of the 11 households sampled in Baaga, women organised a working invitation (*boogu*) among Rimaibe to help them in this task. In 4 cases the men paid for this, with costs varying from a whole goat to just 1,000-2,000 FCFA for buying kola nuts and preparing *gapal* for the participants. In one household the woman had to pay for this herself. Only one woman in Baaga benefited from an agreement of mutual help. Liptako women generally did not like to do the thinning, but had no choice to refuse their husbands' demands, unless they were extremely ill or about to deliver a child.

**Weeding** was the most time consuming and strenuous work during the rainy season. Those households with enough paid or household labour normally weeded twice. The first weeding is called *jobu*, and is the most strenuous; the second weeding is called *maitu*<sup>20</sup>, but was not always completed by the sampled households. The first weeding took place between the middle of July and the end of August. The second weeding took place in September. The Djelgobe in Ngoundam did not consider the second weeding very important due to the low rainfall which produced few weeds. However, in general it is considered best for the crop to be weeded twice (cf. Milleville 1991a:152).

In none of the households sampled did any of the women participate in weeding (apart from the one household in Ngoundam, already mentioned, in which the woman who owned the field performed all tasks. No man, not even in Baaga, was considered to have the right to force the women in his household to help with this arduous task, even

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<sup>20</sup> Fulbe in this research area use the *darao*, as their principal farming tool (cf. Riesman 1977) and not the hoe as in many agricultural Sahelian societies. The *darao* is a long spade-like tool. The user stands upright and pushes it into the ground at 45 degrees from the vertical. It works the soil more superficially than the hoe (Raynaud & Delville 1997:168). It is a tool well adapted to sandy, homogenous and relatively flat soils (*seeno*) and makes sense when labour is a limiting factor.

though at this time of the agricultural calendar labour scarcity was at a maximum (cf. Beauvilain 1977:134; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:125, 224).

Plate 7.4: Fulbe man weeding his field with a *darao*, Baaga



There were two ways in which Fulbe coped with this labour scarcity during weeding<sup>21</sup>. One was to organise working invitations or to employ day labourers. Work invitations (*boogu*) were said to be rare nowadays as they were considered expensive and on the whole unsatisfactory. This was because most people called upon to contribute simply sent adolescents to fulfil their obligation. Looking at the data, however, shows us that especially in Baaga there were still a considerable amount of working invitations taking place (Table 7.8). No statement can be made about their effectiveness. The other option, to pay for non-Fulbe labour, was actually more desirable for the Fulbe in the research area<sup>22</sup>. The wage per day ranged between 500 and 750 FCFA. Although this is

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<sup>21</sup> In each research village there were 4 to 5 age groups, so called *walde*, for each sex. Every Fulbe in the research villages belonged to a particular *walde*. A *walde* is seen as having more social and cultural value than economic purpose. On festivities, members of a particular *walde* dance together, eat together and sit together in a group. In general, there is little co-operation or organised mutual help for agricultural, pastoral or any other economic activities among the *walde* members within the research sample. In the whole sample, only one occasion was observed, when *walde* members met to help a needy member's relative in cultivation for half a day. In return the *walde* members were given a meal and some kola nuts. (The word *walde* is a metaphor, actually meaning cattle coral.)

<sup>22</sup> Beauvilain, who observed the same preference, thought it to be due to the individualism of Fulbe, but the economic problems after the drought made the importance of paid labour recede. "*Ce système correspond le mieux à l'individualisme peul, mais les difficultés monétaires liées à la sécheresse tendent aussi à le faire reculer*" (Beauvilain 1977:138-139).

a lot of money for most Fulbe households sampled, around half found it worth the expense to employ day labourers (Table 7.8)

**Table 7.8: Organisation of weeding (both *maitu* and *joobu*) in the research villages during the rainy season, 1996<sup>23</sup>**

Village	No. of households (% in brackets) that...		
	organised labour invitations	Employed labour	only relied on household labour
Ngoundam (n=5)	0	3 (60%)	2 (40%)
Banguil (n=10)	2 (20%)	6 (60%)	3 (30%)
Aliakoum (n=6)	2 (33%)	2 (33%)	2 (33%)
Baaga (n=10)	7 (70%)	7 (70%)	1 (10%)
Total (n=31)	11 (35%)	18 (58%)	8 (26%)

In Ngoundam, 3 out of 5 cultivating households employed Bella for a few days to help them with weeding. All 3 households, the one of Ramsatou included, spent 3,000 FCFA (500 – 600 FCFA per day per labourer). Ramsatou spent another 3000 FCFA for help with the second weeding. The concept of labour invitations for agricultural tasks was not known in Ngoundam (Table 7.8).

In Banguil, two households invited each other in an arrangement of mutual help, and by way of appreciation. One slaughtered a goat, the other some chickens. One of these households then spent another 7,500 FCFA on wages for the second weeding, while another only spent 2,500 FCFA on the second weeding.

Whether or not a household head decided to employ labour for weeding depended on a combination of two main factors: wealth and labour scarcity within the household.

**Harvesting** of most crops was done by the men and adolescents of the household and took place during October. Only in Ngoundam did two wives of household heads participate in the harvest due to labour shortages, but only because of good relations between husband and wife. No man could force his wife or daughter to help him harvest in any of the villages. Ramsatou did the harvesting with the help of her nephew.

<sup>23</sup> Household heads could give multiple answers.

Apart from the three households that paid for all their agricultural labour, there were only three households in Baaga that arranged for others to harvest their crops. They organised a small working invitation for 2-4 people, preparing a meal and distributing tobacco and kola. Women did not harvest cereals, but condiments such as okra, roselle and cowpea.

**Transporting the harvest** of grains did not pose a problem in Ngoundam and Banguil because households' granaries were on their fields. In Aliakoum and Baaga granaries were in the homesteads. Consequently, in these villages millet had to be transported long distances. Fulbe thus had to hire a donkey cart from local Rimaibe. Prices varied in kind (i.e. millet) and cash depending not only on the amount that had to be transported but also on the understanding of the two parties and their relative wealth. Women did not participate in transporting the harvest, except in Baaga where they may transport condiments and cowpeas.

## **Conclusion and discussion**

Due to various economic, ecological and socio-political factors, agriculture has become an important production strategy for almost all Fulbe households in the sample.

At the time of the study, in Banguil, Aliakoum and Baaga, the most common way to access agricultural land was through inheritance. In Ngoundam, most land owners acquired their field through clearing a new patch of land. This is very different from the findings of de Bruijn & van Dijk (1995:309), who examined 76 transactions in the acquisitions of agricultural land, and found that two thirds involved the purchase of land by the present owner. The land availability situation seems to be less critical in my research area than in de Bruijn & van Dijk's, but this may be influenced by the fact that many of their households sampled were Rimaibe. However, land scarcity may soon become a problem in more densely populated areas of my sample, e.g. Aliakoum and Baaga (cf. Milleville 1991a:148, Raynaut 1997a:135 *et seq.*). Also, where Fulbe are continually politically marginalised, as for example in Ngoundam, access to land may become increasingly difficult.

The Liptako in Baaga are the only Fulbe in the sample cultivating enough to secure self-sufficiency in millet in most years. In the more southern parts of the research area, agriculture is less prone to risk and therefore, investing (particularly labour) in agriculture makes more sense than in the more northern areas. This, however, does not necessarily mean that yields are always higher, due to the variability of rainfall and other factors. Besides, cultural reasons may be a more important factor. Liptako have long been sedentary and interested in agriculture, while Djelgobe are more eager to pursue a pastoral ideal than the other groups.

Agriculture is a domain more or less completely under the control of men. As it is men who have a cultural obligation to provide cereals for the household, it is logical that mostly cereals, and particularly millet, are cultivated. Given that Fulbe men do not particularly like agricultural work, they are willing to cultivate other crops and so most condiments have to be purchased by women.

The majority of literature about Fulbe emphasises the fact that women do not participate in agricultural activities (e.g. de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:268). "*Men are responsible for the work in the fields which is absolutely forbidden to women*" (de Bruijn 1997:633) Although women in my sample do not engage much in agriculture, it would not be correct to say that cultivation is forbidden for them *per se*. The situation is much less clear-cut and differs between the sub-ethnic groups.

One woman in the research area owned a field. She was an extraordinary woman who was economically and emotionally independent in a way never observed anywhere else in the whole sample. None of the other women were interested in owning land.

The current perception of what is and what is not seemly for a Pullo woman in the research area, with respect to agricultural work, differs by sub-ethnic group. For more sedentary and agriculturally-oriented Fulbe, it appears that the cultural stigma attached to women's engagement in agriculture extends to their exclusion from cereal cultivation, but not from small-scale cultivation of condiments crops such as roselle and okra. Some Liptako and a few Gaobe women were interested in cultivating condiments, as most had to spend a portion of their income from selling milk on condiments for daily use in preparing food. It is difficult to quantify the exact number of women who

seriously contemplated taking up the cultivation of condiments, as I got the impression that some women felt obliged to show an interest in agriculture or gardening when talking me, thinking that I may be linked to one of the local development projects.

Djelgobe women generally seemed far less interested in agriculture than Gaobe and Liptako women. One explanation may be found in their cooking habits. Djelgobe women generally bought less condiments. They sometimes would not prepare sauces, but instead add butter or sour milk to the millet porridge (*nyiri*). Often they would not even prepare millet porridge. Djelgobe women frequently find themselves in the situation of not being present in the rainy season, as many of them go on transhumance, and thus, whatever their preferred cooking and eating habits, cultivation would not be an option.

Non cultivation by women was not a function of a scarcity of land, nor of being overloaded with other work during the agricultural season, although Djelgobe and Gaobe women, responsible for the provision of housing, may have found it difficult to find time to cultivate. Only a few Fulbe households practised Islamic seclusion to the extent that women could not go to the fields. Nor was it the case that men did not allow women to engage in agriculture, rather the opposite; most men would have appreciated help from women in farming activities. Where women did not cultivate, the primary reason they gave was that they feared the criticism and mockery of other women, should they to be seen preparing or weeding a plot. Those women mentioned who did engage in cultivation more than the norm suggests, were either desperate, already an outsider due to other reasons, or in the case of Ramsatou, exceptionally rich and relatively old and therefore more respected and less criticised. Also, as Riesman (1977:238 *et seq.*) suggested, sometimes behaviour that contradicts *pulaaku* can be excused by society and attributed to personality - wealth and age certainly aids tolerance.

It is Fulbe culture in general - the association of agriculture with the work of former slaves - that places a stigma on engagement in cultivation, more so among women than among men. Women who help their husbands to weed are ridiculed by other women. Cultivating lowers Fulbe women's status, and is something to avoid if at all possible. While most men, as providers of cereals, cannot avoid cultivating, women seem to be in

a position to do so. It is open to discussion whether women use these cultural values advantageously to protect themselves from being overworked and investing time, labour and money in something they are not responsible for, or, whether these same codes of behaviour or mannerisms disadvantage women by restricting them from diversifying their livelihoods.

# 8

## PATTERNS AND DETERMINANTS OF MILK SELLING

### Introduction

I have shown that women in the research area have little influence on most aspects of the pastoral sector and hardly engage in agriculture. However, within the pastoral sector milk selling has always been portrayed as Fulbe women's domain in the classical literature about Fulbe (Hopen 1958; Dupire 1962; Stenning 1959), but also in some more recent studies (Waters-Bayer 1985; Jung 1997; Kuhn 1997). Other studies, however, have emphasised the dwindling scope of milk selling for most Fulbe women. This is attributed to impoverishment (Maliki 1988; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995; de Bruijn 1997) or to increasingly orthodox Islamic orientation, that idealises women's seclusion and thus restricts women's marketing activities (Boutrais 1988; Burnham 1996; Schneider 1997).

In this chapter, I will discuss women's access to milk, use of milk and opportunities for collaboration in milk selling. Then, potentially important determinants of milk selling behaviour of women will be discussed with respect to the study area. Various factors will be examined: lifecycle, culture (e.g. ethnicity), seasonality, the degree of sedentarisation or mobility, market opportunities, relative wealth or impoverishment and the degree of commercialisation. This chapter asks, to what extent Fulbe women in different economic and social circumstances engage in milk selling. How, therefore, does impoverishment and commercialisation influence milk selling behaviour? To what extent is milk selling influenced by the different cultural ideals of the sub-ethnic groups? Is milk marketing determined by location and by distance to market? Can the relative importance of these different influences be discerned?

The classic literature on pastoral Fulbe indicates that women used the proceeds from their milk selling activities to buy cereals to feed the household or to exchange milk directly for cereals (Stenning 1959; Dupire 1962, 1063). Recent studies of other Fulbe groups have emphasised that women, more than ever, have to spend their income on household needs, due to impoverishment at a household level, assuming that women had more autonomy on milk revenues in pre-drought times (e.g. de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995) (see Chapter 1). In this Chapter I will examine how women in the research sample allocate their earnings from milk selling. Where a woman engages in milk selling, to what extent do the earnings remain under her control? To what extent are they used to meet basic household needs or, conversely, for her own personal benefit?

### **Access to milk**

In the research area, sheep were hardly ever milked. Goats were milked mainly in the hot dry season but usually only by the herders, often children or adolescents. Most adult Fulbe preferred cow milk to goat milk. Thus, in the majority of households goat milk was either given to children or left at the herder's disposal (cf. Dahl & Hjort 1976:216; Thébaud 1998:52). Sometimes goat milk was mixed with cow milk.

Cow milk was highly appreciated. Fulbe women, but also men, praised its effect on giving beauty (weight) to those who consume it. Loutan & Lamotte (1984 quoted in Mortimore 1998:61) observed an average of 3.1kg weight loss among Fulbe men, and 2.4kg among Fulbe women in Niger during the hot dry season, which they attributed primarily to the lack of milk and secondarily to a lack of cereals, symptomatic for this time of year. In my own research area, there was a visible difference in people's physical shape in the hot dry season, when there was hardly any milk and often little other food available, and the rainy season when food, including milk, was more abundant.

**Plate 8.1: Djelgobe woman milking, Ngoundam**



**Plate 8.2: Liptako women with milk and butter, Baaga**



Djelgobe women usually milked the cows themselves. Liptako and Gaobe women did not milk the cows, but had the milk brought to them by the herders. Sometimes in the Djelgobe village a man would milk the cows and in the Gaobe villages sometimes a woman. It is interesting to note that in the two Djelgobe households in which the women owned the majority of the cattle, it was men (in one case the woman's husband, in the other her nephew) who milked the cows. Milking was not necessarily always regarded as a privilege, enabling the person who milked to determine milk off-take, but sometimes seen more as a chore. Most Gaobe men said they would be grateful if their wives would milk the cows, as then they could pursue other activities or rest. Whether they would let their wives milk the cows on a regular basis is, however, doubtful. Liptako men, on the other hand, did not like their wives milking as they suspected them of taking too much milk and leaving too little for the calves. This indicates a potential source of conflict between women who want access to milk and men who want to secure calf growth.

The milk cows generally accessible to a woman, comprised those animals that belonged to her, those owned by her unmarried children (so long as they were kept in the same compound), and those that the husband allocated for her to milk or to be milked for her, including *kalifa* animals (see Chapter 6; cf. Dupire 1963:67). Once a son was married, the distribution of his cows' milk within the household might change. In case of co-residence with his mother, she still usually received all the milk as long as the daughter-in-law had not yet delivered a child, but she would provide the newly arrived wife with condiments and utensils from milk selling revenues. Only after having given birth to the first child, a young wife became more established in a compound and was given more freedom. Then her husband either shared the milk of his animals between his mother and wife, or gave it all to his wife. His wife was then supposed to give part of the milk to her mother-in-law to show respect and keep good relationships with her in-laws. There were, however, two families where all the milk was still given to the mother for distribution although her daughters-in-law had several children (cf. Box 8.1).

*Box 8.1: Distribution of milk in a household, Baaga*

*Hama's household was one of the richest in Baaga. His three sons, with their wives and children, had not yet separated from their parents. It was a very religious household and Hama, being around 70 years old, did not like to see any of the women in the household go to the market. All the milk was given to Hama's wife and she distributed the milk according to seniority of her daughters-in-law and the number of children they had. Only occasionally did she sell milk within the village and, even more rarely, did her eldest daughter-in-law go to the market.*

The cows that belonged to a woman or to any of her children, were only milked for her (or by her, in households where milking was done by women). No co-wife was entitled to any of her milk. If a woman owned or had rights over more animals than her co-wife, the husband would sometimes even out discrepancies of milk supply by milking more of his own cows for the wife that owned fewer animals, taking into consideration the number of children and other dependants.

Where there was no lactating cow in the household, a richer relative might milk a cow for a woman, a practice said to have been common in former times but rather the exception today (cf. Kuhn 1997:67). In the present study, women only acquired milk from their own allocated milk cattle, with two exceptions. In both these cases, women with no cattle to milk were given milk by their mothers, in order to have milk to consume and to sell. Most women interviewed in the present study had between one and four milk cows at their disposal, though some had none.

In all villages, cows were generally milked twice a day during the rainy season and once a day in the hot and dry season (cf. Milleville 1991b:170). During the rainy season there was considerably more milk available than during the dry season. Depending on various factors (including season, age of the calf and fodder availability) milk productivity per milking varied from under a quarter of a litre to a little more than one litre. Only rarely were up to two litres reported. Highest milk yields were achieved in September, the lowest were measured in May and June. If one litre of milk weighs approximately 1.1 kg (Homewood & Rodgers 1991:227) my findings correspond roughly to those of

Milleville (1991b:170) around Oursi in Oudalan province, where the smallest amount of milk per milking was 360g and the maximum 1000g<sup>1</sup>.

Given the variable milk yields per cow, a woman had anything from less than a quarter litre of milk up to four litres a day, this translates to a range of 0.3-4.4 kg per day. By comparison, the Nigerian dairywomen in Waters-Bayer's study had averages ranging from 2.8 to 4.2 kg of milk per day. In this Nigerian study, average dry season disposable milk yields fell to 1.8 kg per women per day (range: 0.9-3.0 kg/day) rising to an average of 5.8 kg per day (range: 4.1-8.4 kg) in the wet season. Overall, therefore, the women in the subhumid zone-based Nigerian study had considerably more milk at their disposal than the sampled population in the Sahel of Burkina.

## Use of milk

Some milk was consumed fresh, but most of the milk was kept aside to be made into sour milk or butter by shaking the milk in either a specially formed calabash (among Liptako) or in leather sacks (among Gaobe and Djelgobe). Women and young girls from the age of six shared this task. Soured milk was kept for around two days. Butter was said to keep for up to a year if put in clean containers, usually bottles. Butter was highly appreciated with *nyiri* (millet porridge) alone or as seasoning to sauces. All sampled Fulbe's favourite dish was *gapal* or *copal*, made from diluted soured milk and millet. Fulbe women in the research area did not make cheese as observed, for example, among Fulbe in Benin (Kuhn 1997).

A woman could dispose of the milk allocated to her as she wished (cf. Kuhn 1997), but had to keep some for family consumption and for guests. The larger the household, the more she would be expected to keep for them. The remainder she could set aside for herself and sell. The amount of milk sold by a woman depended not only on the size of the household, and the amount available, but also on the staple food preferred by the household. For households heavily involved in farming, consumption was based primarily on millet rather than milk. Those households that did not cultivate tried to reduce millet purchases by consuming more milk instead. In the rainy season, two non-cultivating Djelgobe households with many *kalifa* animals, claimed to have lived off

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<sup>1</sup> For other milk yields under similar ecological conditions see Swift *et al.* (1984:359) for Niger, Dahl & Hjort (1976:145) for Northern Nigeria.

milk more or less alone for up to two months. Both Djelgobe women and men preferred milk to millet as a main diet. By contrast, those Liptako sampled, were long used to farming and to millet as a staple food, and did not wish to live off milk alone.

Women usually sold soured milk, watered-down to varying degrees, or butter, but hardly ever sold fresh milk. All women preferred to sell butter since it invariably commanded the highest price. It was, however, very difficult for most women to produce enough butter for both home consumption and sale. The ability of a woman to be able to sell butter depended on season, household structure, and determination not to offer butter with household meals. None of the women found it possible to store butter long enough to wait for prices to go up in the dry season.

### **Collaboration in milk selling**

Women sold milk<sup>2</sup> either in their own village, in hamlets around their village, in transhumance camps, or in near-by towns either at markets or by going from door to door. Most frequently, women went to market towns to sell their milk, for several important reasons. Women preferred to sell their milk for cash, not for goods or credit. This was most easily done in towns where the demand for milk was usually high. Furthermore, women could thus combine milk selling with making purchases to meet their own needs (cf. Kuhn 1997). More importantly though, to many women milk selling was the only culturally justified reason for them to head for the near-by towns and socialise outside their own village.

In Ngoundam, if women were not on transhumance, they either sold milk within the village to Bella or they went to Markoye, the nearest market town, which is around 8km away. Gaobe from Banguil never sold milk within their village, since it was exclusively inhabited by Fulbe. Consequently they also went to Markoye to sell milk. The distance to this market town from where these Gaobe settled, varied during the year, between 1 and 6km. Aliakoum was very close to Gorom Gorom, the nearest market town, around 1-2km, so Gaobe women here were able to access their market easily. In Baaga, Liptako women rarely sold milk to their neighbouring Rimaibe, as they already had considerable

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<sup>2</sup> In the remaining sections of this chapter soured milk, fresh milk and watered-down milk sold by Fulbe women will collectively be referred to simply as 'milk' (see Chapter 1).

livestock holdings themselves. These women therefore walked around 6km to Dori, their nearest market town.

In view of the long distances, and the small quantities each woman sold per walk, it might be expected that women in Ngoundam, Banguil and Baaga would take turns to sell each other's milk, thereby saving time and energy. However, this was hardly ever the case. Even co-wives managed their milk marketing completely independently. Hardly ever did women from the same compound even walk to the market together. Sometimes close friends would walk together to the market, but invariably kept their milk selling independent from each other. A woman who was ill might occasionally have given a very small quantity of milk to a friend or a relative to buy condiments or soap for her - the sick woman's - own immediate needs. But even this was said to happen only if the mother-in-law was no longer alive and the woman's own mother was not in the same village, otherwise one of them would have taken care of her milk selling. Generally, wherever possible, such co-operative arrangements were said to be avoided, as they tended to result in problems. Collaboration in selling milk was usually, therefore, limited to mothers-in law and their daughters-in law, and between mothers and their daughters.

### **Use of money from the sale of milk**

Milk was sold for cash where possible. None of the women in the research sample wanted to exchange milk for millet, because men were considered responsible for buying millet (see Table 8.1).

**Table 8.1: Gender division of expenditure obligations**

Domain	Male responsibilities	Female responsibilities <sup>3</sup>
Pastoral investment	Vaccination, fodder, labour	Bran
Food for household members	Millet, condiments	<i>Millet, condiments</i>
Agricultural investment	Seeds, labour, transport	<i>Seeds, labour</i>
Housing for household members	Mud-brick houses	Tents, beds, shelves
Clothes for household members	Clothes for all members	-
Food processing/cooking utensils	-	Mortar, pestle, bowls, etc.
Dowry for daughters	-	Mats for tents (Djelgobe; Gaobe) Bed, Utensils
Bridewealth	Animals, cash	-
Animal gifts to children	Cattle, sheep, goats	Cattle, sheep, goats

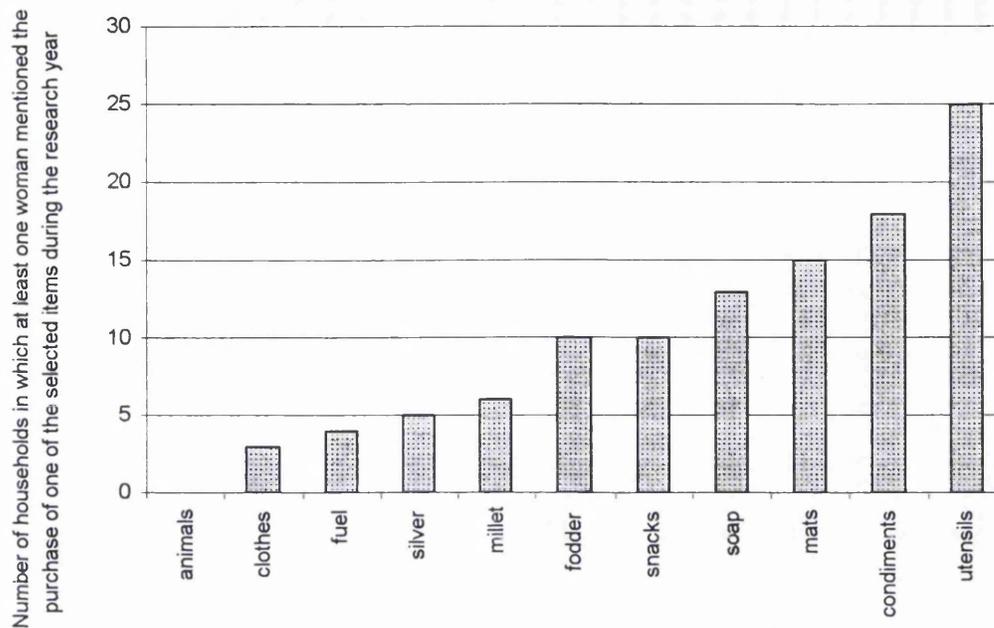
Income from milk selling was women’s money. Men knew neither exactly how much women earned, nor what they bought with their earnings. Kuhn observed a similar pattern among Fulbe women in Benin: “*Cet argent reste la propriété de la femme. L’époux n’a aucun droit sur les gains issus de la vente du lait et ne doit pas intervenir dans les décisions relatives à leur utilisation*”<sup>4</sup> (Kuhn 1997:74).

Fulbe women in the research sample used the profits from milk selling as described in Figure 8.1.

<sup>3</sup> Those items printed in italics indicate that there were some women in the sampled households that contributed to these expenditures but it was rather an exception than the rule.

<sup>4</sup> “*This money is women’s property. The husband has no right on the profits that come from milk selling and is not allowed to intervene in the decisions about its use*” (own translation).

Figure 8.1: Women's use of milk money in 25 sampled households, all villages included (n=25)



None of the women in any of the research households were in a position to buy animals with her 'milk money' during the research year (Figure 8.1, see Chapter 5). This is different from the findings of Waters-Bayer (1985) in Nigeria where women were able to buy small stock from milk earnings.

Some of the women from each of the research villages had to buy clothes for themselves or their children. Fuel, in the form of wood, was only purchased in Aliakoum (Figure 8.1). Likewise, men only rarely participated in the purchase of fuel wood. Women in the other research villages never bought fuel wood.

Women were nearly as likely to buy silver for themselves and their daughters as they were to contribute to the purchase of millet to feed the household (Figure 8.1). Not only was silver jewellery considered by individual women to be beautiful, and an investment, but also the more silver worn, the more social prestige a woman had (cf. CRPA 1994:18). As for millet, a woman would accept millet (or millet bran, used as supplementary feed for livestock) only if the buyer of milk had no cash, which was mostly the case when milk was sold in neighbouring villages rather than at the market. Otherwise, only if her household head was completely unable to provide the household with millet, or where there was exceptional love and understanding between a couple, might a woman voluntarily contribute to the purchase of cereals. She would be

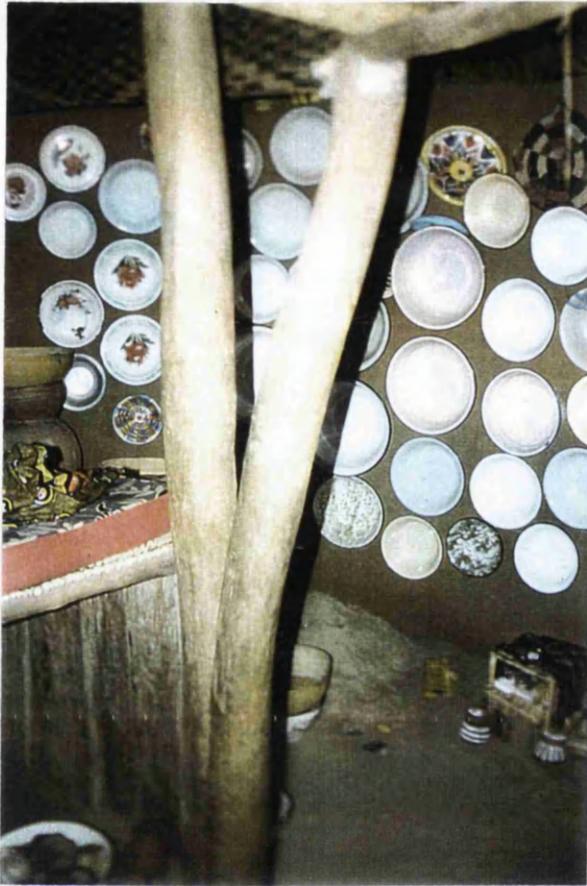
somewhat more likely to buy millet bran as supplementary feed for the household animals, usually her own, than to buy millet (Figure 8.1).

It was common for a woman to spend some of her 'milk money' on condiments - less so among Djelgobe than Gaobe and Liptako - and sometimes a woman might buy tobacco or kola for her husband (Figure 8.1).

Gaobe and Djelgobe women had to constantly buy material for making mats for their tents and those of their daughters (Figure 8.1). Furthermore, all women had to buy equipment to construct beds for themselves and for their daughters when they were married. Women buy these items gradually, whenever they have some money spare. A well-kept house was important for all Fulbe women in the sample, as their social standing in front of other women was largely dependent on this.

'Milk money' was primarily spent on utensils for a daughter's dowry or a woman's own use (Figure 8.1). These utensils included a mortar and pestle, cooking pots, calabashes, lids for calabashes, wooden or enamel bowls and plates, leather sacks to curdle milk. Many of these items were for everyday use and therefore regarded as necessary expenditure in the production of food for the household members. Others, however, like enamel bowls and plates, served primarily to decorate the tent or house. A woman gained prestige vis-à-vis other women if her house was elaborately decorated with these plates and bowls. Djelgobe women, in general, had less such decorative items than Gaobe or Liptako women, for the simple reason that they went often on transhumance with their tents and everything in them and thus these items were usually more of a hindrance than an asset.

Plate 8.3: Well decorated Fulbe Liptako house, Baaga



From the above data it is clear that, in my own research area at least, women's earnings were not very likely to be used as a primary source of the household's staple grain diet. This finding is in direct contrast to classical works on Fulbe groups in arid and semi arid areas (Hopen 1958: 153-4; Dupire 1962:96) and recent works in areas close to the present study area (Castle 1992; de Bruin & van Dijk 1996:295). The pattern was, however, entirely consistent with that reported by Waters-Bayer (1985) for the wealthier, more settled, agro-pastoral Fulbe of Nigeria.

### **Determinants of milk selling behaviour**

Out of 94 women, within the 39 households sampled, 37 engaged at some time in milk selling during the research year (for 5 women no information could be obtained). In the following chapter I will discuss the factors that most influenced women's decisions on whether or not to sell milk, and the various restraints they encountered in the process.

### *Women's life cycle*

Girls not only helped their mothers in making sour milk and butter, but they also sometimes accompanied them to sell milk. Once a girl reached puberty, a mother avoided taking her daughter to the market and would certainly not allow her to leave the village on her own. Even after a girl was married she would not leave the village to sell milk until she had had her first child. During this time these young married women had no independent income at all. In general, both men and women considered it inappropriate for younger women, unmarried and just married, to leave the compound or the village unless it was an absolute necessity, i.e. to fetch water or fuel. A young woman's status in society was to some extent devalued by the amount of times she was seen in public, particularly at the market. Most young, newly married women in all villages were reluctant to even visit women in other compounds. At this stage in her life, a woman would usually try to establish a good reputation for herself, because her future status would be influenced by the reputation she gained both before she was married and early on in her marriage.

This seclusion of young married women was not, generally speaking, enforced by men. Although the men in the sample were obviously too jealous to let their young wives go to the market, according to their interpretation of *pulaaku*, a Pullo man was not supposed to show his emotions, of love or jealousy, otherwise his age-mates and other members of the society would make fun of him. In the present study it was therefore usually not the husband, but the elderly women in the husband's household who decided when a woman could start selling milk after the delivery of her first child.

The effects of age and parity are clearly shown by the fact that the odds of a woman engaging in milk selling were three times greater if she had one or more children (logistic regression:  $p < 0.05$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $r = 0.13$ ). These odds increased by a factor of 1.33 with each child (logistic regression:  $r = 0.17$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $df = 1$ ).

After having delivered their first child, most women who engaged in milk selling would only interrupt going to the market for a few months after each subsequent birth, as long as there was a surplus of milk (most likely in the rainy season) (cf. Waters-Bayer 1985). Women also reported being quite happy to refrain from their market activity, providing their husband could afford to supply them with all a woman needs to be respected by other women. The extent to which women refrained from selling milk and remained

secluded clearly depended on the economic situation of the household. Most households were too poor to allow for the luxury of complete female seclusion (cf. Horowitz 1974:375). At the same time, women obviously enjoyed the opportunity that milk selling in the market provided for them to socialise.

### *Ethnicity*

Djelgobe women were, in general, less likely to engage in milk selling than Liptako and Gaobe women. Although there was no significant difference between villages (and hence ethnic groups) in the proportion of households with at least one woman engaging in milk selling, there was a strong difference between villages in the likelihood of individual women selling milk. Thus, the odds of a Liptako women in Baaga selling milk were 8 times greater than those of a Djelgobe woman from Ngoundam doing so (logistic regression:  $r=0.22$ ,  $p<0.01$ , 1df).

This was surprising, because it has been assumed that women's ability to sell milk is more secure when women milk the cattle themselves. "*Une plus grande liberté d'action économique et, de ce fait, une position économique plus forte des femmes peules seraient assurées si celles-ci pouvaient traire elles-mêmes et si elles possédaient leur propres bovins*"<sup>5</sup> (Kuhn 1997:76). Djelgobe women usually milk cattle themselves. Also, as shown in Chapter 5, the Djelgobe women from Ngoundam, on average, owned more of their households' animals than the women in the other villages. The reason why they sell milk less often appears to be linked to the fact that Djelgobe seemed to consume more milk than Gaobe and Liptako. As mentioned earlier, they alone were happy to live entirely off milk during the rainy season if they could. Thus less milk would be available for sale.

### *Seasonality*

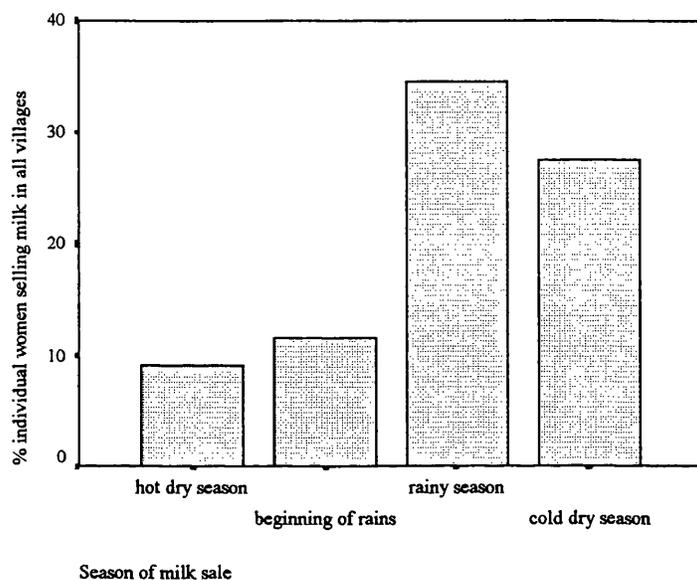
Considering minimal milk yields in the dry season (see Table 2.2) and small overall animal numbers, it is obvious that most women had hardly any milk at their disposal in the hot dry season. In fact, women were four times more likely to sell milk during the rainy season, (and three times more likely to sell during the cold dry season), than during the hot dry season (Figure 8.2). Both results are statistically significant at the  $p<0.01$

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<sup>5</sup> "A bigger freedom of economic action and, therefore, a stronger economic position of women would be assured if they could milk themselves and if they owned their own cows." (own translation).

level (logistic regression). However, women would always try to sell some milk in the dry season because prices for milk and other goods are higher. Understandably therefore, the dry season is usually also the time when sour milk for sale is most watered down.

Figure 8.2: Seasonality and involvement in milk selling (n=89)



### *Transhumance patterns and proximity to markets*

Overall, the odds of a woman selling milk were nearly three times greater if she was present at her home village than when she was away on transhumance ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $df = 1$ ).

This result may simply reflect the predominance of Liptako and Gaobe women in the sample, since, unlike women from the other ethnic groups, Djelgobe women were significantly more likely to sell milk while away on transhumance than when they were at their home village (Figure 8.3, Table 8.2). It might be argued, though, that women on transhumance find themselves far from markets and unable to sell their milk products. Many Djelgobe women from Ngoundam, however, reported that during transhumance households sometimes camped near villages or settlements where they could easily sell milk. Sample numbers are small, but Figure 8.3 shows the percentages of Djelgobe women engaging in milk selling when at the home village and when on transhumance.

Table 8.2 shows broadly comparable numbers of Gaobe women from Banguil going on transhumance (though with a different seasonal pattern). However, these Gaobe women

were consistently more likely to engage in milk selling when in their home village than when away (Figure 8.4).

In total only five Gaobe women from the periurban village of Aliakoum went on transhumance (Table 8.2). One who left at the beginning of the rainy season, sold milk, as did two who were on transhumance during the main rains (Table 8.2; Figure 8.5). Most women in Aliakoum stayed in their home village all year round, and roughly half of those that stayed sold milk in both the rainy season and throughout the dry season (Table 8.2; Figure 8.5).

Only one of the 16 Liptako women sampled in Baaga went on transhumance and sold milk in the cold dry season. Two-thirds of the Liptako women who remained sold milk, mainly in the wet season (Table 8.2; Figure 8.6).

**Table 8.2: Transhumance absence and presence of the sampled women, 1996-1997 (n=92)**

Season	Ngoundam ( <i>Djelgobe</i> ) (n=24)		Banguil ( <i>Gaobe</i> ) (n=34)		Aliakoum ( <i>Gaobe</i> ) (n=18)		Baaga ( <i>Liptako</i> ) (n=16)	
	Trans-humant	Present	Trans-humant	Present	Trans-humant	Present	Trans-humant	Present
Hot dry	9	15	4	30	0	18	1	15
Beginning of rains	18	6	5	29	2	16	1	15
Rainy	18	6	17	17	4	14	0	16
Cold dry	4	20	16	18	5	13	1	15

Figure 8.3: Percentage of women selling milk at home vs. on transhumance, Ngoundam, 1996-1997 (n=24)

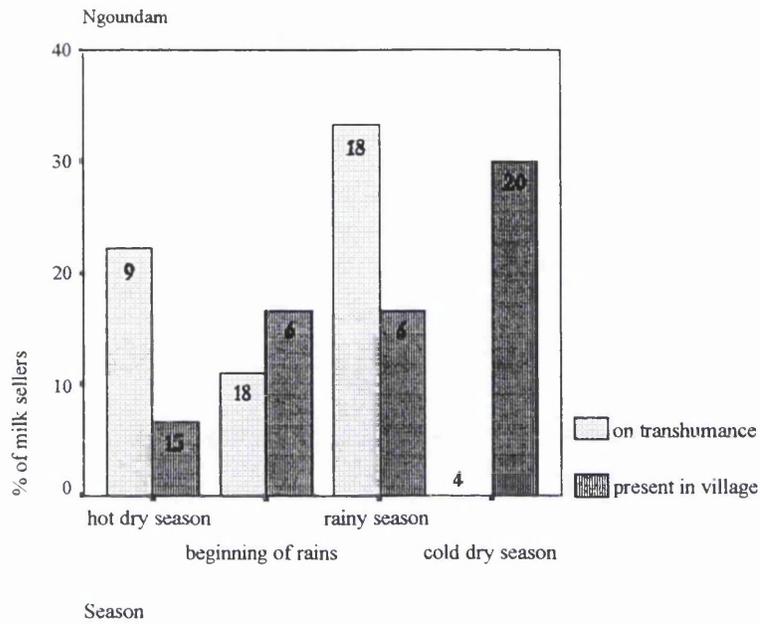


Figure 8.4: Percentage of women selling milk at home vs. on transhumance, Banguil 1996-1997 (n=34)

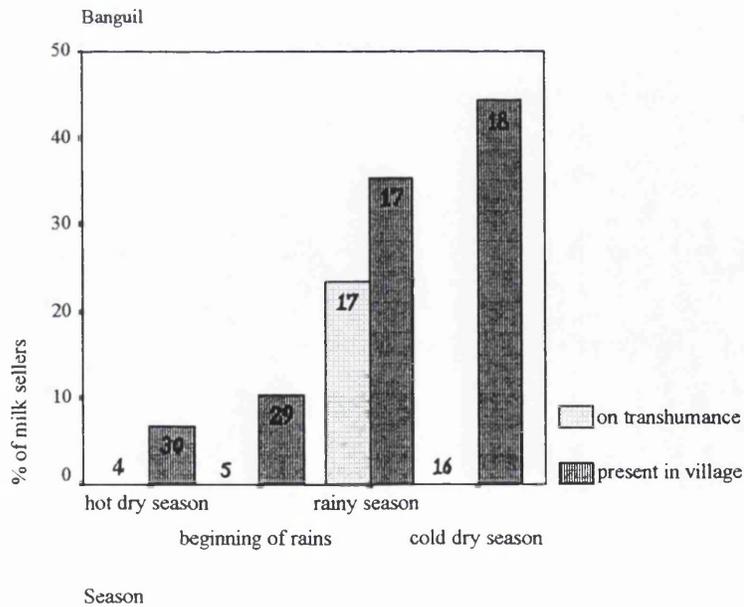


Figure 8.5: Percentage of women selling milk at home vs. on transhumance, Aliakoum 1996-1997 (n=18)

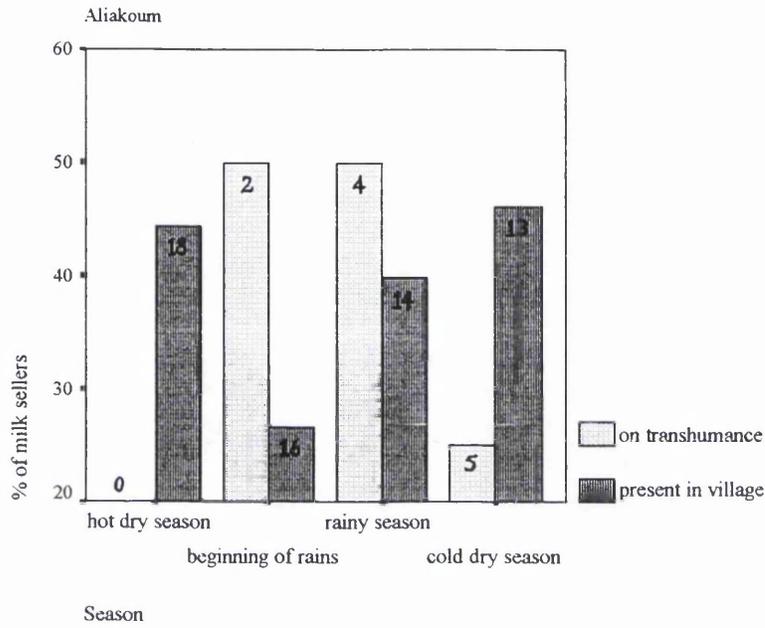
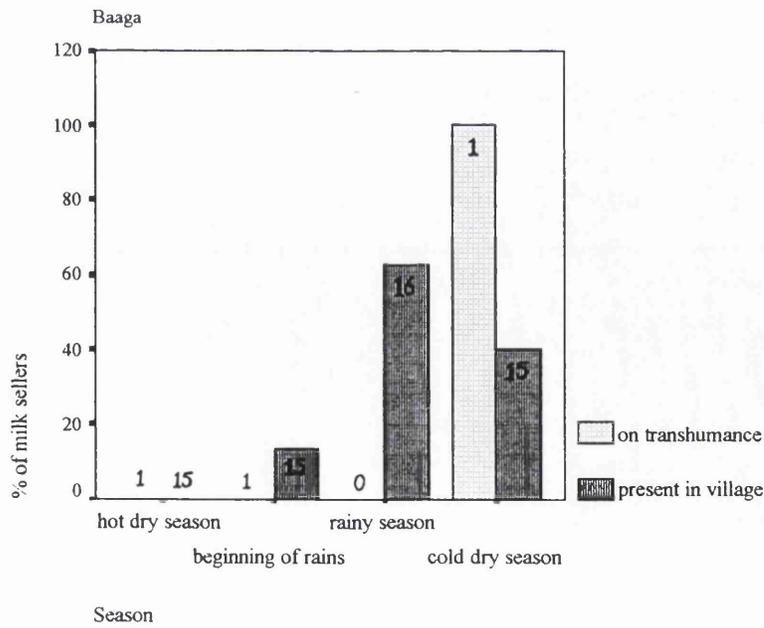


Figure 8.6: Percentage of women selling milk at home vs. on transhumance, Baaga 1996-1997 (n=16)



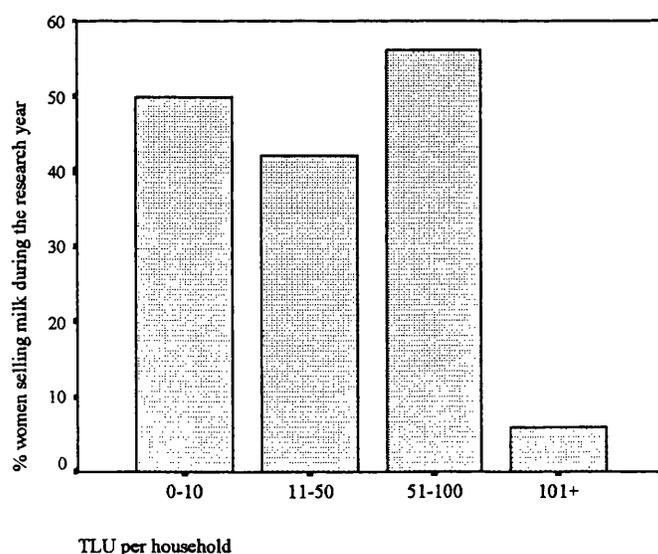
Milk selling thus shows a marked divergence by season and by pattern of transhumance between Djelgobe and other ethnic groups.

Liptako women of Baaga, and Gaobe women of Aliakoum, live near big markets and this may influence their greater participation in milk selling. Djelgobe women in the sample live somewhat further away from markets, but may move closer to such outlets while on wet season transhumance. Location is, therefore, not such an absolute determinant of milk selling behaviour as it might seem; most pastoralists are to some degree able to move to locations more favourable for milk sales.

### *Animal holdings and extent of cultivation*

De Bruijn & van Dijk (1995:278), who studied Malian Jallube Fulbe and Rimaibe households, in an arid area (ca. 400mm rain per annum), only a couple of hundred km from the present study, observed that due to impoverishment, only women from the richest households were selling milk. As their sampled households had similar cattle numbers as my research sample (cf. Chapter 6) this would suggest that in a very rich household with high numbers of cattle, women might find it easier to access and sell milk products. However, in my study, the women from the richest households are more likely to avoid leaving the compound to go to any market to sell milk.

Figure 8.7: Household cattle holdings and occurrence of milk selling (n=92)



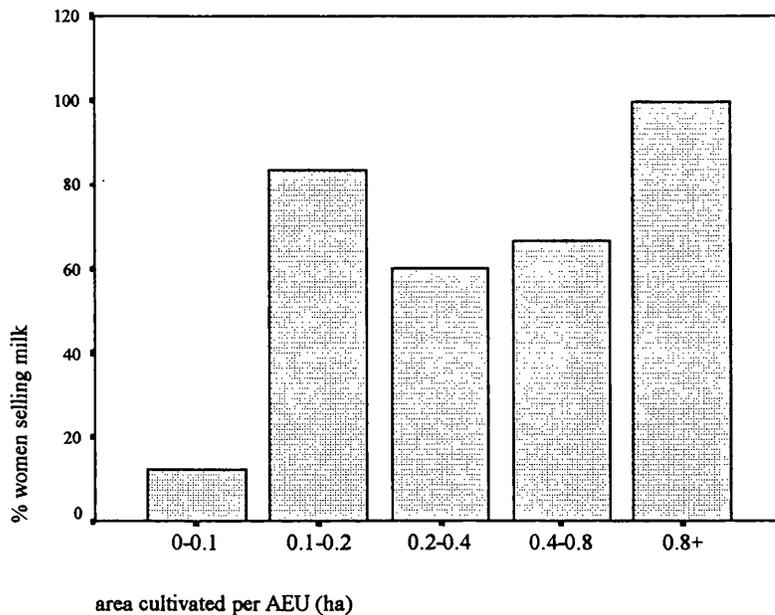
For the 94 individual women in the present study, the likelihood of engaging in milk selling was not significantly different between women from households with 0-10, 11-50 or 51-100 TLU (in all cases, around 50% of women participated). Only 6% of the women of exceptionally rich households sold milk (i.e. 1 out of 17 women in households with more than 100 TLU). The women from these households were unlikely ever to be seen on a market, at least not to sell milk (Figure 8.7). Although most of their cattle were kept in Mali, these households always had several milk cows in their compounds, so a lack of lactating cows in the proximity of their homes was not the reason why these women did not sell milk. Instead, their husbands preferred to give each of the women in these households, once a year, just before Tabaski, around 20,000 FCFA. The women then all went together to Markoye and bought new clothes, jewellery and other items. All other items needed during the year were purchased for them by a man from the household. None of these women regretted not being able to sell milk, although they sometimes complained about not being able to go to the market town as and when it pleased them. It was obvious that they preferred to stay at home in a wealthy family where they were well looked after, and had enough millet or milk and new clothes every year. They knew their husbands, fathers or brothers would not tolerate seeing them on the market in Markoye where incidentally these men spent most of the day and quite often also the night.

Generally therefore, women appreciated the convenience of not having to sell milk for their own economic needs. Further, they gained prestige by rarely being seen in public and not having to sell milk, which was arduous work when combined with long walks. At the same time they sometimes seemed to miss the possibility to socialise at the market.

The above results suggest that milk selling is constrained not so much by the lack of milk among poorer women, as by stricter codes of behaviour in very wealthy households. Therefore, there is no simple link between milk selling and livestock holdings in the present study. However, milk selling does increase significantly with increasing area farmed per adult equivalent (logistic regression:  $r=0.27$ ,  $p<0.05$ ,  $df=1$ ) (Figure 8.8). Leaving out the three very wealthy households, livestock holdings and area farmed per adult equivalent are also correlated (linear regression:  $r^2=0.18$ ,  $F_{1,34}=7.55$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). These relations would not be expected if milk selling were primarily a means of securing grain for the Burkinabe Fulbe in the present study. In fact, those women who lived in households that cultivated more were also more used to grain as a staple diet,

and thus were more willing to compromise milk consumption for milk sales (Figure 8.8).

Figure 8.8: Area farmed per AEU and occurrence of milk selling (n=92)



### ***Terms of trade and socio-cultural factors***

Recent economic analyses of milk selling behaviour have tried to develop a theoretical framework linking milk selling decisions as to whether or not to sell milk to economic determinants (Sikana *et al.* 1993). These authors propose a formal economic model that analyses milk selling behaviour in terms of the trade-offs between use value (i.e. what the milk is worth to the household if drunk directly) and exchange value (i.e. what the milk is worth if the household sells it, or uses it to support live animal growth and, ultimately, live animal sales). It would be interesting to see the extent to which the model's predictions are borne out by the present study. The model suggests that poor families must depend on the generally favourable terms of trade between grain and pastoral produce in terms of calorific value of grain when compared with their milk or meat supply if eaten directly. The model predicts that poor families will have to sell milk all year round in order to feed the household, however low the price of milk may fall (for example during the wet season when milk is in abundance). Conversely, the model predicts that richer families will be more flexible in their milk selling behaviour; they will only sell when milk prices are high during the dry season, or may reserve all the

milk for calf growth and not sell at all, because they have enough animals to sell whenever they need to purchase more grain.

Prices in this research area for butter and soured milk fluctuated during the year, reaching twice the price in the hot dry season compared to that in the wet season. Butter was sold in bottles of 1.00, 0.75 and 0.25 litres. The price for one litre of butter doubled from 1,000 FCFA in the wet season to 2,000 FCFA in the dry season, the price for 0.75 l of butter from 700 to 1,500 FCFA and the price for 0.25 l from 500 to 1,000 FCFA (cf. Jung 1997:59). The seasonal fluctuation of milk prices was more difficult to ascertain as women dilute milk with water to varying degrees. Also, they often use smaller measures in the hot dry season, but may not necessarily demand higher prices per unit sold<sup>6</sup>.

While Sikana *et al.*'s predictions appear to hold true for the very rich families in the present study, the other households suggest a rather different pattern. Women, overall, were only one-quarter as likely to sell milk in the dry as in the wet season (Figure 8.2), despite the price incentive. This was partly due to livestock-poor families having no milk to sell in the dry season, and not being able to store any butter until prices went up. However, women from relatively well-off families also chose to sell in the wet season and not in the dry, in direct contrast to the predictions made by the formal economic analysis. I would suggest that this discrepancy between prediction and empirical observation points to a failure of the model to account for the gender relations of milk selling. The model assumes that decisions over milk sales are made in the interests of the household overall, as a cohesive unit. However, in the case of milk selling, a woman has the opportunity to earn money that she can dispose of more or less independently. She may choose to get some items for the household, but most of the money goes on her own needs and often on items that become her own possessions, to be taken with her in the event of a divorce (Figure 8.1). The increase in numbers of well-off women selling milk in the rains, contrary to formal economic prediction, arises from the fact that during the rains, with the extra milk that becomes available, women are more able to pursue milk selling for their own gain. This is worth their while, irrespective of relatively low prices. This discrepancy between formal prediction and empirically observed practice reinforces my argument that Fulbe women in this study are not simply passive victims either of patriarchal domination or of progressive impoverishment.

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<sup>6</sup> Not only season determined prices, but also the relationship between seller and customer, e.g. women may get a lower price in the village, and may have to charge less for a regular customer than for a stranger.

## Conclusions and discussion

This Chapter has set out a description and analysis of milk selling and its role in the economic life of Fulbe women. Milk selling reveals a great deal about the extent to which women maintain a degree of economic and social independence, and also about the extent to which impoverishment on the one hand and commercialisation on the other may be affecting their self determination.

Certain assumptions about Fulbe milk selling are widespread in the literature. These are: firstly, milk selling is of central importance in acquiring grain as staple food for the family; secondly, impoverishment, and therefore lack of animals and hence milk means less opportunity to participate in milk selling; thirdly, progressive commercialisation means women progressively lose control of milk selling activity, of their labour input to the process, and of the earnings that result.

In my sample, few women used their earnings from milk sales to purchase grain, nor did they do so regularly. Although some of their milk income was spent on condiments and other items for the household, most was used for women's own needs.

It has been shown that, for this study population, around half the adult women participate in milk selling. This holds true for households in very different wealth categories, including households with ten fewer or cattle, which comprised half the sample population. Women from the very wealthiest top two or three households, which had several hundred cattle apiece, provided the exception to this rule. Only one in nearly 20 of these women engaged in milk selling.

De Bruijn and van Dijk interpreted their findings in terms of impoverishment, lack of animals and lack of milk, but there are reasons to suspect their observation is not simply the product of a poorer group of people overall. Although the Malian study did have more families with no cattle (19% of households vs. 3% in the present study) the proportion of households with 1-10 cattle was virtually identical (45% vs. 44%) and with 11-100 cattle quite similar (33% vs. 46%), as were those with many more than 100 cattle (3% vs. 8%) (see Chapter 5). The Malian data do not allow a detailed comparison, but they do suggest that either a broader range of women may have been marketing milk at some stage during the year than was apparent from the small numbers of women at the market on any one day, or that the system operates very differently from the present

study, despite being geographically and ecologically so close. This could well arise from cultural differences given the different sub-ethnic groups of Fulbe involved, and also perhaps because of drought conditions immediately prior to the Malian work.

For the present study, a woman was increasingly likely to engage in milk selling as she grew older and had more children. This was a function of growing freedom from the codes of behaviour governing young women, combined with greater access to milk cows given to her and her children. The data suggest little impact of impoverishment on participation in milk selling overall, although there is a dry season fall-off when milk availability becomes limiting.

Patterns of participation in milk selling are a complex product of factors including those that are cultural (such as women's avoiding being seen in public) interacting with demographic (woman's age and parity), ecological (season and other environmental determinants of milk production), geographical (distance to market; presence of buyers interested in milk products), economic (extreme wealth) and occupational factors (settled agropastoral versus more mobile pastoral production system). These interrelations are influenced by the interplay of many interacting factors, and the sample size and structure of the present study make it only possible to a limited extent to disentangle different effects statistically. However, the present study gives a strong indication that dominant assumptions about the role of milk selling in millet purchase and household food provision may be misplaced or at least more valuable on a site specific basis.

Furthermore, widespread assumptions about women's loss of economic independence with impoverishment are not borne out in terms of any qualitative shift in patterns of economic activity or control of earnings (although they may, quantitatively speaking, be true in terms of the absolute sums women can command). Finally, on the basis of a very small number of cases in this study, there seems to be considerable truth in the idea that with a shift to live animal trade women may show much less involvement in selling milk. In the present study this seems to be less due to male-dominated decisions about investing milk preferentially into calf growth than to off-take for sale or consumption. Rather, it seems to result from patriarchal control (wealthier husbands limiting wives' movements) and from women's self-imposed strict observance of *pulaaku* and adherence to Islam.

# 9

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

### **Introduction**

In this concluding chapter I emphasise, by way of a final discussion, three main points drawn from the results of this thesis in relation to gender literature in general and pastoral literature specifically, as discussed in Chapter 1: access to resources, labour, and income and expenditure obligations of the sexes. These are the arenas in which female economic disadvantage is mostly perceived, especially in the context of increasing impoverishment and commercialisation. Then, the results of this thesis are applied to common gender and development trajectories. Finally, the findings of this research are summarised.

### **Impoverishment and commercialisation – women as victims or beneficiaries of cultural norms?**

#### *Access to resources*

The gender literature reviewed generally points to the fact that women are discriminated against in accessing resources. A cultural male bias, often enhanced by impoverishment and/or commercialisation, monopolises important productive assets in the hands of men (e.g. Dey 1981; Monimart 1989; Momsen 1991; Kasman & Körner 1992). In Fulbe societies, Islam and *pulaaku* are often regarded as displaying these same cultural traits that disadvantage women (e.g. Dupire 1963; 1970; Hopen 1958; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995). This study, broadly speaking, bears out this view. However, there are important variations to be observed.

The primary resources in agro-pastoral production for the households studied were animals, milk and land.

It has been suggested that impoverishment among pastoral groups has increased barriers to women accessing animals (e.g. Talle 1988; Joeques & Pointing 1991; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995; de Bruijn 1997). The data presented in this thesis showed that most households in the sample were relatively impoverished in terms of animal holdings (Chapter 5). Women had very few animals, more so in the Gaobe and Liptako villages than in the Djelgobe village. They often found it more difficult than their male counterparts to access animals by way of gifts or inheritance. There was evidence in the study to suggest a confirmation that impoverishment accentuates the relative economic disadvantages of women, as women in cattle-rich households were much better off concerning cattle holdings compared to those that lived in poorer households. However, women's access to cattle also seems to vary according to cultural differences between the Fulbe sub-ethnic groups – in the Djelgobe village of Ngoundam, women participated more in livestock ownership than in the other villages. Bridewealth, particularly, still seemed to be an effective means for Djelgobe women to access animals. Thus, wealth or relative impoverishment in cattle holdings do not seem to be the only factors that influence women's access to animals.

I discussed in Chapter 1 the idea that “*growing importance of beef production and marketing is adversely affecting women's property rights in animals*” (Joeques & Pointing 1991). In my research area those women from the households of the most successful cattle traders were among the richest individual women in the sample (only the two Djelgobe women, Ramsatou and her daughter were richer). Despite their menfolk's heavy engagement in cattle trade for beef production, they had more animals than most other women. Thus, it seems we have to carefully differentiate between commercialisation as stress sales, i.e. driven by poverty, and commercialisation as an optimising strategy, i.e. to accumulate wealth, in its effects on women's property rights in cattle. Commercialisation *per se* does not affect women's access to animals negatively.

It is important to emphasise in this context that women of all three sub-ethnic groups studied were not likely to complain about differential access to animals when this put at risk their relationship to their natal kin. These Fulbe women had to maintain a good

understanding with their family of origin, as they were likely to depend on them in the event of divorce (cf. Dupire 1963:74). Vis-à-vis the family of her husband or her husband himself, a woman could complain about and resist the sale of one of her own animals when this was to fulfil expenditure obligations of male members of her household. In such a matter, a woman's refusal generally had the support of her family (see Chapter 6). Thus women in my sample, as with those studied by Dupire 36 years ago, "*are far from being passive about their rights*" (Dupire 1963:89). This clearly differs from the observations made by de Bruijn & van Dijk (1995) among Jallube Fulbe in Mali, just a few hundred km away from my field-site, where women's decision-making rights over animal sales and access were reported to be negligible.

It has been argued that not only is direct ownership in cattle important among pastoral groups, but also user rights (Bruggeman 1994; Smith Oboler 1996). This is of particular importance in terms of Fulbe women's main economic activity, i.e. milk selling. In Chapter 8, I discussed the determinants of milk selling in detail. In this female domain, no direct link as suggested by the literature (de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995; de Bruijn 1997; Schneider 1997) could be observed between impoverishment and qualitative engagement in milk selling, except in terms of quantities sold and profits gained. Rather, the link with extreme wealth was inverse: it was the women from cattle-rich households that did not engage in milk selling at all. The men of these households were successful cattle traders. It might, from this, be assumed that commercialisation of livestock production, concentrated in the hands of men, was a hindrance to the milk economy of women as has been suggested to be the case elsewhere (Grandin 1988; Joekes & Pointing 1991; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995). However, it seemed rather that these households could afford to pursue the seclusion of their women (cf. Schneider 1997) as male members were able to pay for all necessary household expenditure and provide their wives with all they needed, i.e. clothes, utensils, mat-making material, etc., to uphold their status within the female community. Women did not object to this seclusion, rather the opposite, as they gained considerable prestige vis-à-vis other women in the village. This weighing of the pros and cons - economic independence versus status enhancing behaviour among women themselves - of engagement in milk selling confirmed conclusions of Castle's study (1992:219) which found among Fulbe in Mali that, the position of women to each other is equally, if not more important than their position in relation to men.

The common perception that women who own animals and perform the milking of the herd themselves may be more likely to sell milk (e.g. Kuhn 1997) was, likewise, not confirmed by this study. Djelgobe women, who had relatively high cattle holdings compared to other groups and milked their household's cattle themselves, were less likely to sell milk than women from the other groups in which men usually did the milking. Cultural preferences for a milk-based as opposed to millet-based diet, thus also seem to play an important role in milk selling activities. So do spatial patterns and availability of markets.

Finally, women generally did not own arable land. Within the culture of all the groups studied it was men's obligation to provide millet for the household. In this respect my study corroborated the suggestion of others that Fulbe women are not interested in agriculture (e.g. Dupire 1963; Beauvilain 1977; Salih 1992; Castle 1992; Thébaud 1998). Although, economically it may have been advantageous for those more sedentary Gaobe and Liptako women to have had a plot of land on which to cultivate condiments - as it was often their obligation to purchase them - they feared the mockery of other women, and thus the loss of status, if they had engaged in agricultural work (cf. de Bruijn 1997). There was only one exception, Ramsatou, who cultivated her own field with cereals (Chapter 7). The composition of her household necessitated her engagement in agriculture. She was courageous and did not seem to mind what other women thought about her. Moreover, due to her exceptional personal wealth in cattle and her age she could afford to behave different and still be respected. This exception shows that there is no 'absolute' reality for the Fulbe populations studied.

### ***Labour allocation***

In the research households, there was, as would be expected, a gender-based labour division, but this was not always clear-cut in practice as it depended strongly on household demography. This observation is born out by other researchers having pursued labour allocation studies in Fulbe and other pastoral groups (e.g. Swift *et al.* 1984; White 1991; cf. Dahl 1987b). Lifecycle had a primary impact on labour allocation. Young women and men were clearly more burdened with work than elderly members of a household, as the latter were in a better position to delegate work (cf. Castle 1992; Warner *et al.* 1997).

Women were responsible for domestic work; men hardly participated in this domain. Fulbe Djelgobe and Gaobe women were responsible for constructing and maintaining the living quarter, the tent, while in the Liptako village and in some Gaobe households men were responsible for providing their household with mud-brick houses. Herding and cultivating were mainly male tasks, but girls would sometimes help with herding and women usually took care of those animals kept at home (cf. Joekes & Pointing 1991; Fratkin & Smith 1994). In the agricultural domain, women helped with certain activities, particularly sowing and thinning the crop, but more so in the Liptako and Gaobe village than in the Djelgobe village. Seasonal labour migration, salaried employment and prospecting for gold were clearly activities open only to men.

In spite of the fact that men engaged in a variety of economic activities that were theoretically contravening *pulaaku*, their cultural code, the labour division outlined above, promoted by the interpretation of these same cultural ideals, restricted women from diversifying their own income sources (see Chapter 4).

I have discussed in Chapter 1 the idea that neither belonging to a higher, more 'noble' class nor household wealth are always advantageous from a woman's personal economic perspective (e.g. Mies in Mohanty 1997; Ellis 1998:7). This was confirmed by the findings of my study. Fulbe considered themselves as being of a higher class than their former slaves or *HaBe*. This may have provided them with a certain social prestige, but it restricted their possibilities to engage in income generating activities that were not considered suitable by themselves and their Fulbe group (cf. de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995:124). This was much more the case for women than for men, who were considered the main providers for the household, and even more so where household wealth permitted women to adhere to these ideals.

As we have seen, the only way women earned an income was by selling milk, and yet, rich women in my sample restrained even from this activity as they could afford to adhere to an even higher ideal, namely that of female seclusion, promoted by Islam.

This does not, however, make "*these values and norms [pulaaku] ... a handicap rather than an asset*" as de Bruijn & van Dijk (1995:417) suggested. Although Fulbe cultural values and norms may have restricted women's diversification of income sources and, adherence to Islamic ideals hinder women from even leaving their compound, these values and norms can still not be considered as operating to the disadvantage of women

*per se*. *Pulaaku* by no means represents merely a set of social constraints imposed on women by dominant older men or control imposed by older women on younger women. The interpretation of *pulaaku* in the research sample also provided women with a means of exacting direct or indirect contributions to their personal and material welfare. On the one hand *pulaaku* obviously restricted women socially and economically, especially as young wives, and to a lesser extent in old age. On the other hand though, women's own flexible use of social and cultural expectations was potentially an effective means of limiting the extent to which either their labour or their income was controlled by their husbands. Women in the research area were, to an extent, aware of this and knew how to use it, in some cases very skilfully and successfully, to their advantage.

In this respect, my research sample confirms Riesman's observations (1977:85) that "*the nature of women's submission*" is rooted in their choice of adhering "*to culture itself*" rather than "*a conformity to the will of an individual, be it father, mother or husband*" (*ibid.*).

Culture, as reflected in *pulaaku*, can therefore be as much an asset as a constraint, particularly for women. For example, it is very likely that if women increasingly participated in agriculture this would not necessarily be advantageous for the household economy as a whole and certainly not for women personally. Fulbe women in the research sample did not have a traditionally safeguarded right to agricultural proceeds. Thus an increased participation in agriculture might have only enabled men to withdraw their labour from this low-return, generally despised form of production, to concentrate on work that was more beneficial to their own personal income.

### ***Income and expenditure obligations***

It has been suggested that in impoverished societies women may be faced with increasing expenditure responsibility towards the household (Talle 1988:230; Bruggeman 1994; de Bruijn & van Dijk 1995; Brockington 1998). Furthermore, it is commonly perceived that women usually spend proportionally more of their income on household maintenance than men (e.g. Momsen 1991; Mayoux 1998). This does not seem to be case for those Fulbe women studied.

As discussed earlier, the women in my research sample had a very limited range of income sources and their income was generally lower than that of men. The division of

expenditure obligations for family maintenance was highly gender-specific. However, not only gender was an influential factor in household responsibilities but also personal wealth, age, residence, household composition and mutual understanding of the individuals concerned.

A man's main obligation towards the household in my research sample was to provide cereals sufficient for the household members' subsistence needs, whether by cultivation or by purchase, and to provide his wife and their children with clothing. It was exceptional for a woman to contribute to these expenditures, unless the woman was extremely rich (e.g. Ramsatou and her daughter). In the study sample, women are therefore not expected to barter or purchase millet as it has been - more so in the past than the present - among WoDaaBe (Dupire 1963; Swift *et al.* 1984). In my sample, ideally, a man was also supposed to supply the household with condiments. At the time of the study it was widely accepted, however, that this was not always possible due to impoverishment and so the day to day provision of condiments was often undertaken, albeit somewhat ashamedly, by women. In general though, Fulbe culture allowed women to invest their income in their own personal needs, like kitchen utensils, mat-making materials and silver for making jewellery, rather than investing it in the subsistence of the household as a whole, unless the household was extremely poor or the woman exceptionally rich. Some of the items purchased by women with their own money were necessary equipment for domestic work; others though, like silver, or decorative items for the house, were of primary importance in enhancing their status vis-à-vis other women (see Chapter 6 and 8). Thus, despite general impoverishment, women used cultural norms to maintain their right to decide over the use of their own monetary income.

One of the reasons for a divorce was a man's unwillingness or inability to meet his wife's and children's subsistence needs. In this respect, Fulbe culture actually provided women with a strong bargaining position vis-à-vis their husbands. Unlike those Fulbe women described by de Bruijn & van Dijk (1995), women in this sample could divorce relatively easily (see Chapter 4). Even in relatively poor households women were in a strong enough position to divorce if their husbands did not fulfil their economic obligations towards the household. However, a woman was generally more likely to contribute to the household expenditure of her own kin in the event that she again became dependant on them immediately after divorce.

Generally speaking, men and women in the sample allocated the resources under their control not necessarily from an aggregate household perspective, but instead invested according to what suited best their personal situation within the bounds of cultural acceptance and economic possibilities. Thus, studies at the household level alone cannot make statements about the personal well-being of the members within those units.

## **Relevance to development trajectories**

In Chapter 1, I pointed out that engagement in organised, communal work and having the possibility to gain an income independent of husbands are often seen as effective means to empower women (e.g. Bruchhaus 1992; Mayoux 1998).

In Burkina Faso the formation of *groupements villageois* (GV) has widely been encouraged and proved rather successful for some communities (e.g. Monimart 1989; Buhl 1994). Most governmental and non-governmental rural development projects in Burkina Faso have thus made the formation of a GV a prerequisite for any village-based intervention to encourage its members to organise and undertake activities communally.

The Fulbe men in Baaga and Aliakoum had in the past organised a GV, initiated by such development projects, in their respective villages. The activities pursued - reforestation, cereal bank, collective fields - mainly failed because of fraud and lack of interest. In Ngoundam there had never been any such project intervention, and in Banguil people were far too dispersed to consider forming a GV. In none of the villages a *groupement* for women (GVF) existed.

In all households sampled, both Fulbe men and women showed little interest in organised communal work. Co-operation in the pastoral and agricultural sector beyond the household level was rather limited (see Chapter 6 and 7). For women, whose main occupations were domestic work, mat-making and milk selling, co-operation was mainly limited to women and their daughters, mothers-in-law and their daughters-in-law, and to a lesser extent also among close friends (see Chapter 8). This is borne out by a number of other studies on Fulbe (e.g. Stenning 1959; Castle 1992; Swift *et al.* 1984:419).

As collaborative action is not part of Fulbe women's current production strategies, a falsely idealised perception of female solidarity promoting communal activities by outside projects and organisations is, in my opinion, not likely to be very successful (cf.

Lewis 1990; Davison 1995; Bryceson 1995), unless well-thought out and carefully planned through detailed discussion with the focal group.

When it came to gaining a monetary income, virtually all women in the research area were interested in only one activity; only a handful were interested in diversifying their income sources. Milk selling was the only culturally approved activity for a Fulbe woman. Only extreme poverty or an exceptionally unconventional character (e.g. Ramsatou) may have caused a woman to take up other, less acceptable income-generating activities.

Both men and women sampled in all research villages defined a good woman as one who never left the compound and was virtually never seen in public, especially whilst young but, if possible, even when she was older. As White (1978:53) stated "*In the Muslim world, economic dependency, not active participation in economic activities, is the ideal for women*". Women in the research sample who did not pursue any economic activity indicated, by implication, that their husband could take care of them. This guaranteed them a high social status vis-à-vis other women and men. Fulbe women did not seek to 'empower' themselves in terms of economic 'independence' from their husbands, but through status enhancement with, for example, adherence to ideals of Islam and *pulaaku*, and dependence on their husbands.

There seems to be one more logical reason behind women's reluctance to engage in any work other than that culturally ascribed to them. Even within their economic domain, milk selling, considering the often long distances to the nearest market, the labour demands are high. Domestic chores already take up a large amount of women's time and energy and milk selling is seen as adding to this, despite the much appreciated opportunity it presents them to socialise on the market. Therefore, using cultural ideals such as seclusion and non-involvement in agriculture can be an effective means for women to avoid being overloaded with more work than is absolutely necessary to enhance their own well-being and to fulfil their obligations towards the household.

Development projects advocating the taking-up of 'independent' income-generating activities will have to take this reluctance to invest labour in additional activities into account. In promoting income-raising activities, they will also have to give real incentives to these Fulbe women to out-weigh the perceived disadvantages, i.e. lower social standing, with the sustainable advantages, i.e. economic benefits.

## Conclusion

The overall aim of this thesis was to make a qualitative assessment of how cultural features, relative impoverishment and commercialisation are currently affecting gender relations in pastoral and agropastoral production of the Fulbe groups studied. To achieve this I set out to describe the production strategies of the households sampled, the contribution and decision-making processes of the genders in production as well as the obligations and rights ascribed to both men and women within and towards the household. Particular emphasis was given to agricultural and pastoral production, and within that to milk-selling activities of Fulbe women.

The study was designed to include three sub-ethnic Fulbe groups, namely the Djelgobe, Gaobe and Liptako in the northeastern, Sahelian part of Burkina Faso, in the provinces of Oudalan and Seno. The research sample included richer and poorer households whose production strategies ranged from more mobile pastoral to sedentary agropastoral, including some households that were heavily engaged in cattle trade.

A general perception in the literature on Sub-Saharan pastoral groups is that these pastoralists have increasingly been economically and socially marginalised. Particularly as a consequence of recent droughts, many of the pastoral and agropastoral Fulbe groups studied by various authors have been confronted with impoverishment as a result of severe cattle losses. A diversification of income sources has often been the result. Live-animal trade as opposed to keeping herds mainly for milk production, has gained in importance for both rich and poor. The literature on gender and production in developing countries, as well as those studies focussing on pastoral groups, has frequently emphasised the negative effects of such socio-economic changes on women, particularly in societies where there is already a cultural bias favouring males.

In answering the research questions set out in the Introduction through the course of this thesis, I have shown that these stereotyped assumptions, the current orthodoxies concerning gender and production, do not always hold in a site-specific context, or are at least much more complex than such perspectives would lead us to believe.

The norms for Fulbe women's behaviour, their accepted mannerisms, seem to be much valued, in the northeast of Burkina Faso, particularly by women themselves as it is through these that they derive their social status. These women have more to gain

through adherence to these norms than through simply maximising economic profit margins. They weigh the two and chose – consciously or subconsciously – which best suits their situation in a culture where milk and millet remain highly gendered domains of productive activities.

The Fulbe women in my research area are not simply victims of patriarchal control legitimised by over-riding cultural perceptions. Nor is their apparent economic dependence invariably reinforced by the vicissitudes of current development. The relative importance of, and extent to which, cultural and socio-economic factors influence women's decision-making rights and access to resources are the result of complex interactions of many factors and, are mainly determined by women's own perceptions about their status. Furthermore, results, and therefore also perceptions, vary from group to group according to variation in the interplay of these different factors. The impact on women of the interaction of Fulbe culture, individuals' interpretations of that culture, factors of relative impoverishment or wealth and various degrees of commercialisation may be different for groups that, on first sight, appear to be similar, as I have shown by exemplifying the subtle but crucial differences between the Djelgobe, Gaobe and Liptako in my sample.

I therefore do not attempt to generalise the findings of this thesis to other pastoral or agropastoral groups. In fact, rather the opposite. The parallels and the contrasts between Fulbe populations, separated in some cases by decades and great distances, and in others by only two hundred kilometres, are in themselves revealing of the relative importance of cultural, economic, ecological and logistic factors whose interplay influences gender and production issues among pastoral and agropastoral societies. They can best be understood in their site-specific social contexts.

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