

Becoming Local Citizens: Senegalese Female Migrants and Agrarian Clientelism in The Gambia

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Abstract: Drawing on ethnographic research with Senegalese female migrants in Brikama, The Gambia this article examines local citizenship and agrarian clientelism. Emphasis is placed on female migrants because of the dearth of ethnographic literature on female migrants in West Africa and to highlight the centrality of female migrants to processes of incorporation, specifically that of agrarian clientelism. Female agrarian clientelist relations are based on a host-stranger dichotomy in which recent migrants are given access to land in the dry season for vegetable cultivation, which is sold in local markets, in exchange for providing unremunerated labor for hosts for the cultivation of rice in the rainy season. It is argued that as mobile citizens these migrants move between different territories or spaces. These may include ethnic territory, descent territory, and/or the “space of the nation,” each with resources, some of which are distinct, some of which overlap. In this sense migrants do not simply move from one physical space to another but also from one group of resources to another. By engaging in the practices and procedures that are central to agrarian clientelist relations migrants become local citizens. In this sense local citizenship must be understood as practice, rather than status. Further, within postcolonial Gambian society such status is subject to ongoing negotiation and struggle. Migrants, in turn, are central to the reproduction of: hosts’ identities; host/stranger dichotomies; the accumulation of wealth through people; agrarian relations; and agrarian clientelism.

Introduction

Agrarian clientelism, a form of labor contracting whereby migrants enter into share-contracts or sharecropping relations with local farmers, has been key to the commoditization and expansion of agrarian production in West Africa from the nineteenth century to the present. Various types of agrarian clientelism have been examined and presented in the literature on agrarian labor and permanent and seasonal migration.¹ However, the role of agrarian clientelism in incorporating migrants into local communities remains relatively unexamined.

Drawing on ethnographic research with Senegalese female migrants in Brikama, The Gambia this article examines processes of incorporation, local citizenship and agrarian clientelism. Emphasis is placed on female migrants, both because of the dearth of ethnographic literature on female migrants in West Africa and to highlight the centrality of female migrants to local institutions of incorporation. Regional migration within West Africa, particularly labor migration, has generally been depicted as a “male phenomenon”

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with little attention paid to independent female and family migration.² Although in many cases it is socially unacceptable for women and girls to migrate independently it is all too easy to overstate and exaggerate the degree to which patriarchal norms serve to restrict, contain, and define the nature of women's mobility, thereby underestimating the extent to which they do in fact migrate.³ Such underestimation is of particular concern given the increasing feminization of labor migration in West Africa.⁴ Further, there is a growing body of literature on migration, transnational practices, citizenship and processes of incorporation amongst Africans who migrate from sub-Saharan Africa to Europe. Yet, there is comparatively less research on these issues in relation to intra-continental migration.⁵

I place emphasis on migration as a social process with a focus on local cultural institutions of incorporation, specifically that of agrarian clientelism. Indeed, it is maintained that our understanding of contemporary migration in West Africa needs to focus on processes of incorporation, as articulated through specific cultural practices and institutions, in order to "(re-) embed migration research in a more general understanding of society."⁶ Such a focus means being attentive to the "internal dynamics" of West African societies in shaping the migration phenomenon.⁷

The "internal dynamics" of West African societies can be partly captured in Kopytoff's (1987) model of the African frontier, which situates mobility, settlement history, and the establishment of a "social and political order" in the context of an abundance of land. The first comer-late comer (host-stranger) dichotomy, also central to Kopytoff's model, is one of the significant "socio-cultural paradigms found in West Africa."⁸ It can be said to characterize settlement history and the social and political order of most West African societies. Further, it is central to an understanding of agrarian clientelism and the incorporation of migrants into local communities. Latecomers, frontiersmen and women, through authority, intermarriage and domination of local groups, lay claim to founder status.⁹

The majority of Gambians are involved in smallholder production, cultivating groundnuts (the traditional male dominated export crop), rice, horticultural produce, and a number of other food crops. Most combine farming with non-agrarian livelihood strategies. Many of those who are engaged in local forms of exchange are women and children, many of whom are recent migrants.¹⁰ Female agrarian clientelist relations are based on a host-stranger dichotomy in which recent migrants, or "strangers" (*lungtangolu* in Mandinka), are given access to land in the dry season for vegetable cultivation, which is sold in local markets, in exchange for providing unremunerated labor for hosts for the cultivation of rice in the rainy season.¹¹ It is maintained that agrarian clientelism is central to processes of incorporation and facilitates a sense of belonging and local citizenship amongst migrants. Further, migrants do not simply move from one physical space to another but from one group of resources to another.¹² In this sense, processes of incorporation and the sense of belonging that ideally accompanies such processes can be highly complex and contradictory: the diverse resources that migrants contribute and that they draw on facilitate processes of incorporation and their ability to establish a sense of belonging. Yet, it is only by engaging in the practices and procedures that are central to agrarian clientelist relations that migrants are able to become local citizens. In this sense, following "feminist reformulations," local citizenship must be understood as "practice, rather than status."¹³ Further, within postcolonial Gambian society such status is subject to ongoing negotiation and struggle.

Methodology

This article is based on thirteen months of ethnographic fieldwork on gender, migration and the social relations of agrarian production in Brikama and Kembujeh, Western Division in the mid-1990s and in November 2005.¹⁴ During this period I carried out fifty interviews with mainly female farmers. I carried out forty-two life history interviews, consisting of thirty-three women and nine men. Detailed case study work was undertaken with six hosts and seven recent migrants who worked in Kembujeh. In addition to carrying out life history interviews with them, I visited their farms on a regular basis. The three case studies used in this article come from these interviews and the detailed case study work. The fieldwork was partly carried out in Suma Kunda, Brikama, one of the oldest wards (*kabilolu*) in the old quarter, and in Kembujeh, an area on the outskirts of Brikama.¹⁵ The majority of the female hosts of Suma Kunda, and their clients, farm in Kembujeh, located on the outskirts of Brikama. Initial contact and access to these research sites was established through my research assistant Binta Bojang and her mother Mama Bojang, who works as a farmer in Kembujeh. My description and analysis of female agrarian clientelist relations draws on material gathered from this sample. I then resorted to generalization on the basis of “comparative analysis.”¹⁶ My generalizations were strengthened on the basis of further conversations with other clients and hosts, at the time and when I returned in 2005, and through the use of primary and secondary literature. Although a focus on female migrants’ relations with their husbands or male family members informs my understanding of the formers’ experiences, I am concerned in this article with the relations that are established between female hosts and Senegalese female migrants.

Citizenship and Processes of Incorporation

Much of the literature on migrants and citizenship focuses on formal citizenship, concerned largely with the state and legal understandings of citizenship, as well as alternative types of citizenship, also variously referred to as social citizenship and “substantive citizenship practice.”¹⁷ The latter is concerned with the way in which migrants express and articulate alternative types of citizenship by, for example: laying claim to citizenship “on moral grounds;” theorizing citizenship as subject-making (following Foucault, as produced through relations of power and technologies of surveillance); and seeing it as “a more total relationship, inflected by identity, social positioning, cultural assumptions, institutional practices and a sense of belonging.”¹⁸ In many accounts the migrant assumes a variety of subject positions, “some of which they define for themselves and some of which are defined for them.”¹⁹

As well as offering a variety of ways of theorizing citizenship, anthropological research has contributed to our understanding of the ways in which migrants are incorporated into communities and establish a sense of belonging. Goode (1990) recasts recent migrants and residents in a neighborhood in Philadelphia as hosts and guests, where the latter are incorporated into the community if they “learn the rules.”²⁰ Chavez (1991) applies Van Gennep’s theory of rites of passage to the process of migration whereby: separation entails departure; the liminal stage entails a period of transition; and incorporation entails a process whereby the migrant establishes a sense of belonging, and/or is incorporated into the new community. Brettell (2006) highlights the importance of how migrants themselves “define their own sense of belonging.” Yet, the rise of autochthony and “ethnic citizenship” throughout many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, as documented by Geshiere and Nyamnjoh

(2000) amongst others, has profound effects on the extent to which migrants' are allowed to feel that they belong.

Following Diouf, drawing from his interview with Bloom (2003), I use the term mobile citizenship to refer to a "dialectics of ideas and space."²¹ The concept of mobile citizenship must be understood in relation to that of "territorialization," which Diouf defines "as a way to project the self as an individual and as a member of a collectivity in a territory . . . you fill up a physical territory with resources that are ideological, cultural and political." In this sense a person moves "between different levels of territorialization." These may include "ethnic territory," religious territory, the "space of the nation," each with resources, some of which are distinct, some of which overlap. The resources that a migrant contributes to these different territories or spaces, and/or is able to take advantage of, affect their ability to establish a sense of belonging, or the extent to which they are made to feel that they belong. Such an understanding reinforces the notion that there are "mobile ways of belonging that are, in some cases, contradictory and opposed, and in others, reinforcing." It also allows one to appreciate migration/mobility as consisting as much of movement from one physical place to another, as of movement from "one group of resources to another."²² If one theorizes citizenship and incorporation as Diouf does, then one can appreciate the way in which migrants, rather than passing through a linear process, as in Chavez's rites of passage theorization of migration whereby one phase leads to the next, a migrant may occupy a liminal position in certain respects (e.g. in the "space of the nation") and be incorporated in others (e.g. "ethnic territory").

Hosts and Strangers

There have been stranger communities in West African societies for hundreds of years.²³ The term stranger (*lungtango*, s., *lungtangolu*, pl.) in the literature is used to refer to a temporary visitor, a recent immigrant, or someone who resides in the community but does not claim descent from the founders. The stranger is frequently represented as male, with the exception of women who marry into lineages, and who accompany their spouses as migrants.²⁴ Strangers have been incorporated into communities through marriage, kinship, clientship, and other social networks. The nature of the stranger's incorporation is historically variable and dependent on the status of the migrant within local cultural and political economies.²⁵ Significantly, the distinctions between hosts and strangers must be seen as processual and in flux.²⁶

Host-stranger distinctions in The Gambia were "sanctioned" with the spread of Islam in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as well as by the colonial authorities.²⁷ Further, Geschiere and Jackson (2006) situate contemporary discourses on citizenship and autochthony in sub-Saharan Africa in the contradictory politics of colonial rule. Following Lentz (2006) with reference to Geschiere and Nyamnjoh, an increase in "discourses of autochthony" can be attributed to the historical "dialectics of the "liberation" of labor in African capitalism."²⁸ Migrants in plantation and mining economies in Southern and East Africa were encouraged by colonial administrators and plantation and mining owners to migrate in search of labor. Colonial systems of taxation forced migrants to migrate to cash crop producing regions in order to generate an income with which to pay taxes. At the same time, colonial administrators sought to "territorialize" people by affirming an identity politics rooted in a visceral connection to "the soil" and the home village in order to facilitate

indirect rule. Further, they created and reified ethnic difference as a way in which to manage local populations.²⁹

Migration in West Africa

West Africa has a long history of migration, in which particular types of migration characterize different periods. A trade in goods in part characterized the period of the Atlantic slave trade. However, “the circulation of African bodies” serves as the defining feature of this period.³⁰ Successive periods of jihad, between the late sixteenth and late nineteenth centuries, witnessed the mass movements of Muslims, thereby “reconfiguring the religious, political, and even economic geography of Sahelian West Africa.”³¹ During the colonial era one witnesses increasing levels of labor migration for cash crop production and colonial ‘development’ initiatives, which included the building of railways and the extraction of natural resources.³² Yet, one can also define much of this labor migration, which was frequently seasonal, as forced, given the need for cash generated by the colonial imposition of a variety of taxes.³³ The British imposed a cash head tax in The Gambia, in order to force Gambians into the cash economy to generate income to cover the colony’s running costs.³⁴

Post-colonial migration in West Africa is characterized by rural-urban migration and labor migration for agrarian cash crop production and the extraction of natural resources.³⁵ The nature of such migration has been defined, controlled, and contained by African states, states located beyond the African continent, and Africans themselves.³⁶ This work has been theorized in terms of a push-pull neo-classical economic approach to migration, in which wage differentials serve as the main motivating factor for migrants.³⁷ Such an approach fails to take into account the larger structural context and conceptualizes individuals as rational actors who decide to migrate on the basis of wage differentials alone.³⁸ Much of this colonial and postcolonial research on migration was also theorized from a structuralist and political economy approach, reflected largely in the work of dependency and world systems theorists such as Andre Gunder Frank and Immanuel Wallerstein.³⁹ They locate migration in a capitalist development trajectory, following Marxist political economy, in which structures are privileged and agency and culture given little recognition.⁴⁰ These approaches have been critiqued by the household strategies approach, which considers the household as the key site where migration decisions are made.⁴¹

The current article draws theoretical insights from members of the Manchester School, who carried out research in the 1960s on urban migrants and migration in southern and central Africa, which highlighted the relationship among political economy, social relations, and migration processes.⁴² They are credited with the development of social network theory in anthropology in which social relations, in the form of kinship and friendship, are seen as central to migration and processes of incorporation.⁴³ Of particular interest is the way in which agrarian clientelism engenders particular networks and social relations in the destination area, thereby facilitating processes of incorporation.

Context

The Mandinka’s extensive trade networks in ivory, slaves, leather, salt, and gold over a period of hundreds of years ensured their presence throughout West Africa.⁴⁴ The majority ethnic group in Brikama and The Gambia, the Mandinka migrated from Manding, the former Mali Empire located in the Upper Niger, from the early ninth or tenth century over a

number of centuries.⁴⁵ Through domination and intermarriage of local groups they established 'Mandinka-ized' states. Mandinka social and cultural institutions were established and the Mandinka language predominated.⁴⁶ Local griots and elders within the community tell narratives about the founding of Brikama, based on the Mandinkas westerly migration from Manding from the thirteenth century. From this period, Mandinka migrants, the descendants of who now identify themselves as hosts, were "welcomed" as "strangers" by the indigenous peoples of the Gambia.⁴⁷ These narratives provide detail on: the initial migration; the alliances that the migrants established along the way; the founding of Brikama; and the order within which wards (*kabilolu*) were established and rulers (kings, *mansalu*, and chiefs, *seyfolu*) held office.⁴⁸ These themes can be related to key themes in the literature on African frontiers. Each of these events asserts the right of the original settlers/founders, their descendants, and affines to: hold political office; establish particular rights to land; and act as hosts to strangers in entrustment (*karafoo*) relations. Claims to founder status are made on the basis of genealogical links through the patriline and include people related through marriage and through the mother's line. Consequently, those who marry into these founding *kabilolu* define themselves as hosts. In so doing they draw on the prestige and status such an identity confers. Indeed, in the early part of the twentieth century, as now: "Amongst the Mandinka, the most salient identity tended to be that of the hometown."⁴⁹

Founding *kabilolu* in Brikama have historically served as "political and ritual units" where power is institutionalized.⁵⁰ Compounds are grouped together within different *kabilolu*. The *kabilo-tiyo* (head of the ward), the compound head, the *alikalo* (village/townhead), the imam (the head of the Muslim community who leads prayers and naming, marriage and funeral ceremonies), the *seyfo* (chief) and the *kafo-tiyo* (leaders of the village/town work groups) all make up the village/town council (*kebbakafo*, lit. elders association). This council is largely male dominated but may include a few female hosts of an older generation.⁵¹

Brikama is largely a Mandinka and Muslim town. Nonetheless, it is very diverse with inhabitants from a range of ethnic groups found throughout the Gambia, which include Wolof, Jola, Fula, Aku (Creole), Serer, Serahuli, Caroninka, Manjago, Balanta, and a number of other minority groups. West Africans, Lebanese, as well as small numbers of Europeans and North Americans reside in the city. It is a bustling small city with approximately 80,000 residents. Its proximity to Banjul, the capitol, and the coastal areas, as well as to Serrakunda, the largest city in The Gambia, ensures that there is a steady flow of migrants to the city. Many rural migrants, forced out of farming as a result of the Sahelian drought and decreasing prices for groundnut crops, come in search of the employment opportunities that a city the size of Brikama affords. Given that The Gambia is surrounded by Senegal, there has historically been a great deal of cross-border movement between the two countries, with Gambians and Senegalese migrating temporarily or permanently from one country to the other. Senegalese and Gambian traders also move between the two countries doing business. Indeed, the re-export trade, in which nationals of the two countries import goods that they then re-export to The Gambia, Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Guinea-Bissau, and Burkina Faso, has flourished since the 1970s and ensures sustained cross border movement.⁵² The border between the two countries is artificial, reflecting the politics of colonial rule and serving to negate the cultural and social similarities between the two countries. Historically, Casamance was "part of the Gambia River complex and it was not until 1889 that it was arbitrarily separated from the Gambia."⁵³ Indeed, Casamance is largely separated from the

rest of Senegal by The Gambia itself. Many Senegalese migrants have migrated to The Gambia since 1983, partly as a result of the conflict in Casamance.⁵⁴

Female farmers in Brikama work as smallholder farmers, cultivating rice on uplands and lowlands in the rainy season and vegetable gardens on low-lying land used for rice production in the rainy season, as well as on the edges of these rice fields. Occasionally female farmers choose to cultivate groundnuts, millet, and fruit trees. Male farmers have historically farmed groundnuts on uplands southeast and west of Brikama in the rainy season. Increasing numbers are moving out of groundnut production because of drought, low market returns, and the removal of subsidies on farming inputs and groundnut crops.⁵⁵

Agrarian Clientelism

Seasonal and permanent migrant labor has been central to the commoditization of agrarian production in West Africa from the nineteenth century to the present. Frequently, migrants enter into share-contracts or sharecropping relations with local farmers in which they receive land and/or crops instead of wages. The relationships are highly variable: in most cases migrant farmers, who are invariably gendered male in the literature, contribute their labor for the cultivation of their hosts' crops in exchange for access to land. Alternatively, migrant farmers may be given a portion of the crop that they have helped to cultivate. The "strange farmer" (*lungtango*), a male agrarian seasonal migrant, enters into a contractual relationship with the host of a particular community. From the early part of the nineteenth century the strange farmer's labor was crucial to the emergence and development of The Gambia's export groundnut industry. Female farmers' labor was relegated to subsistence crop production.⁵⁶

In *abusa* contracts migrant farmers grow their own crops on borrowed land and receive one-third of the cash crop they have helped to cultivate. However, there are variations in the *abusa* share contract system, with migrants receiving more of a share of crops in some forms of *abusa* than in others.⁵⁷ Documented extensively by Hill (1963), these contracts were central to the expansion of cocoa production in Ghana and the Côte d'Ivoire. In Senegal, the utilization of *navetanes* (migrant workers) was based on a system of land, labor, and time sharing with seasonal migrants. *Navetanes*, as with the strange farmer labor system, were central to the commoditization of the groundnut industry.⁵⁸ Within both labor systems host farmers benefit from additional labor, increased yields and the fact that they do not need to pay migrant laborers cash. Most importantly, these relations are not just about access to land but also about the integration and incorporation of strangers into local communities.

In the 1970s female farmers in The Gambia were encouraged by the state, the World Bank, the European Community, the UN, the Islamic Development Bank, and various non-governmental organizations to grow horticultural crops in the dry season in order to improve household income.⁵⁹ This expansion led to a further intensification of women's and children's labor because it required increased labor input throughout the year. A fall in household income, partly as a result of a decline in groundnut prices, has resulted in an increased need for cash amongst households.⁶⁰ Further, as a result of the commoditization of agrarian production one witnesses the increased individuation of production and diversification into other livelihood strategies. This process of individuation and diversification has, in turn, led to an increasing shortage of labor. Consequently, households can no longer rely on family work groups in the completion of particular agrarian tasks.⁶¹ Although both hosts and their clients have been affected by this shortage, most hosts are

structurally positioned in such a way that they are able to recruit labor from potential clients.

The introduction of horticultural production in low-lying areas on the outskirts of Brikama led to the emergence of a system of land and labor sharing in which stranger-migrants are given access to land primarily in the dry season for vegetable cultivation in exchange for providing unremunerated labor for their hosts for the cultivation of rice in the rainy season. This system of agrarian clientelism has developed in a context where land and labor are in increasingly short supply.⁶² Migrants, such as Sarjoe and Jutula, enter into agrarian clientelist relations in order to gain access to land, and the networks such access provides. The following case studies highlight their experiences in establishing clientelist relations with hosts when they first migrated to Brikama.

Two Case Studies

Sarjo Camara is a fifty-year-old Balanta woman from Casamance. She had two children in Casamance then came with her husband to join her family in Kembujeh in the late 1970s. They came for a better life. There are people, she tells me, who move back and forth between The Gambia and Casamance, but she has lived in Brikama since the late 1970s. In Casamance she had access to a lot of land but has much less now. She grows vegetables during the dry season on two medium sized plots (approximately three hectares), given by Junkong Koli of Suma Kunda. During the rainy season she cultivates rice on one plot and Junkong Koli uses the second plot. She has been cultivating vegetables for five years and grew only rice prior to this. She maintains that vegetable production is very profitable for her. Before this she was able to grow groundnuts near Gidda. However, people have since settled there. So, she no longer has access to the land. As Sarjoe states, 'It is difficult to have land because I wasn't born here and they [strangers] have to borrow it.' In the past she has had to farm on different plots from one year to the next. However, she has been working on these plots for some time and has not had to change them. A lot of people have come to ask her where they can farm and she tells them they have to go to the host. When she first came she went to a woman in Suma Kunda (Junkong Koli), introduced by someone they knew in common, and gave her kola nuts. She said, "As of today you are my mother because I have no family." The woman allowed her to use some land. Sarjoe's husband borrows land from Fulas in Wellingara (Interview, January 1997).

Jutula, a sixty-year-old Mandinka woman, was born in Salikenya, Guinea and moved to Banganga, Casamance when she was small. Both her parents were born in Salikenya and were descendants of this village. She moved with her mother and one brother because it was the biggest place in the area. In both villages they grew rice and millet in the rainy season. During the dry season they would mill millet and rice and thresh groundnuts. She came to Brikama in 1993 with her husband and her four children. They left because "there is no stability in Casamance. They were afraid they might be killed." On arrival they went to the *seyfo's* (chief's) place and asked him for anyone who wanted to host them. They stayed in Darboe Jarjue's compound in Suma Kunda for a year. When she arrived in Brikama she started gardening. Her husband is a marabout. He farms groundnut, coos, and maize in the rainy season and goes to Dakar during the dry season to work as a marabout. During the dry season Jutula cultivates three plots. She cultivates two vegetable plots in Kembujeh on land given to her by Darboe Jarjue. She also grows sorrel on an upland plot on the way to Sanyang. Drammeh, a Jahanka man, gave her the plot. Her mother's surname is Drammeh.

She met Drammeh and said, “Well, you’re my uncle because my mother’s name is Drammeh.” So, he gave her the plot. She harvests her sorrel crop and either sells it to Senegalese men or sells it herself on the stall in Brikama market (February 1997).

Both Jutula and Sarjoe migrated to Brikama with their husbands: Jutula moved because of the ongoing conflict in Casamance; Sarjoe moved “for a better life.” Sarjoe had family in Kembujeh with whom they stayed when they initially arrived, making use of her kinship networks. Jutula, on the other hand, went to the *seyfo* with her husband to see if anyone would host them. Darboe Jarjue hosted them and gave Jutula land for farming. They stayed with Darboe for a year.

Migrants are dependent on the good will of hosts to stay in their adopted communities. Previously migrants who wanted land would visit the *seyfo* or *alikaló* who would direct him/her to an area, which had yet to be cleared. The *alikaló* could allocate land within particular districts and received taxes for land use.⁶³ Increasing demand for farming land has meant that migrants can no longer expect to get land from the *alikaló*. The latter either approaches a family who is in a position to lend land to migrants (*fu banko*, lit. loaned or borrowed land), or the migrants approach a family directly.⁶⁴

When seeking out a host, Sarjoe gave Junkong kola nuts and stated: “As of today you are my mother because I have no family.” Although Sarjoe has family with whom she initially stayed in Brikama, when she says that she has no family she means that she has no network of support with hosts in Brikama. Similarly, Amie Beyai, a Balanta women in her forties who had migrated from Casamance, approached her future host stating: “Please will you be my mother because I don’t have one here.” She then informed me that she “built a friendship with this woman.” In this sense, networks, framed either through relations based on friendship or kinship terminology, are central to processes of incorporation. Here, the kinship relation entails use of the term mother. However, it must be distinguished from a true blood relationship (*woluwoo*).⁶⁵ The terms “mother” and “friendship” are part of the language of honor and respect inherent in clientelist relations and point to the strong moral dimension to these relations.⁶⁶ This moral dimension draws partly from Islamic principles of charity and generosity.⁶⁷ Such relations form the basis of agrarian clientelism and are crucial in accessing land for agrarian production and accommodation as well as support from established hosts.

As potential clients, migrants go through the practices and procedures that are central to the establishment of agrarian clientelist relations. In so doing they affirm their identities as strangers, potential clients, and local citizens, and those of their hosts. Following Diouf, descent status, framed in terms of host-stranger distinctions, constitutes a territory or space with ideological, cultural, and political resources. Within a descent territory migrants entrust themselves/put themselves under the protection of (*ngakarafaaima*) hosts in relations of patronage. Historically, as migrant farmers, warriors, hunters, and traders, strangers would entrust/put themselves under the protection of hosts in relations of patronage. Entrustment (*karafoo*) facilitates the establishment of agrarian clientelist relations, effectively a relationship of reciprocal obligation in which hosts provide land or other forms of material support, helping recent migrants to establish themselves in Brikama.⁶⁸ Agrarian clientelism represents an investment in people, networks and relationships. Indeed, clientelism serves as “an extensive network of people bound together by reciprocal obligations.”⁶⁹ The practice of *karafoo* helps to sustain the reciprocal obligations and sense of trust that underpin clientelist relations.

Jutula managed to get land both from her host Darboe and from Drammeh, a Jahanka and a wealthy Islamic scholar and marabout who drives a brand new Mercedes and wears richly colored and exquisitely embroidered clothing. He is a powerful landowner in the area because marabouts have historically been given land by clients and disciples (*talibe*, sing.) as a display of gratitude. Both Jutula and her husband, who works as a part-time marabout, are part Jahanka, a caste of Muslim clerics, marabouts, and scholars. A minority group in The Gambia, they belong to the Serakulle people.⁷⁰ As well as laying claim to land within descent territory Jutula draws on her cultural and ideological resources within a new “ethnic territory.” She invokes a shared ethnic identity in order to lay claim to land to which she would otherwise have no legitimate rights.

Mobile Citizenship and Belonging

Migrants who successfully establish agrarian clientelist relations convey a knowledge of the rules and a respect for the ideology and cultural codes that underpin host-stranger distinctions. Such knowledge, deference, and acquiescence constitutes, in turn, a distinct resource that migrants can draw on in their attempts to become clients to hosts. In drawing on such resources they are able to benefit from the material, political, and cultural resources that their position as clients avails them of. Within this descent territory, and ethnic territory, recent stranger-migrants become particular types of local citizens with particular rights. Here citizenship must be understood as practice rather than status.

As clients gain rights to land and local citizenship hosts, in turn, acquire labor power. Within many African rural societies rights and access to land are, by and large, determined by membership of a social group. This is unlike market economies where rights and access are determined through monetary transfers.⁷¹ Such membership, attained through agrarian clientelist relations, entitles strangers to local citizenship and land. Most female hosts, on the other hand, are given usufructuary rights to farming land through affinal ties. Women occasionally inherit the paramount title to land used for rice cultivation from their mothers rather than through their patrilineal kin group. The decision to let stranger-migrants farm in Kembujeh is left to female senior hosts as rice farming and vegetables are their domains. Agrarian clientelism and the *karafoo* relations that inform it, as well as other similar clientelist based institutions, continue to combine two different types of rights, those of access to land and local citizenship.

There is a significant body of literature on processes of incorporation of stranger-migrants, mobility, access to land and labor, and local citizenship in West Africa, with a particular focus on the Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Benin.⁷² One of the most prominent institutions, the *tutorat*, is a form of agrarian clientelism found in the Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, and in many other parts of West Africa. The *tutorat*, described by Le Meur as a frontier institution, is a patron-client relationship that closely resembles Gambian agrarian clientelist relations. It facilitates the transference of land rights from hosts within a community to strangers. As is the case with agrarian clientelist relations in Brikama “rights in land are extended on the basis of a moral economy principle: any individual has a right of access to the resources required to ensure his own and his family’s subsistence.”⁷³ Recent migrants are given indefinite rights to the land, which may be transferred from one generation to the next. Migrants are obliged to provide their labor, fulfill particular duties, and work to support their *tuteur* and the community.⁷⁴ The variations of *tutorat*, and agrarian clientelism, highlight their flexibility.⁷⁵ In Brikama land may be lent from one season to the

next. This is partly regulated by the demand for land and the changing nature of the agricultural economy.

The *tutorat*, and agrarian clientelist relations, must be situated within a local moral economy, which depends on the incorporation of recent migrants for the “wider reproduction of the community.” Mandinka hosts and elders work to reproduce particular sets of social relations – chiefly those based on “seniority and patronage.”⁷⁶ The reproduction of particular sets of social relations entails an investment in people and a person’s reputation, both of which involve the accumulation of dependents (children, clients and wives) and expenditure on ceremonies, praise singers, dress, and gifts. In short, investments are made in the social relations and networks that (re)produce social identities and vice versa.⁷⁷ There is an extensive body of literature on the notion of wealth in people in which an investment in people and the claims on people to which such investments give rise serve as a “form of wealth.” Material wealth and status enhance a person’s ability to invest in people, and an investment in people, in turn, helps to generate material wealth.⁷⁸

Deterritorialization: A Case Study

Hosts promote inclusion and feelings of belonging by incorporating migrant farmers into clientelist networks of support and providing them with seasonal access to land. At the same time they reinforce social hierarchies and host-stranger dichotomies; monopolize rights to political office; make use of clients’ unremunerated labor; and maintain rights over the land. Such rights allow hosts to exercise power and maintain authority over clients. In this sense there are “mobile ways of belonging that are, in some cases, contradictory and opposed, and in others, reinforcing.”⁷⁹ Rather than attempting to exclude the recent migrant completely from access to resources, however, hosts have historically aimed to (re) produce a “distinctive identity” and to have their rights, authority, and legitimacy as hosts recognized.⁸⁰ Here, the stranger is both marginal and partly included within the community. “The sense of *territorialization* is always coupled with the idea of *deterritorialization*, which shows that the identity being produced through such processes is always unstable, flexible and negotiable.”⁸¹ Despite having access to land, clients such as Mariamma frequently referred to their feelings of “strangeness.” In the following case study Mariamma conveys a sense of the way in which she is made to feel excluded and as if she does not belong.

A tall and slender Senegalese Mandinka woman in her early thirties, Mariamma proudly proclaims that her parents are descendants of Sami in Casamance. She came to Brikama, from Casamance in 2001. She married in Casamance and “her husband, a farmer, was the first to come here” (to Brikama). He came to find better living conditions. He left her with his parents and sent for her once he had a place to stay. They got land in Kembujeh by helping in fields. When she arrived she also farmed with her husband on a host’s groundnut and millet fields. She got to know the local hosts in the neighborhood and they ‘introduced’ her to a rice field.

When she came here she found it tough before getting to know people. Her first days were depressed and lonely, with nobody to talk to. She could do nothing to earn something. She feels it was unavoidable that she would be treated differently. Where she comes from there is a feeling of ownership. Here she often feels homesick. She feels she has no ownership. She has no voice. Someone can take advantage of you. They can tell you a foul word (discriminating word) because you are a stranger. In a joking way people may say, “When are you going back because here is not your home?” You feel the person is

expressing his/her ownership over you. The person is emphasizing that he/she is a citizen of this area (Interview, November 2005).

Mariamamma's feelings of exclusion and otherness are expressed through her claim that "she feels she has no ownership," in the sense of belonging to the community and being a citizen of the community. Hosts, she maintains, both deny her rights to a feeling of ownership and express their ownership "over her" by laying emphasis on their status as citizens/hosts and her status as a "stranger." In so doing they reinforce the structural differences between the two. By becoming a client Mariamma has attained a form of local citizenship. Indeed, many of the female migrants I interviewed felt that they had attained a form of group membership and local citizenship in becoming clients. Yet, clearly such a status can involve "ongoing negotiations and struggle."⁸² For instance, many migrants who come to live in Brikama voice a desire to return "home" to live, despite the fact that they have lived in Brikama for many years. However, a return journey is unrealistic and highly unlikely, given their financial constraints.

Mariamamma's feelings of exclusion must be contextualized. In postcolonial Gambian society many strangers, particularly African foreign nationals, are made to feel unwelcome. Dominant and popular images of the stranger, generated through state rhetoric and the media, criminalize non-Gambian African nationals, particularly those from Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Sierre Leone, Mauritania, and Senegal.⁸³ Skinner highlights the importance attributed to national identity in the postcolonial era in defining subjects and the concept of the stranger.⁸⁴ Indeed, after the 1994 coup, in which Sir Dawda Jawara's People's Progressive Party was toppled, one witnessed a resurgence in national pride amongst Gambian youth and those who failed to benefit from the previous government's system of patrimonial redistribution.⁸⁵ Popular discourse maintains that: "during the Jawara regime the borders were open and every 'stranger' had access to the country to enter and work." West African foreign nationals are consistently criminalized. They are blamed for engaging in: theft; prostitution, drug trafficking, fraud, and other "criminal acts."⁸⁶ It is important to recognize that discourses that inform local autochthon-migrant distinctions overlap with and influence those that inform Gambian-foreign national distinctions and vice versa. Berry describes the way in which Ghanaians define themselves as both Ghanaian citizens as well as citizens of their local communities, thereby bringing together locally based discourses on citizenship and autochthony with notions of citizenship espoused by the state.⁸⁷ Similarly, non-Gambian migrants who are incorporated into local communities as clients may have attained a form of local citizenship whilst in the "space of the nation" they are unable to gain legal citizenship.

Conclusion

Despite the increasing commoditization of the agrarian economy, agrarian clientelist relations persist. Indeed, the social relations of agrarian production continue to be partly organized through these relations. Hosts can no longer rely on family and community work group labor in the production of crops because of the increased individuation of agrarian production. This process of individuation has been brought about partly as a result of the commoditization of agrarian labor and the intensification and diversification of production.⁸⁸ Consequently, clients' unremunerated labor represents a flexible form of labor upon which hosts rely heavily. Within the context of an increasing shortage of agrarian labor, the provision of migrant farm labor is a highly valued resource. Indeed, as well as

facilitating migrants' incorporation into the local community, this practice helps to ensure the continued existence of nonwage agrarian labor relationships, thereby "mitigating the forces of the market economy."⁸⁹ Forms of hierarchy and authority as vested in seniority, clientelism, relations of entrustment (*karafoo*), Islam and the local moral and political economies of communities such as Brikama persist.

Bryceson highlights the process of "deagrarianization," or "rural income diversification away from agricultural pursuits," that has occurred in sub-Saharan Africa in the last fifteen years as a result of market liberalization.⁹⁰ As a result, one witnesses an increasing reliance on migrant labor as fewer men and young women in the region farm. "The Gambia's annual rate of urbanization is 8 percent, and it is now one of the most urbanized countries in sub-Saharan Africa."⁹¹ Young women increasingly lend land, mainly gained through affinal ties, to recent migrants from Senegal, Guinea Bissau and other parts of The Gambia. They receive an obligatory payment of a portion of the harvested vegetable and/or rice crops. Similarly, an older generation of female farmers who no longer farm yet maintain rights to the land are lending land to clients throughout the year and receiving payments of harvested produce.⁹² Amanor (2010) highlights a similar trend in Ghana, where one witnesses the decline of family farms, the individuation of agrarian production, and greater use of hired labor and sharecroppers, many of whom are migrants.

The internal dynamics of Gambian agrarian political economy have produced a continued need for migrant farm labour. At the same time the sustained arrival of migrants has partly shaped the existing social relations of agrarian production and the nature of agrarian clientelism. In this sense there is a need to "view migration as a process which is an integral part of broader social transformations, but which also has its own internal dynamics and which shapes social transformation in its own right."⁹³ Agrarian clientelism, which serves as a way to recruit labor and lend land, is central to migrants' incorporation into local communities. Through the act of entrustment and its accompanying practices and procedures recent migrants are transformed into clients and local citizens. Once given access to the land they are able to lay some claim to the land.

Senegalese migrants come to Brikama with particular ideological, political, economic and cultural resources. They move "between different levels of territorialization," contributing resources and benefiting from some, most notably land and local citizenship, in the process. Here territory, "territoire," is both a "productive, physical space" as well as an ideological field.⁹⁴ These migrants partly migrate in the knowledge that they can establish clientelist relations. Such sustained movement affects the changing nature of the social relations of agrarian production. Migrants, in turn, are central to the reproduction of hosts' identities, host and stranger dichotomies, the accumulation of wealth through people, agrarian relations, and agrarian clientelism.

Notes

- 1 See for example Amanor 2006, p. 151; Hill 1963; Swindell 1985; Robertson 1988.
- 2 Abdul-Korah 2011, p. 390.
- 3 Porter 2011, p. 67; Hampshire 2002.
- 4 Adepoju 2003.
- 5 See for example Koser 1998; Yuval-Davis and Werbner 1999; Davidson and Castles 2000;

- Werbner and Fumanti 2010. Historical and contemporary research on regional migration in West Africa has focused largely on rural-urban migration, colonial and post-colonial labor migration, and forced migration (Sharpe 2005, p. 174).
- 6 Van Hear 2010, p. 1533.
 - 7 Abdul-Korah 2011, p. 391 with reference to Cordell et al., 1996; Manchuelle, 1997.
 - 8 Kopytoff 1987, p. 17; Brooks 1993, p. 37.
 - 9 Brooks 1993, p. 37.
 - 10 Kea 2010.
 - 11 For a detailed analysis of female agrarian clientelist relations in the Gambia see Kea 2004; 2010.
 - 12 Bloom 2003, p. 50.
 - 13 Goldring 2001, p. 511 with reference to Lister 1997.
 - 14 Research for this article was funded by: the Nordic Africa Institute research grant; School of Oriental and African Studies fieldwork grant; Central Research Fund Award (Irwin Fund), University of London; and ESRC postdoctoral grant (no. PTA-026-27-0394).
 - 15 A *kabilo* is a patrilineal kin group or a lineage of many families who usually have the same last name but cannot necessarily trace common descent (Dey 1980, p. 152).
 - 16 Miller and Slater 2000, p. 21.
 - 17 Sassen 2002, p. 7; Goldring 2001.
 - 18 Mattias and Werbner 2010; Ong 1996, p. 737; Werbner and Yuval-Davis 1999, p. 4.
 - 19 Brettell and Sargent 2006, pp. 3-4.
 - 20 Goode 1990, p. 126.
 - 21 Bloom 2003, p. 50. Mamadou Diouf is a Senegalese historian teaching African history at Columbia University, where he also directs the Institute of African Studies. He has a research interest in migrant identities.
 - 22 Ibid.
 - 23 Skinner, 1963, p. 308.
 - 24 Berry 1989, p. 42; Kea 2010.
 - 25 For instance, Murphy and Bledsoe (1987, p. 126) highlight the way in which historically strangers in a Kpelle chiefdom with political or military power to contribute to local founders were positioned hierarchically above those strangers who could merely contribute their labor power, and consequently became clients and/or slaves.
 - 26 Sharpe 2005, p. 174.
 - 27 Linares 1992, p. 153; Bellagamba 2004.
 - 28 Lentz 2006, p. 14.
 - 29 Ibid.
 - 30 Akyeampong 2009, p. 25.
 - 31 Cordell et al. 1996, p. 26.
 - 32 Ibid.
 - 33 Wright 1997, pp. 178-80.
 - 34 Colvin 1981, p. 63.
 - 35 Abdul-Korah 2011, p. 391.
 - 36 Akyeampong 2009, p. 25.
 - 37 Brettell 2008, p. 118.

- 38 Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994, p. 5; Massey et al. 1998, p. 8.
- 39 <http://www.faculty.rsu.edu/users/f/felwell/www/Theorists/Frank/index.htm> contains information on Frank, while information on Wallerstein can be found at: <http://www.faculty.rsu.edu/users/f/felwell/www/Theorists/Wallerstein/index.htm>.
- 40 Phizacklea 1998, p. 26.
- 41 Kabeer 1994.
- 42 Vertovec 2007, p. 2011.
- 43 Brettell 2008, p. 124; Epstein 1958; Mitchell 1969, 1971, 1974.
- 44 Swindell 1981, pp. 85-86.
- 45 Dalby 1971, pp. 3-5.
- 46 Gamble and Hair 1999, p.57. The Mandinka are spread throughout West Africa from the Gambia to the Côte d'Ivoire, with greatest prevalence in the Senegambia region, Mali, and Guinea Bissau (Dalby 1971, p. 6).
- 47 Wright 1987, p. 291; Kea 2010.
- 48 Kea 2010, p. 71.
- 49 Nugent 2008, p. 944.
- 50 Beckerleg 1992/1993, p. 47.
- 51 Kea 2004, p. 365.
- 52 Wright 1997, p. 229; Golub 2009.
- 53 Gailey 1975, p. 40.
- 54 The “movement des forces democratique de la Casamance” (MFDC), a secessionist movement made up of freedom fighters, seeks independence from Senegal. They have waged war against the Senegalese state since 1983 when approximately 100 Senegalese were killed while demonstrating against the Senegalese state. The MFDC claim that most of the government’s resources are targeted to the Northern part of Senegal (Evans 2007).
- 55 Kea 2010.
- 56 Swindell 1981; Robertson 1987.
- 57 Amanor 2006, p.151.
- 58 Robertson 1988.
- 59 Baker 1995, p. 75.
- 60 Barrett and Browne 1989, p. 6; Cornia 1987.
- 61 Berry 1993; Baker 1992; Guyer 1997; Hoggart 1992; Kea 2007.
- 62 Kea 2004.
- 63 Quinn 1972, p. 37.
- 64 Kea 2010.
- 65 Robertson 1987, p. 247.
- 66 See Chauveau, Colin, Jacob, Delville, and Le Meur (2006) with reference to Jacob (2004, 2005) on the “moral duty of gratitude” that strangers are expected to display towards their *tuteurs* in *tutorat* in the Côte d'Ivoire.
- 67 See Linares (1992, p. 129) for a discussion of the way in which lenders and borrowers of land in a Mandigized Jola village in Casamance are expected to see themselves as “‘brothers’ under the tenants of Islam.”
- 68 Bellagamba 2004.
- 69 Barnes 1986, p. 9.

- 70 Sanneh 1979, p. 2.
- 71 Chauveau et al. 2006.
- 72 Chauveau 2000, 2006, 2008; Chauveau, Jacob, Le Meur 2004; Chauveau et al. 2006.
- 73 Chauveau et al. 2007, p. 34; Chauveau 2006, p. 214 with reference to Scott 1976).
- 74 Chauveau et al. 2006, p. 2; Le Meur 2006.
- 75 Chauveau et al. 2004, p. 9.
- 76 Ibid., pp. 10-14.
- 77 Sharpe 2005, p. 174.
- 78 Guyer 1993; Berry 2001, p. 110.
- 79 Bloom 2003, p. 50.
- 80 Berry 1989, p. 48; Kopytoff 1987, p. 52; Kea 2010.
- 81 Bloom 2003, p. 50.
- 82 Goldring 2001, p.511.
- 83 Kea 2010.
- 84 Skinner 1963, p. 312.
- 85 Wiseman 1997, p. 265.
- 86 "Gambia and its Foreign Guests," *The Gambia News and Report* 29 Oct. - 4 Nov. 1996.
- 87 Berry 2009, p. 31.
- 88 This process of intensification and diversification has a long history (See Haswell 1963, 1975; Barrett and Browne 1989; Carney 1992; Carney and Watts 1991, 1992; Schroeder 1999.)
- 89 Blackwood 1997, p. 278.
- 90 Bryceson 2002, p. 725.
- 91 Wright 1997, p. 237.
- 92 Kea 2004, 2010.
- 93 Van Hear 2010, p. 1531.
- 94 Bloom 2003, p. 51.

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