International Migration Institute
James Martin 21st Century School
University of Oxford

Working Papers

Migration Aspirations and Immobility in a Malian Soninke Village

Gunvor Jónsson

Abstract

This paper explores the local meaning of migration and the experience of immobility amongst young men of Soninke ethnicity in a village in the Kayes region of Mali. Soninke communities in Kayes are characterised by a "culture of migration"; increasingly since the 1950s, Soninke men from this region have supported local households and contributed to local development by working as labour migrants in France. This paper explicates how young Soninke men's aspirations to migrate internationally relate to the structural and cultural features of the local Soninke community. The analysis focuses upon young men who aspire to migrate but who – for political or other reasons – are unable to do so, resulting in a condition of "involuntary immobility". The paper shows how these young men construct their social identities in the context of immobility. While some seek out alternative forms of livelihood that are not based on international migration, most young men devote their time to socialising in groups called "*grins*". In the *grins*, they reinvent youth culture, contest hegemonic notions of social becoming, and attempt to connect to an imagined world of global flows that these "immobile" youngsters are otherwise cut off from.

Author: Gunvor Jónsson is a Research Assistant at IMI, University of Oxford. Email – gunvor.jonsson@qeh.ox.ac.uk

Table of Contents

Introduction

After the Second World War, Soninke migrants from the Senegal River Valley were a welcome labour force in France. But from the mid-1970s, restrictions on immigration have increased, and today, unskilled West Africans like the Soninke villagers are generally considered a social burden that must be barred from entry, not only in France, but in most Western destinations. A young Soninke man's prospects of pursuing the trajectory of previous generations by making a livelihood based on international migration are therefore bleak[1].

This paper is based on fieldwork conducted in a Soninke village, Kounda[2], in the Kayes region of Mali. The aim of the research was to explore the local meaning of migration and the experience of immobility. The entire existence of the village of Kounda was founded on migration, which for centuries had been central to villagers' livelihood (cf. Kane & Lericollais 1975, Manchuelle 1997). Household heads had a long tradition of working as labour migrants in France and, through a regular flow of remittances and communication, they retained strong bonds to their families in the Malian village. However, many of the young Soninke men that I encountered during fieldwork were expressing a sense of "involuntary immobility" – an aspiration to migrate, but the inability to do so (cf. Carling 2002). In this paper, I examine how young Soninke men's aspirations to migrate relate to structural and cultural features of Soninke society, and how their current situation of involuntary immobility affects their social interactions and social becoming.

Context, Methods and Informants

In Mali, the popular stereotype of the Soninke people is that they are the country's '*ethnie migratrice*' – an ethnic group characterised by their culture of migration. There is a Malian saying that, "the Soninke have migration in their blood". The Soninke sometimes refer to themselves as '*commerçants*' (traders), since commerce is the economic activity with which they have been associated since the times of trans-

---

[1] This paper is a summary of my MPhil thesis in anthropology (Jonsson 2007), in which readers of this article can find a more elaborate analysis and further empirical descriptions. A French version of the paper was presented at a conference ("Actualité de la Recherché sur les Migrations Maliennes") in Bamako in June 2008.
[2] All places and names in this paper have been replaced by pseudonyms to ensure the anonymity of my informants.

Saharan trade. But since this occupation was always linked to migration, Soninke identity is inextricably associated with migration (cf. Whitehouse 2003:19).

For nearly a millennium, people identifying themselves as Soninke have been settled in an area by the Senegal River near the south-western border of the Sahara desert, from where they initially conducted trading expeditions and fought wars, accumulating wealth and slaves that they put to work on their farms. The beginnings of the modern migrations of the Soninke were linked to European commercial penetration in Africa in the 19th century. Already by the late 18th century, members of the Soninke aristocracy started working as labour migrants, serving as indigenous sailors (*laptots*) for the French Navy on the Senegal River (Manchuelle 1997). In the mid-19th century, the Soninke also became involved in seasonal labour migration to peanut plantations in the Gambia and later, Senegal. This activity became known as the *navetanat* and was one of the most important migrations in the modern history of West Africa (ibid:53). One of the reasons for this modern labour migration was the increasing need for money that was caused by colonial domination; many young Soninke men became *navetans* in order to accumulate the cash that their local economy could not generate (Kane & Lericollais 1975)[3]. With the abolition of slavery in the early twentieth century, former slaves gradually got involved in temporary migration as *navetans* and later they presented for military recruitment in French West Africa. As former slaves turned into labour migrants, so did a growing number of young males of the Soninke nobility. Migration then in a sense became a declaration of independence, not only for former slaves, but for young males as well (Manchuelle 1989b and 1997, Pollet & Winter 1971).

After the Second World War, Soninke migration to France increased, as these unskilled labour migrants took part in post-war reconstruction. In 1960, this migration flow was spurred significantly, both by the economic decline of the Soninke homeland, and the need for manual labour in France. In 1960, France opened its borders to foreign labourers, which resulted in increased immigration, especially by

---

[3] However, Manchuelle's (1997) detailed historical research disputes many of the conventional assumptions regarding the link between colonialism and migration in West Africa, including the need to pay colonial taxes, which he claims was a far less significant impetus for migration than was the attraction of high wages and incomes, which provided a potential for social promotion within Soninke society (ibid: 91-92).

Sub-Saharan Africans. The acute labour shortage in France resulted in a complete breakdown of official immigration control, and French enterprises ran their own recruitments abroad. The efficient and well-established Soninke migrant networks and the French employers' preference for these workers explain why, in 1968, the Soninke constituted 85 % of sub-Saharan immigrants in France (cf. Manchuelle 1997:2). By 1975, about one third of the active male population in the Soninke homeland had emigrated to France (Kane & Lericollais 1975:177).

In 1974, the French government took measures to stop the arrival of new foreign workers (Chastanet 1992:145, Quiminal 1994:65). Illegal arrivals increased and in 1976, the French State started to repatriate irregular immigrants, first by offering 'assisted return', which included an allowance and training for those who departed voluntarily (Quiminal 1994). In recent times, more severe measures have been applied, such as arresting irregular immigrants, placing them on charter planes and sending them out of the country (cf. Kuagbenou 1999). Increased border controls since the 1990s, which have mounted after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, and the recent passing of a bill favouring 'selective immigration'[4] in France, constitute further barriers to unskilled West African immigrants. The migratory system of the Soninke has therefore been largely disrupted and migration to France has changed from a viable livelihood strategy into a clandestine business.

In Kounda, as well as many of the surrounding villages in the Kayes region of Mali, migration is indeed the distinguishing feature. In this part of the country, migration is inscribed into the landscape. Coming to Kounda, you drive along the tar road that connects the two main cities in the Kayes region. This is one of the only tarred main roads in the whole of Mali and it is partly funded by the migrants in France. From this road, if you peek out of the heart-shaped windows of the rusty taxi that drives past the village, you can spot the big water tower as well as the four minarets of the grand mosque of Kounda. These constructions have been built entirely with the funding of '*les ressortisants*' – the migrants from the village. As such, they are the most

---

[4] This, in the West African context, much detested policy, referred to as "*migration choisie*", was proposed in 2006 by then French Minister of the Interior, Nicolas Sarkozy, who is now the French president.

significant monuments of the village, symbols of the migration, which gives the village its *raison d'être*.

The fieldwork I conducted in Kounda lasted five months and was carried out from September 2006 to February 2007. The primary methods were interviews (conducted in French, sometimes with a translator) and participant observation. The main group of informants was the young men in the village, who were between the ages of 18 to 26. I had both private conversations with individuals and general discussions with groups of young men, usually in their *grin*. These *grins* were groups of young male friends, who shared bedrooms and socialised on a daily basis, usually in the location where they had their rooms. Another major source of information was men between approximately 30 and 60 years, who were mainly active breadwinners with a family of their own. They included both villagers and visiting migrants, particularly from France and from the urban centres of Mali (Bamako and Kayes).

There are 220 households in the local town hall's tax register of Kounda village. A quantitative survey of 100 households[5] in the village showed that 86% identified themselves as Soninke, the dominant ethnic group in the village. 95% of the households were engaged in agricultural subsistence production, while 18% of the households had members who conducted commerce within the village. According to respondents, the households consisted of a total of 1,631 people residing in the village, and another 375 people, who had emigrated. If we count locals and emigrants[6] together (2,006 people), the share of emigrants out of this total population is 18.5%. Of the 375 emigrants counted in the survey, 224 had migrated to France, making France the country of residence of approximately 60% of the migrants counted in the survey[7].

---

[5] For the purpose of the survey, a household was defined as a group of people, who ate together on a regular daily basis. Yet, respondents also considered emigrants residing abroad as members of the household, if they contributed financially to the local household and since, if they returned, they would naturally partake in the food and living space of the household.

[6] The family members, whom respondents considered as migrants, were all men. However, a number of women have also emigrated, to accompany their husbands abroad. But when a woman marries, she is considered part of her husband's household and no longer belongs to her natal family. Local households did not consider "accompanying spouses" to be emigrants, because they had left with their husbands. Generally, migration is considered the domain of men, while women are associated with the home.

[7] The other places of residence of migrants counted in the survey include: Mali (46 migrants, about 12% of all the migrants counted); the US (28 migrants); Nigeria (11 migrants); the Ivory Coast (10

Theoretical Framework: Migration and Non-Migration

A great deal of the standard social scientific theorising about migration tends to overlook or ignore the significance of socio-cultural factors in shaping migration dynamics. Research has traditionally been inspired by the neo-classical economics approach, which has led analysts to focus almost exclusively on economic disparities between areas of origin and destination, which are evaluated by rational actors seeking to maximise utility (Massey et al.1998: 8). This approach to migration, which supports the functionalist paradigm of social theory, is problematic, especially in the context of many developing countries, with unpredictable economic markets and structural constraints impinging on peoples' decisions (cf. de Haas 2008:6; Carling 2002). As de Haas (ibid: 6-7) mentions, "Migration does not take place in a social, cultural, political, and institutional void". Migration and economic considerations are always socially embedded and culturally informed (Åkesson: 2004).

Network theory is a newer approach that provides a more convincing explanation as to why so many Soninke migrants from Mali are clustered together in France. The theory contends that networks linking the homeland with kin and friends in the diaspora function as catalysts of further emigration, and that this works quite independently of changes in economic push and pull factors (Brettell 2000:104-106, Åkesson 2004:18-19). Due to its focus on the links between migrants and homeland, network theory is useful for analysing why and how local societies in the Soninke homeland have persisted for centuries, despite their high rates and long-standing history of emigration.

Another recent development in migration research is the focus upon transnationalism, defined as a social process, whereby migrants operate in social fields that transgress geographic, political and cultural borders (Glick Schiller, Basch and Szanton Blanc 1992 in Brettell 2000). In the transnational perspective migrants are not uprooted, but move freely back and forth across international borders and between different cultures and social systems (Brettel 2000:104). This might be a fruitful approach to analysing the experiences of Soninke migrants; yet, it contains certain biases, which become

migrants); Ghana (7 migrants); Senegal (6 migrants); and Central Africa (5 migrants). The households also had members residing in Angola, Asia, England, Japan, Mauritania, Niger, South Korea and Spain.

apparent as one attempts to analyse aspects that are central to this paper. First of all, by focusing on socio-economic exchanges across national boundaries and the convergence of places of origin and destination, the current analytical focus on transnationalism might defer attention to the central fact that the Soninke migrants and villagers are highly impeded by state boundaries (cf. Whitehouse 2003). Secondly, as the Swedish anthropologist Lisa Åkesson points out, the definition of transnationalism only focuses on the *migrants'* experiences and ties to the homeland (Åkesson 2004:16). Current anthropological migration studies applying a transnational perspective thus often deal with cultural adaptation in receiving countries, but they leave out the experiences of those who remain at home. Meanwhile, the daily lives of local Soninke villagers' often depend upon people, money, ideas and resources located in another distant setting. Even if these villagers never leave the homeland, their social universe stretches far beyond the borders of their homeland (ibid).

Finally, certain scholars have drawn attention to what they call 'the culture of migration', to argue that international population movements are influenced not only by economic considerations but also by cultural values, including the inclination to emigrate (Kandel and Massey 2002, Åkesson 2004). Kandel and Massey (2002) write that, in communities characterised by a culture of migration, international movement becomes so deeply rooted that the prospect of transnational movement becomes normative, and young people "expect" to live and work in a particular foreign country at some point in their lives. Furthermore, "Males, especially, come to see migration as a normal part of the life course, representing a marker of the transition to manhood, in addition to being a widely accepted vehicle for economic mobility. International migration is cultural in the sense that the aspiration to migrate is transmitted across generations and between people through social networks" (ibid 981). This sort of ideology is evident in many communities involved in international migration, e.g. from Mexico to the US, from Cape Verde to various Western European destinations, and from the Kayes region in Mali to France. Later in this paper I will analyse the subtle ways that the 'culture of migration' is sustained in the Soninke community. Yet, although I find the 'culture of migration' approach very useful, I do not mean to say that Soninke migration is purely a culturally constructed phenomenon, determined

by the very ethnicity of the Soninke people (this critique is raised by Timera 2001:40). But I do want to draw attention to the importance of culture.

In a global perspective, migration is considered an anomaly and immobility is perceived as by far the norm. Only about three percent of the world's population are international migrants. The majority of the world's population seemingly prefers to stay at home, and common sense makes most people assume that immobility is normal. The Soninke then appear to turn common logic on its head: in Soninke society, the healthy person – or to be exact, the man – is one who migrates. Therefore, the non-migration of a normal young Soninke man is considered a social problem. To understand this logic, it is necessary to move beyond the artificial analytical distinction between migrating or not, and consider that a central feature of human life *is* mobility.

As with any human practice, people who migrate do so for a number of social and cultural reasons and, as Olwig & Sørensen (2002) argue, migration can be considered on a par with other livelihood strategies. This 'livelihood perspective' takes us beyond the economic and structural approaches to the analysis of migration, producing a deeper understanding of the significance of migration aspirations and immobility in a society, like that of the Soninke. It also sheds light on aspects of contemporary Soninke migration dynamics that tend to be overlooked. As Carling (2002:9) points out, because migration literature has always been concerned with contrasting migration with non-migration, the possibility of *wanting* to migrate but *not being able* to do so is often lost. Carling therefore argues for an analytical distinction between the aspiration and the ability to migrate, to account for 'involuntary immobility', defined as the aspiration to migrate but the inability to do so. Carling's notion of 'involuntary immobility' aptly describes the current situation of young Soninke men in Kounda, and his attention to migration *aspirations* is central to my analysis.

But why is 'involuntary immobility' emerging as a topic in migration research, and what exactly is implied by 'immobility'? As shown above, the focus on immobility partly reflects an epistemological turn in migration studies, as neo-classical theories are challenged by new approaches, particularly from anthropology and geography, which apply more holistic and experience-near methods. Moreover, Carling (2001 and

2002) argues that our times can be characterised as "the age of involuntary immobility". According to Carling, legal labour migration to Europe has become increasingly difficult over the last twenty five years. Meanwhile, labour migration has become a structural feature of the economy and society of a large number of developing countries, and finally, an increasing number of people live transnational lives, relating to two or more nations in their daily activities. These factors, argues Carling, combine to cause a condition of 'involuntary immobility', particularly in societies with a long tradition of emigration to Western countries, where there is currently a large share of people who wish to emigrate, but a relatively small number of actual migrants (Carling 2001 and 2002).

While economic incentives for international South to North migration have probably never been greater, the barriers to these flows are mounting, too. Involuntary immobility is then related to contemporary forms of globalisation, which impede international migration and, generally, the socio-economic mobility of people in the South. This is an aspect of globalisation which tends to be overlooked, not only in studies of migration but generally in anthropology and other social sciences (Carling 2001 and 2002, Ferguson 2006, Inda & Rosaldo 2002). In Kounda, there were clearly fewer people who were able to migrate than the number who aspired to do so. This paper, though, does not deal with the causes of involuntary immobility but rather, looks at the consequences. The data gathered for the following analysis does not explain whether the current situation of involuntary immobility is due to political circumstances (i.e. restrictions on immigration) or rather, due to contemporary social and economic changes affecting the migration dynamics in the Kayes region.

Finally, it should be noted that "involuntary immobility" does not entail that Soninke people cannot or do not migrate at all. Certainly, many villagers still migrate to both Western and non-Western destinations. The problem I am referring to is that a growing number of aspiring migrants cannot legally or safely pursue their desired destination, particularly France but also other Western countries, and therefore remain unwilling non-migrants. Several factors make these destinations more attractive to the young Soninke men, especially as they appear to present an earning opportunity that cannot be matched by merely urban or regional migration in Africa. But France is also a preferred destination, since this is where a Soninke diaspora and transnational

11

networks are in place, which can facilitate the migration process for a young man. Such networks also exist in other African countries, like the Ivory Coast and Congo Brazzaville (cf. Whitehouse 2003 and 2007). But hazards like unemployment, poverty, crime, violence, and warfare make such African destination less appealing to the young aspiring migrants.

The Role of Migration in Soninke Society

'Stranger Logic': The Role of 'Strangers' in Soninke Society

With its past history of migration, it is safe to say that geographic mobility has been both a stabilising and productive force in Soninke society. Migration has therefore, for generations, been an inherent feature of life for people in this region. Historically, the Soninke have imported their labour force, while they themselves have migrated to supplement local production. Still today, Soninke migrants from Kounda and elsewhere employ labourers to farm their lands in their absence[8] (cf. Manchuelle 1989a:108). These labourers are themselves migrants, who, like the Soninke, have left their natal villages to attain social and economic mobility. In Kounda, these labourers are referred to as '*bourobonda*', which according to an informant means, "someone who earns his bread by walking from door to door offering physical labour". The *bourobonda* settles in with the family that employs him, and receives food and accommodation and a small monthly salary. In return, he works four days of the week for the family and three days for himself. Apart from farming, he performs various kinds of heavy physical labour. The young Soninke men in Kounda considered it humiliating working as *bourobondas* in their natal village; in fact, the term *bourobonda* was considered derogatory. However, it is quite normal for young Soninke men to work temporarily in Senegal as *bourobondas.*

Several authors have pointed out the important and ambiguous role that 'strangers' have played in West African societies (e.g. Fortes 1975, Skinner 1963, Shack & Skinner 1979, Whitehouse 2007). Georg Simmel (1950[1908]) was the first to elaborate on the sociological concept of 'the stranger' (cf. Whitehouse 2007:12). He

---

[8] This goes against popular arguments that the Kayes region has been drained of its manual labour force due to emigration. My fieldwork supports Manchuelle's argument that the Soninke homeland is characterised by "immigration in a land of emigration" (1989a:108; cf. also Kane & Lericollais 1975:187).

defined the stranger's position as ambivalent, composed of certain measures of nearness and distance: "In spite of being inorganically appended to it, the stranger is yet an organic member of the group" (Simmel 1950[1908]:408). According to Shack (1979), strangers in the Simmelian sense were marginal as well as integral elements of African social and political systems long before the beginning of colonial rule. In many African states, especially in West Africa, strangers as 'liminaries' often engaged in occupations disdained by the indigenous host societies in which they settled, temporarily or permanently (Shack 1979:44-45).

The French word that the Soninke in Kounda use for immigrants in their village is '*étranger*', which both means foreigner and stranger. To my Soninke informants, a foreigner is conceived of as a 'stranger' in the Simmelian sense: The person who is foreign is someone who stands outside the cultural logic and social rules that govern society – not a potential citizen who must be integrated (a notion that seems to inform the policies of many contemporary Western states). Yet, the stranger plays a central role in the reproduction of his host society, performing labour that locals cannot or will not do (such as the *bourobonda* or commerce). To the Soninke in Kounda, the logic that followed from this organisation of society was that 'strangers' are an indispensable part of society and that, on the path of upward social mobility, any person will most likely at some stage in life be a stranger (– women too, as they pass from their biological family to that of their spouse).

In the village of Kounda, strangers have an ambivalent position: They do not have the privileges and rights of locals; but this also means that strangers are not expected to adhere to the rules in the same way as locals, and this in itself becomes a privilege for the stranger. This is for example why foreigners in Kounda dominate local business, while the commercial activities of local entrepreneurs are impeded by an ethos of gift-giving. One of the first things that struck me as peculiar when I started doing fieldwork was that virtually all the people who were earning money in the village, were "foreigners" who were not born and raised in the village. Of the thirty-four registered shopkeepers in Kounda, only five were native to the village. Of these five, two were physically disabled and hence, they explained, being a shop keeper was a necessary survival strategy, as they were unable to do farming. The three others counted a migrant, who travelled between Kounda and France; a young man, who had

recently started up his business; and a former migrant, who was the local 'President of Commerce' and whose father had been a successful trader in Kounda in the times when there were only a few local shops. Apart from shopkeepers, almost all the bakers, the mechanics, the tailors, and the builders were "foreign". The few local people who were making money in the village mainly did some sort of local administrative work or they had invested in livestock.

This peculiar division was explained to me by a former Soninke migrant in his early thirties, as we sat drinking tea with his friend – a foreigner, who had established himself as a poultry farmer in the village:

> "The foreigners come here to look for money. One cannot work for money in the village where one is born. That would be a disgrace. And it will cause arguments if, once I have paid you and next time you come here and ask for something, I tell you that I have paid you that other time, and so on…People can end up killing each other that way. So as a young man, you can contribute in two ways: You can either leave to make cash that you give your family; or you can stay here and work manually, collecting wood, fixing the house, etcetera. Both jobs are equally good. But even if you could make really good money here, you would still have to leave your maternal village if you want to earn money. It is only if you are a teacher, or working for the administration that you can stay here and earn a salary. That is acceptable".

To understand this situation, one needs to look at the type of exchange relations that are practiced amongst locals and strangers in Kounda. In Kounda, most villagers stand in a close personal relation, and favours and gift-giving is prominent. Each of the original neighbourhoods in the village is dominated by one of the traditional social classes, which are each represented by one or two clans[9]. These clans consist of a number of patrilineages, which often live closely together, ideally sharing the same household, which should only break up once the living space has become too small. This means that each of the original neighbourhoods in the village resembles one large, extended family, and many of the local inhabitants are somehow related (cf. Pollet & Winter 1971:187). As is the case in many societies, people who are related through family ties reaffirm and maintain that relation through gift-giving (Berking 1999, Levi-Strauss 1969, Sahlins 1972). This form of exchange is what Sahlins (ibid) refers to as 'generalised reciprocity', and it characterised the exchanges that took

---

[9] Each clan has its own patronym, which signifies the person's traditional social status.

place between members of the same households and neighbourhoods in Kounda: They helped each other financially and work-wise, and to demand or offer money for such favours was almost taboo. Also, the hospitality towards relatives was unconditional. Often relatives would arrive in connection with weddings, baptisms, or other festive occasions. Some visitors came to see family they had never met or not seen in a long time and there was a large number of children, who came from other villages and settled in while they attended the local school[10].

In contrast to this generalised reciprocity and emphasis on giving, the common form of exchange involved in commerce is payment[11]. Payment is associated with immediate transaction and an impersonal contractual relation between the partners exchanging – in other words, what Sahlins (ibid) termed 'balanced reciprocity'. This type of exchange does not harmonise with the system of generalised reciprocity that defines local exchange relations in Kounda. Accepting payment from one's kin is almost taboo in Kounda and therefore, native villagers avoid conducting commerce in Kounda.

Local Soninke informants held the common view that, "You cannot succeed in the village of your father". In fact, making a local income was considered unappealing, even humiliating, because it meant that you profited at the expense of your relatives. Demba, a man in his early forties, said that, "To succeed, you have to be wicked". Demba was an entrepreneurial villager, and was known as the best tailor in the village, yet he struggled to make a living. "I have a soft heart", he explained, implying that he could not get himself to ask money for his services. So when his wife had to be hospitalised during her pregnancy, he spent days trekking up and down the winding roads of Kounda to ask people to pay back their longstanding credits to pay for the hospital bill. Luckily, his brother in France eventually sent him 50,000CFA[12].

Young men and returned migrants sometimes attempted to start up a small business in their village. But even though their co-villagers would like to obtain the goods and

---

[10] Such visits could last months, even years, sometimes to the frustration of either the hosts, if they lacked the space to lodge the visitors; or of the visitor, who might have wanted to leave, but whose departure depended on the permission of a parent or a spouse.

[11] Cf. Mogensen (2004/2005) on the distinction between giving money and paying money in an African context.

[12] 50,000CFA equals approximately 75 Euros.

services that they offered, their limited access to cash meant that they often could not pay for them. Particularly women "solved" this problem by buying on credit. They got away with this if the trader was a relative of theirs. The local ethos of generalised exchange meant that the obligation to repay was vaguely defined, and relatives could not easily request payment from one another. Instead of demanding his money back, the local trader then went bankrupt. Checkne was twenty-one years old when he started up a small business in Kounda, administering a pay phone. However, his relatives and co-villagers came to phone without paying, saying they would come up with the money later. Eventually, Checkne had to close down the business and when I met him six months later, he was still paying off on the telephone bill. Such experiences were well-known by local Soninke traders in Kounda, who felt they could not refuse to give credit to their relatives, because "if relatives demand something from you, you are morally obliged to help". But if the trader was a foreigner, the rules of balanced reciprocity came into force and at some point, the creditor would demand repayment. It was easier for 'strangers' to demand payment, because their social relation with the customer was more impersonal and they had less sympathy for a non-paying customer if this person was not their relative. Several informants told me that in these shops, the materiality of sex[13] came into play, as the local women would end up sleeping with the foreign traders in order to have their debt cancelled. When other Soninke villagers discovered such things, they would chase the foreigners out of the village.

But while their business was relatively profitable, foreigners in Kounda were marginalised from local infrastructure and decision-making. Affection and familiarity, more than wealth, determined whether the local Soninke villagers accepted a newcomer. Consider this statement by a forty-year old male from the nobility:

> "In Kounda, if you show up and want to settle, you ask the village to give you land. The villagers will first look at your character and estimate if you are a wicked person. If not, they will give you the land. This is Soninke philosophy: We can see what type of person you are; if you are someone who cares about human problems and if you are a good person. Everyone here knows each other, or we know your father and your

---

[13] Cf. Hunter (2002) "The Materiality of Everyday Sex". Hunter writes from KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, where women use sex as an everyday strategy to access resources and favours from men. See also Jonsson (2004) on this phenomenon in the South African Lowveld.

> family when you say your name or the village you come from. Even
> with foreigners, we can sense if they are good persons. Then we will
> give you the land you ask for."

Villagers that were not born and raised in Kounda, and hence not considered part of local webs of solidarity and kinship, often complained that the Soninke were "racist"[14]. Elhadji Diallo was a "foreign" Peul trader who owned the biggest shop in the village, where he had lived for more than sixteen years. Although he lived centrally, his house had been entirely bypassed by the infrastructure that the Soninke migrants had donated. Unlike his neighbours, Elhadji had neither a water tap, electricity, nor a telephone line. The chief never summoned him when there was council, except for '*cotisations*', i.e. financial contributions. On numerous occasions, his son had been beaten up for no apparent reason, and eventually, Elhadji had sent him to Kayes city to attend school there instead.

Soninke Migrants as 'Strangers'

According to my Soninke informants, the 'stranger logic'[15] that renders foreigners integral to yet marginalised from their host society, applies not only to strangers within Kounda. It also applies to the Soninke themselves when they go abroad to work. When a Soninke man migrates, he himself becomes a stranger in another society and he adopts the ambivalent position that he associated with the strangers within his own society.

The marginal social position of the 'stranger', which also applies to the Soninke migrants, is captured in the saying, "tunga te danbe don". According to an informant in Kounda, this means that, "a foreigner has no value in foreign places"[16]. This implies that, "When you leave your home, you lose your value. Abroad, they don't

---

[14] This is an emic use of the term "racist". 'Emic' refers to the perspective of the insider. The emic perspective focuses on the intrinsic cultural distinctions that are meaningful to the members of a given society, while the opposite - the etic perspective - relies upon the extrinsic concepts and categories that have meaning for scientific observers. In this case, the emic concept of 'racist' was used to refer to villagers, who discriminated against people that were not born and raised in the village or against those who belonged to a different ethnic group than themselves.

[15] This 'stranger logic' resembles Whitehouse's (2007) observation of 'the stranger's code', which informs the conduct of Malian immigrants in Congo Brazzaville. Whitehouse defines this 'code' as, "the tacit understanding between strangers and their hosts which grants the strangers a life in the host country while effectively limiting their rights" (ibid:303). Yet, I prefer to use the term 'stranger logic', because the notion of a code makes it appear as an institutionalised phenomenon, whereas I experienced it as a more implicit cultural understanding.

[16] The French translation is: "*Un étranger n'a pas de valeur à l'étranger*".

know your family, your name, your origins". The informant himself had lived and worked in France for a decade, and he said that one of his biggest problems was the humiliation and racism he experienced, and the disregard of his noble heritage: "In France, they do not know what it means to be a Sylla [belonging to the clan of nobles]".

As an immigrant, you become unfamiliar – something which my Soninke informants seemed acutely aware of[17]. The migrant's transformation from a familiar local into a stranger in a foreign society was sometimes expressed by local informants in bodily terms: They claimed that when they went abroad, their appearance would change. A former migrant, who had settled back in the village, put it like this: "When a Soninke goes abroad, he will change – his skin will become brighter, his body will become bigger; he will start to look like the people over there. In fact, people say that you cannot recognise a Soninke who is abroad". While local villagers are thin and dark-skinned because of the hard work in the sun and the poor food, the migrant's appearance is healthier. This signifies that when the Soninke migrant leaves the local place and enters the host society, he also leaves behind his local, familiar way of being – he is no longer a peasant resembling his co-villagers. As his appearance changes, so does his character. The migrant becomes un-recognisable and he becomes un-familiar.

The transformation of character and the experience of strangerhood is central in my informants' characterisation of the migration project. When a man migrates, he does so in order to become a 'stranger'. The Soninke word for the place to which people migrate is 'tunga', which informants translated as: "where one is not at home". In French, the villagers' standard expression for migrating was "*aller en aventure*", lit. 'to go on adventure'. To the Soninke villagers in Kounda, moving to places where one has a strong social network does not constitute an '*aventure*'[18]. On the contrary, the point of migrating is exactly to profit from one's status as a stranger. Although the

---

[17] Since my fieldwork was not multi-sited, I focus on the *perception* of migration from villagers' perspective. I therefore cannot elaborate on the *actual* extent to which Soninke migrants retain their 'strangerhood' in their host society.

[18] I had an interesting interview in Kounda's former slave quarters, where a young man passionately described going to the nobles' neighbourhood almost like going to *tunga*: "Here is good, because here is what we know, but over there is attractive, because we don't know it there. Kounda is magnificent!" It would be interesting to investigate further such local notions of intra-village mobility.

marginal position of the stranger might appear as a negative factor, this is exactly what the Soninke migrant strives towards.

Abroad, the migrant is a stranger who has "no shame and no obligations". This enables him to conduct the kind of economic activities that are not socially acceptable in his familiar, local society. My young male informants held no illusions about the burden of the work they would have to endure as migrant labourers in France. This was brought home to me during a conversation with Hamsa, a twenty-five year old, whose male relatives were working as migrants in respectively France and Uganda:

> I tell Hamsa that I don't understand how the migrants in France manage to cover their rent, send money home, pay for a wife, their return ticket, reimburse those who paid their journey, and…Hamsa stops me; he says he once talked to a migrant who had returned after three or four years in Paris: "He said that those who have been in France will not enter Paradise. Because they do not even have time to pray. Maybe they sleep only two hours. They cannot even turn in their beds; there is no space because they are packed so close. The work there is so hard". I ask Hamsa if all the boys here in the village know that. "Yes, of course they do! Their fathers and brothers who are working up there they tell them". I say I thought the migrants did not want their families to know what they are doing in France. But Hamsa says the youngsters here in the village are being prepared for the hard work they will do in Paris: "This is why we work so hard every day. You will never rest. Your whole life you will be tired. From when you start working till the day you die."

However, my informants considered the hardship and low status associated with certain jobs easier to endure in a foreign environment where people's opinion did not matter as much as the profit one could make performing these jobs. This explains why the young men in Kounda had no problem working as temporary labour migrants in Senegal, while they considered the local equivalent, the bourobonda, humiliating. Different rules apply when one is abroad. The endurance of migrant labour is hence conceptualised as a necessary liminal phase in the lives of Soninke men. This logic has informed the organisation of Soninke migration since the times of slavery, when young Soninke men endured slave-like labour as migrants, motivated by to the prospect of returning home and eventually, attaining a higher social position.

Moreover, when leaving his familiar place, the Soninke migrant enters a place where he has no social obligations and therefore, he is free to partake in commercial

activities and accumulate wealth. In the words of Kounda's President of Commerce: "As a foreigner, you have no expenses, because you are not at home"[19]. This foreign place where one is not "at home" is the destination of Soninke migrants - i.e. tunga. On a symbolic level, the migrant who goes abroad exits the sphere of familiarity and affection, and enters one of interest. This transition from familiar to foreign is, as noted above, reflected in a bodily transformation: Since the migrant can accumulate money and does not have to spend it on other people, he can afford to take better care of his body and be more indulgent, and so the migrant does not appear as "worn-out" as he does in the village.

The notions that informed what I have called the 'stranger logic' were also invoked by Soninke villagers to justify the presence of Soninke migrants in French society. This first of all meant that their only scope as immigrants there was to earn money and later return to their place of origin. Aspiring migrants in Kounda emphasised the fact that they had no intentions of "bothering" the French by staying there permanently. They just wanted to go there temporarily and later return to the village. One middle-aged Soninke villager took great effort in convincing me that, "We do not go to France to become bandits. We simply want to make a living"[20]. Migrants who had severed their ties with their kin in Kounda and Soninke children who were born and raised in French society were considered "lost".

Moreover, according to villagers' 'stranger logic', France, like any society, needs strangers. My informants referred to the fact that immigrant workers helped reconstruct France after the war and make it what it is today, and referred to the welcoming of guest workers in the 1960s; and especially the young men argued that there was a continued availability of unskilled jobs in service and construction. The 'stranger logic' thus explained the Soninkes' presence as labour migrants in France.

Informed by this logic, my young male informants could not see why they should not be allowed to enter France: They needed to go there temporarily in order to generate

---

[19] In French: "*Comme étranger tu n'a pas des charges, parce que tu n'es pas chez-toi*".

[20] One Soninke informant in Bamako told me that one of the clans of the Soninke aristocracy is known to have initiated the first criminal immigrant network in France. Moreover, the Soninke sailors in Marseille are known to have been highly involved in international smuggling (Manchuelle 1997:202-203). My informant in Kounda might implicitly have been arguing against these negative stereotypes of Soninke migrants.

what they could not obtain locally and France needed its 'strangers' and therefore, the obvious thing to do would be to welcome the Soninke immigrants. On a few occasions, I caught myself trying to explain the neo-liberal world order that impeded the mobility of these young men, only leaving myself and my informants even more frustrated and mystified.

The Local Meaning of Migration

The previous section focused on structural aspects of Soninke society contributing to the reproduction of the Soninke 'culture of migration'. In the following section, I will explore the local meaning of migration, by focusing on the practices and ideas that generate 'migration culture' in everyday life in the village. I will examine various levels of villagers' social interactions, to show why migration is central to the expected and desired life trajectory of Soninke men. Throughout the analysis, I will illustrate and discuss how involuntary immobility affects these levels of social interaction, often posing as a socially destabilising condition. This paper only examines the levels of the community and interpersonal interaction, while my thesis (Jonsson 2007) also covers cosmology and participation in global flows as central to understanding the meaning of migration in Kounda.

Migrants as Community Patrons

The economy of the village of Kounda can be described as "assisted self-sufficiency", as farming is complemented by migrants' remittances (cf. Quiminal 1991). The money migrants send to their relatives in Kounda is indispensable to the survival of most households in the village. According to my household survey, migrant remittances cover half of the annual consumption of an average local household. The yearly amount of money sent by Malian emigrants exceeds 100million Euros, of which at least 50million Euros is sent by Malians who reside in France (Muurling 2005:178). Moreover, the communal projects funded by migrants have done much to develop the local infrastructure. The Malian government and NGOs are conspicuously absent in Kayes, where most development projects are partially or entirely funded by emigrants (cf. Daum 1995, Gauvrit & Le Bahers 2004). The poor Malian State is obviously relieved by the self-sufficiency of the Kayes region. But many of the Kayes

villagers I spoke with were resentful of the State, which they felt had abandoned them[21]. In Kayes, the migrants act as substitutes for the State.

The young men in Kounda wanted to follow the migrants' examples by financing projects in the village. As migrants, they wanted to "realiser quelques choses"[22] in the village – i.e. to make a difference by starting a project or constructing something in Kounda. Generally, migrants' communal projects in the village were not just "white elephants"; they had significantly augmented the living standards and welfare of local villagers. Without their migrants' money, the Kayes region would be as destitute as the rest of Mali, since the poor and weak Malian State – in one of the poorest countries in the world – has little capacity to make a difference for its rural inhabitants. In an analytical sense, the migrants in France could therefore be perceived of as Homerian heroes, who venture off to sacrifice themselves on behalf of their communities, as they accept the risks and hardships of migrant life. Migration is therefore related to a sense of moral responsibility towards the community where a young Soninke man grows up.

However, presiding over the means and the authority to define local development also endows migrants with significant local power. Migrants' money transfers to Kounda were therefore perceived by some villagers as symbolic acts demonstrating the migrants' wealth and power. This came up during a conversation one day, when I sat with one of Kounda's only native traders in his shop together with his old friend, who had retired about twenty years earlier, after a decade of migrant labour in Paris. The two elderly men complained that the migrants in France should stop sending people pocket-money and instead, simply transfer one large sum, so that the villagers could buy a tractor and become self-sufficient. Another middle aged man, Issa, complained that the locals were never consulted when the migrants' representative came to the village to define new communal projects. Issa's brother had constructed a large communal garden in the village with the help of an American organisation; but the migrants had never even come to see it.

---

[21] One villager said the State ought to compensate Kayes for the good job they did developing their region. Cf. Daum 1995 (especially pp.31-36) on migrants as the primary agents of development in Kayes.
[22] In English this means "to do/achieve something".

It was mainly elderly villagers and ex-migrants who sometimes insinuated that migrants were serving their own interests in the village, boosting their power and prestige through communal projects. However, these complaints reflect the situation as seen purely from these villagers' perspective. From the migrants' perspective, the accusation of hidden social and political interests as the motivation for communal projects might not seem fair. Indeed, the paradox about Soninke migrants' communal projects is that less and less of these migrants end up returning and settling in their village. Hence, they never appear to actually reap the benefits of their local investments.

Generally, the migrants preferred to determine themselves what they would finance. The division of responsibility was reflected in a local expression, where villagers said that, "The migrants are the head, we are the arms". This implied that the migrants would come up with the ideas and the financing, while the villagers supplied the necessary manual labour to carry out a project. This division of roles was not always beneficial. For example, although villagers' main priority remained the acute need for drinking water, the migrants were more interested in funding the construction of a new mosque.

From a social-scientific point of view, the phenomenon of giving is not purely altruistic. It also contains elements of interest, utilitarianism and, ultimately, power (Bourdieu 1996 and 1997, Levi-Strauss 1969, Sahlins 1972). In Soninke society, gift-giving has historically shaped the local power structures (Manchuelle 1989a and 1997, Pollet & Winter 1971). Since pre-colonial times, clientage has been the basis of power in Soninke society. Wealthy patrons would reward the artisans, *griots*[23], and *marabouts*[24], who performed services for them, by giving gifts and protection. Symbolically, this made them part of the patron's family, but the relation in fact turned them into the patron's dependent clients (Manchuelle 1997:17). Gifts to clients (particularly to *griots*) demonstrated the wealth and generosity of the donors, thereby establishing their status as patrons (ibid:18).

---

[23] The term *griot* refers to endogamous groups of musicians, public speakers, and oral historians (cf. Schulz 1997, Skinner 2004).
[24] *Marabouts* are Islamic teachers and spiritual counsellors, as well as traditional religious clerics of the Soninke nobility.

Migrants' donations towards communal projects in Kounda contain the central paradox of gift-giving as both altruistic and interested. Villagers' relations to the charitable migrants somewhat resembles a system of clientage. Migrants' donations render them as patrons and villagers their clients. The development and maintenance of local infrastructure depends on villagers maintaining good social relations with their migrant kin. This might partly explain why villagers construct an image of absent migrants as full members of the local society: By emphasising the social tie between villagers and migrants, villagers ensure the continued loyalty of the migrants and nurture migrants' sense of social obligation towards the village.

However, the transnational system of 'clientage' is probably more profitable to villagers than to the migrants. Although the status as a patron is prestigious for a Soninke man, it also entails great financial burdens, since villagers (especially women and children/youth) who relate to the migrants as their patrons, constantly ask them for money. So even if some villagers see migrants as sorts of dictators, who unilaterally determine local development, most villagers certainly benefit economically from their position of dependence.

Yet, as my elderly informants pointed out, this position of dependence is not necessarily for "the greater good" of the local society, especially in the current context of immobility. It should be noted that migrants' communal projects did not significantly increase local productivity or create jobs. A cynical interpretation of this could be that the migrants were constructing their own retirement village, geared for consumption and leisure. To the elderly men, migrants' apparent disregard of the authority and self-determination of local villagers threatened to destabilise the power-balance between the local community and migrants, giving migrants the upper hand in the management of village affairs. This constituted a social problem, since men who did not migrate did not have the authority to define or influence communal projects. With the new generation of men who are unable to migrate to France, Kounda's symbolic status in the transnational exchange relations with migrants in France might change from that of an authoritarian elderly to a dependent minor. They will be alienated from local decision-making, which is relegated to the diaspora in France. Most of the young men in the village therefore maintained the hope of being able to

emigrate, aspiring to attain this position of authority and become "community patrons".

Reciprocity, Status and Belonging in Interpersonal Relations

As a form of livelihood, migration to the Soninke is not only a matter of earning the daily bread, but relates broadly to the social construction of the ideal life (cf. Olwig & Sørensen 2002). Migration is considered to be central to the process of 'social becoming' of a young Soninke man, defined by Vigh as "a movement along an expected and desired life trajectory" (cf. Vigh 2006a). In the following I will describe and analyse the 'culture of migration' in Kounda, which renders migration a normal part of the life course of Soninke men (cf. Kandel and Massey 2002).

Based on the experiences of previous generations of Soninke men, villagers in Kounda generally consider (male) youth as a stage within a larger generational trajectory, a category defined by its position within an intergenerational process of becoming (cf. Vigh 2006b:34). To become a mature adult, a young man was, and is, expected to detach himself from his local family and venture out to seek the means to establish a family of his own, and then later "re-attach" himself to the local family. In Kounda, migration has traditionally facilitated this process of social becoming and the village has constituted the centre, around which the ideal life cycle of a Soninke man revolves. This ideal life trajectory can be illustrated with the following model:

TIME:	Childhood	Youth	Adulthood	Old age
PLACE:	Village	Abroad	Village/Abroad	Village

Youth is considered a period of liminality, detached from everyday village life. Migration is the socially sanctioned strategy, whereby a young man can detach himself from his family and become an independent, mature individual. Hence, to the Soninke villagers, 'being on *aventure*' implies 'being on the path to adulthood', and migration can therefore be considered a 'rite of passage' for young men. Despite their physical absence, migrants residing in France overcome the liminal stage of youth as they "re-attach" themselves to the local families, making their presence felt through social and economic bonds with their families in the village. And even if a Soninke

migrant does not physically return to the village in his own life-time, the ideal life cycle is still completed, when the corpse of the dead migrant is transported from France back to the village[25].

Working as a migrant and sending back remittances not only enhances a young man's social status in the village. It also allows him to return the gestures of affection to his family, who has reared him and thereby, complete the cycle that Sahlins (1972) refers to as 'generalised reciprocity', where mothers who nurture their children have their efforts returned at old age, when their children support them. The young men in Kounda felt obliged to their families and felt a strong moral imperative to support their parents. Although virtually all the young men I interviewed wanted to emigrate, all of them without exception expressed an ideal of returning to their natal village at some point because, "This is where your family is".

But like all other forms of social exchange, reciprocity between parents and their children is not simply based on pure affection, but involves matters of interest[26]. In Kounda, working for one's family and contributing to the household economy is not just an expression of affection; it is also a very concrete expectation in Soninke families. Several of my young male informants claimed that, "If you don't have money, even your own mother does not love you"[27]. Giving money was part of the relations that ensured an intimate tie to one's mother. Rather than being biologically determined, motherly affection depended on the sons maintaining an active relationship of exchange. Kinship in this sense is not considered a fixed position, but is a constant process of becoming, determined by the kinds of exchange relations that exist between family members (cf. Carsten 1995). Relatedness in the Soninke family is not confined to a biological or physical bond, but is constituted in much broader

---

[25] Returning the corpses of migrants in France is a common practice and members of the Soninke migrant community in France are obliged to contribute to a funeral fund, which pays for the transport and burial of dead migrants back in Kounda. The establishment of this fund was one of the first communal initiatives of the Soninke migrants in France. Whitehouse writes that in the Malian Soninke village Togotala, the ideal life cycle of a migrants can also be completed by his offspring: "Migration trajectories do not always come full circle within an individual migrant's lifetime; those that do not are often completed by the migrant's children, who, having been born abroad, will return to Togotala for a period of their youth before going out on their own migratory journeys" (Whitehouse 2003:49).
[26] For example, a mother nurturing her children is likely to also nurture a sense of indebtedness in her children and thus secure their future loyalty and support.
[27] This is partly due to the rivalry between co-wives in polygamous Soninke families: women wanted their sons to succeed economically and to support the household, in order to "outdo" their co-wives and their children, and thus gain the attention and affection of the husband.

terms, including neighbours, friends, and absent migrants. This partly explains why generalised reciprocity was practiced not only within the family, but between co-villagers too. It also explains why migrants, despite their physical absence, are conceived of as full members of the local family: Through their remittances, phone calls or visits, they maintain a social and economic presence, and by maintaining an active exchange relation with their family, they remain members of it (cf. Olwig 1999). In the words of one villager, "The migrants complete us".

A man's position in the Soninke family is related to the nature of his exchange relations with the family. Household heads were considered in charge of the family economy. Therefore, if younger members of the household were in possession of money, they were expected to hand it over to their seniors and could only keep a small portion for themselves. I discussed this with a group of young men, who complained about their inferior position: "We cannot save up money for ourselves. Our fathers here depend on us, and we have to work for the family as long as we are living with them. It is not possible to work just for yourself; you have to give everything to dad!" The young men in Kounda had an ambiguous position towards the local ethos of sharing: On the one hand, they themselves relied upon it, as they had not yet established their own independent households. On the other hand, it inhibited their ability to accumulate capital for themselves. To escape the impeding webs of social obligations, the young men had a tactic of slipping off to the big Malian cities (Kayes or Bamako) to spend money on themselves; or to Senegal or the Gambia, where they worked to save up a small sum. Migration was a socially sanctioned strategy for exiting the impeding gift economy, solving what scholars have referred to as 'the entrepreneur's social dilemma', which Whitehouse defines as, "the conundrum confronting those who seek to accumulate wealth without completely cutting themselves off from their greatest source of support, their kin networks" (Whitehouse 2007:142; cf. Hart 1975 in Whitehouse 2007).

Migration is ideally what turns a boy into a man. Migration and generally, mobility, is integral to the hegemonic masculinity in Kounda. 'Hegemonic masculinity' refers to the form of masculinity dominant in society, and which bestows power and privilege on men who espouse it (Morrell 1998:607-608). In Kounda, hegemonic masculinity entails the freedom of mobility, and this is one of the distinguishing features between

the two genders in the village. Soninke women are to a large extent fixed inside the household, while men are outside moving between the field and other tasks, both within and beyond the village, and partaking in public life. The men who did not migrate and remained economically dependent on their kin were considered as immature youngsters. Particularly the women expressed great contempt of non-migrants, and referred to them with a derogatory term, '*tenes*'. This is a Soninke adjective that means 'being stuck like glue', 'unable to move'. In the mid-1990s, two women from Kounda broadcast a song about the '*Tenesy*', denouncing non-migrants as parasites with nothing to offer their families and undesirable to women. By characterising non-migrants as immature, cowardly, lazy and selfish, the song reproduces the conceptual link between migration and the status as an adult male, and construes non-migration as an immoral choice. When the *Tenesy*-song was made popular by a local radio station, the village chief forbid the derogatory use of the word *tenes* and fined villagers who sang the song. But today, "*tenes*" has become a vernacular term denoting non-migrants, and its connotation is more joking than humiliating. The perception of non-migrants in the village has changed in the past ten years. When I asked women about their view on immobile men, they saw their situation as pitiful rather than immoral. Hence, non-migration is now conceptualised as an involuntary, forced condition. This however, does not make it more attractive.

Unable to migrate, the young men's possibilities of reaching and sustaining a position as providers were slight. I therefore sometimes witnessed how generalised reciprocity within the family and between close friends turned into negative reciprocity, when villagers would want something for nothing (cf. Sahlins 1972:195). However, it was not only the non-migration of village youth that undermined interpersonal relations but also the migrants' difficulties to return to the village. Ideally, the oldest migrated son of a household is supposed to return to the village at old age and take over the position as household head from his father. In turn, the younger brothers in the village are then expected to leave on *aventure*, representing a new generation of migrant breadwinners to the local household. However, this system of exchange is disintegrating due to involuntary immobility. A group of young men explained that their brothers in France had trouble returning to the village, either because they had no money or because they were residing illegally in France. "Our brothers in Paris are so tired. They say we must come and replace them there; but we can't go!"

The Being and Becoming of Youth in the Context of Immobility

In this section, I will show the strategies that the young men apply to make meaning out of non-migration and analyse how they construct their identities without migration. Youth in Kounda is not merely positioned by others; they also position themselves (cf. Christiansen, Utas & Vigh 2006:11). I will first give the example of a young man who pursues the intergenerational trajectory of social becoming by acquiring skills that can lead to forms of livelihood not based on the tradition of migration. I will then move on to analyse how young men's negotiation of their social identity manifested itself in a much more fundamental conflict, which concerned the position of adolescent men in the village vis-à-vis other generations. The practices and ideals of groups of young immobile men in Kounda contest the conventional conception of youth and challenge the dominant society to consider youth as not merely a 'becoming', but a 'being' (cf. Vigh 2004; Christiansen, Utas & Vigh 2006).

Pursuing a Local Livelihood

Migration still forms part of the ideal life trajectory envisioned for a young Soninke man. Most villagers could not comprehend that a young man might not want to migrate; they usually attributed this to the fact that he could not migrate. Adult men, who complained about the delinquency of village youth, also claimed that the youth would "come round" once they left on *aventure*. Such expectations entailed that villagers showed little support for, or interest in, the projects the young men were pursuing in the village. Attending school, playing soccer, or composing music were just considered pastimes and not potential life-making projects. While a number of young men were learning a trade, like mechanics, tailoring and carpentry, these careers were not considered attractive.

Simbala was a twenty-two year old mechanic apprentice. Although this could secure him financially, he was not entirely excited about the prospect of earning a meagre income in his natal village. The narrative that linked manhood and migration made his career seem like a poor compromise. "If you stay here in the village you will not progress, but always be the same person, even in ten years", he told me one day, as

we sat talking at his workshop under a big tree, while he was fixing a radio. "If I find the occasion to go, I will hand you this radio and be on my way!" Simbala's father had never left the village and, possibly to compensate for his own failed ambitions, he wanted Simbala to go on *aventure*. Simbala had gone to school for three years. "Back then, I didn't know that school was a good thing or that it could help me in life; but now, I have regretted leaving". When he left school he had nothing to do and he did not want to ask his relatives for money all the time. Since then, he started doing mechanics. "The other boys here can count on their brothers in France to send them things, so they are not working. My brothers send something once in a while, but that cannot continue. If I keep asking them, one day they will say 'merde!' and they will be fed up."

Simbala recognised that his chances of going abroad were so slim, he had to opt for another career: "This is what we have realised today, that you have to learn a trade. I don't try to go on *aventure*, because I do not have the means". Since Simbala was busy acquiring the means to establish an independent livelihood, he was on the path of social becoming. He was pursuing the kind of livelihood that he could realistically sustain. But this form of livelihood did not conform to the hegemonic masculinity, where a young man should actively distance himself from his local kin and, ideally, go abroad. This distinguished him from his male peers, who clearly contested the authority of their parents. From Simbala's perspective, these young men were engaged in counter-productive activities. Yet, in the light of the dominant narrative on migration and manhood, Simbala himself was just as socially impaired, as he was engaged in a local livelihood and still attached to his parents. Hence, the ideal life trajectory is clearly being jeopardised when a young man cannot migrate. The local society enforces the image of a "real man" as equal to being a wealthy migrant, but the young men cannot sustain this ideal.

The Space of Youth

In Kounda, young men do seek to adhere to the commonly accepted trajectory of life, which renders youth as just a transitory stage which is not in itself something to aspire for. But they also seek to challenge this hegemonic discourse of social becoming by claiming their own space and time. Hence, 'youth' as a form of 'being' is gradually

emerging as an emic[28] category, which means that Kounda villagers are starting to acknowledge youth as a particular type of identity that is distinct from other forms of being.

During the heyday of migration to France, 'male youth' did not exist in the village, partly because most of those who could be considered young had left on *aventure*. But today, male youth is present in Kounda, constituting what Schulz (2002) aptly refers to as a "generation-in-waiting"[29] – some literally waiting to obtain the visa to go abroad but also, awaiting the passage to adulthood that was traditionally secured by migration. As these young men sit and "wait", they socialise in groups that resemble the traditional age sets.

In Kounda, institutionalised age sets for adolescents (*īre*) have existed since pre-colonial times. These age sets have always had their own separate quarters apart from their families, where the members would sleep. One of the main purposes of the *īre*, which is still relevant, was that the groups could be mobilised by the village chief for communal purposes (e.g. to dig a well, construct buildings or roads, or put out fires) (cf. Pollet & Winter 1971). In the 1960s, Pollet & Winter (ibid) observed that, although the *īre* still existed, villagers did not consider their public function significant and they became mainly a form of socialising. The increasing migration to France since the 1960s probably reduced the significance of the *īre*: Members were separated by large geographical distances for very long periods of time, and means of communication and transport were lacking. However, in 1989[30], Kounda witnessed a revival of the traditional age set and 'youth culture' with the introduction of a group (or *grin*) called "Mickey Black Paul". This group was founded by young villagers, who had spent time in urban milieus and who were inspired by the kind of male

---

[28] 'Emic' refers to the perspective of the insider - in this case informants in Kounda - while its antonym 'etic' refers to the perspective of the outsider, like the anthropologist. Cf. footnote 14 for further definition.

[29] Schulz uses this term to refer to urban Malian youth, observing that, "they wait not only for achieving a status of adulthood, but for parental support and for the state's creation of the very conditions that would enable them to become full grown members of the social and political community" (ibid:806).

[30] This date is not arbitrary, and I suppose it could be related to certain political events at the time. One suggestion is the effects of the visa restrictions that France imposed in 1986, which made it even more difficult for young Soninke men to legally pursue the path of migration; another possibility is the transition to democracy in Mali in the early 1990s, which may have inspired village youth to contest the traditional authorities.

socialising known today all over Mali as the *grin* (cf. Schulz 2002). The *grin* refers to a group of male friends, who meet regularly to socialise, often in a particular location, where they drink tea, listen to music, play cards, or discuss[31]. The *grin* in Kounda is in many ways a re-invention of the *īre*. Meanwhile, the emphasis on leisure and consumption distinguishes the *grin* from the *īre*, and while the members of the *īre* appear to only have used their rooms to sleep in, young men in Kounda today often spend the entire day with their *grin*.

Today, there are more than forty of these *grins* in Kounda. I interviewed members of eleven different *grins*. They had between seven and eighteen members at the ages of eighteen to twenty-five. Most young men had never attended school or had dropped out after a few years. On average, about half of the *grin* members had either migrated to another country or left for Kayes or Bamako for a longer period, usually to "look for the visa". Young men gradually move out of the rooms of the *grin* as they get married or when they migrate. When someone has decided to migrate, he often informs his *grin* – even if he does not tell his family that he is leaving – and the *grin* might arrange a little farewell party. Migrated members stay in touch with their *grin* and regularly send money, photos, or gifts such as tea or cigarettes to their *grin*. Members sometimes leave together on *aventure*, or a migrated member might help finance another member's *aventure*. Abroad, the *grin* members might also support each other.

Right from its inception, the *grin* culture was in opposition to the local authorities and older generations. Today in Kounda, the grins would regularly throw parties and play music at night. At such occasions, young women frequently showed up and sneaked into one of the bedrooms with a *grin* member, to have a quick intimate moment. Most girls had a secret boyfriend, but these relationships became very complicated when the young girls were married, usually at the age of fourteen. The prominence of such intimate pre-marital relations was new to Kounda, and a modern discourse of romance set the youth apart from senior generations in the village. Young men's rivalries over girlfriends often became violent and, moreover, an increasing number of young,

---

[31] The *grin* appears to be mainly an urban phenomenon and normally the *grin* members, who might be adult males with families of their own, do not share living space. Despite this, my observations in Kounda seem to contradict the claim by Schulz (2002:811 n.31) that the *grin* does not have a rural equivalent in Mali.

unmarried girls had recently become pregnant. The village chief was concerned about this situation and as he took office in 2006, he therefore decided to ban all music in the village – even at weddings or baptisms. Bobo, a twenty-year old man, commented on this decision:

> "The youth is too bothered here; even the cocks are better off! We can't play the tam-tam [music]; the chief is against everything that the young people do. Before he was installed a year ago, everything was better. Now if you party, even in secret, and someone sees you, they will go and tell, and then they come and stop the party. I am really annoyed! I don't even want to stay one more hour here!"

I discussed this with a few men in their early thirties. They said the youth would normally organise to protest such outrageous decisions by the chief; but the youth of Kounda were not mobilised, they bemoaned. Indeed, it was more friction than collaboration that marked the relations between the different *grins* in the village. The young men had little respect for the traditional authorities, and fights could therefore become rather severe. I was told that some young men received teargas from their brothers in France, which they used against their rivals. Towards the end of my fieldwork, one young man stabbed his cousin to death in broad daylight. Drama of this scale had never been witnessed before in Kounda, and all villagers, many of whom were related to the young men, attended a big public prayer held just before the funeral.

While the youth generally blamed this tension on the influence of conservative villagers, some villagers in their early thirties saw the problem as due to boredom and a lack of cohesion. One of them was Bongana, a man in his thirties who had recently returned from France. There, he and the other young migrants from Kounda had defied the older migrants, who dominated decision making, and had pooled their own resources to build a sports stadium for the youth in the village. Back in Kounda, Bongana managed to mobilise the village youth and in December 2006, he led a procession to the village chief, demanding the un-banning of music. He was elected the 'chief of the youth' and I interviewed him in this capacity. He explained:

> "The youth of today are not properly organised, so the chief succeeds in destroying their initiatives […] Today there are more young men in the village

than before, youngsters who cannot go on *aventure*. They are hanging around, bored, because there is nothing to do. The rain usually does not last more than three months. There are no industries here where the youth can work. The government has done nothing here! If the French do not want us to go there, then they must come here and help us. We have to find the means for the youth to work. The youth is the misery."

Bongana was drawing upon democratic principles to contest the marginal social position of youth in the conservative village society. But youth was generally not considered as 'a being' in its own right. To mobilise the adolescent men as one cohesive group would therefore require a reconfiguration of youth from a liminal, transitional phase into that of a social category with potential to develop agency.

The *grins* had the capacity to provoke this social transformation of youth. Here, young men practiced their own version of 'youth culture' and this set them apart from the surrounding local community. The *grins* would often listen to hip hop and reggae music and the walls of their sleeping chambers were plastered with posters of Afro-American music and film stars. Some of the young men had nick-names that they had taken from famous rap stars, such as '2Pac', 'Snoop Dogg' or 'Puff Daddy', and at parties they often performed with innovative dance moves or self-composed rap music. Through these practices, the young men created what the anthropologist Michael Barrett calls 'spaces of freedom', which refers to moments of freedom from the constraints of their elders, and places where young people can exercise certain types of agency that are at odds with, or lead to alternative versions of, personhood as understood by their elders (cf. Barrett 2004:32). The space of the *grin*, the local youth parties, the practice of rap music and dance, and the young men's romances are examples of such 'spaces of freedom'. They attest to an emerging 'youth culture' in Kounda, where 'youth' is gradually consolidating itself as an intra-generational position, rather than an undesirable stage of marginality and transition.

Male Youth in an Imagined World

Parallel to this portrayal of a modern youth rebellion in Kounda, the local 'youth culture' could also be considered as an imaginary substitute for migration. From this perspective, the young men's involvement with Afro-American popular culture reflected their aspiration for community in an imagined world (cf. Appadurai 1996,

Frederiksen 2002). As immobile villagers, they were cut off from the global community to which they aspired and their experience of globalisation was confined to a local appropriation of urban and Western forms and practices. But these cultural dimensions of globalisation could not compensate for the young men's lacking economic opportunities (cf. Ferguson 2006).

The young men in Kounda shared a sense of restlessness and said they wanted to make "fast" money and "big" money. Gessouma was a twenty-six year old who only knew the first half of the alphabet and who had already passed the age when a young man should leave the village and start making a living. Once, as we sat talking in his *grin*, I told him that starting a career and saving up money takes time. Gessouma got up restlessly, shook his body and looked at me saying, in Soninke: "I don't have a calm spirit! I think too much of money. Of BIG money". Gessouma and I later became good friends and one late evening, coming back from a trip to Bamako, I gave him a cap that I had bought for him in the city. Gessouma was delighted to receive the gift; yet he and his friends immediately pulled out a torch to check the label inside the cap, to see what brand it was (but there was none, it was just bought from a street vendor). A local salary could hardly meet the consumerist desires of these young men.

Through consumption, young involuntarily immobile men in Kounda transcended their sense of dependency upon their kin and the local subsistence economy. But these were still the structures that supported the young men. Therefore, when young men withdrew from the exchange relations practiced between local villagers, their surrounding community experienced their behaviour as a negative reciprocity, since the young men retired to consume without contributing and sometimes even stole from other villagers. This explains why senior generations and visiting migrants, who were economically in charge of the local households, expressed contempt of the *grins*, and considered them spaces of delinquency and laziness.

The aspiration to consume above the local means was expressed in many ways, including a conspicuous form of consumption, where the display of consumer objects was valued just as much as the actual consumption of these objects. In line with James Ferguson (2006), I would argue that the Soninke villagers' "longing for goods" signals a longing for membership in an imagined global community, where capital,

people, goods and information flow freely and instantly across borders. Consumption in Kounda is an attempt to hook on to the global community; but the villagers only succeed in so far as they become part of an imagined community of global consumers. The immobile villagers' only claim to global connection is thus their appropriation of Western goods and forms (cf. Ferguson 2006). But these cultural dimensions of globalisation do not lead to the form of globalisation that they most desire: To be unimpeded by international borders, to take advantage of the global economic market and basically, to have the possibility of creating a livelihood that is not confined to a local subsistence life.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have shown how young Soninke men's aspirations to migrate relate to structural and cultural features of Soninke society, and how their current situation of involuntary immobility affects their social interactions and social becoming.

Since medieval times, migration has been an integral feature of Soninke society, not merely as a subsistence strategy, but as a means of accumulating wealth and power. Several dimensions of the current structure of Soninke society are reflected in their migration history. The structure and history of Soninke society has produced what I have described as a "stranger logic", which entails that strangers are an indispensable part of society; that the experience of strangerhood is integral to the trajectory of life; and that strangers are socially marginalised, but this marginal position is a privilege in terms of accumulating economic profit. To the Soninke, the point of migration is to profit from one's position as a 'stranger'. Migration is a socially sanctioned strategy to exit the impeding local gift economy, and migrant labour is considered a necessary liminal phase where profit is more important than social status. My explication of this local 'stranger logic' might contribute to furthering the understanding of migrants' relations to their host societies and their conceptions of the notion of "integration".

Transnational social and economic exchanges and villagers' connections to the world of global flows give meaning to their local existence and shape their notions of the good life; hence, the ideal life trajectory of a Soninke man involves migration, which facilitates his social becoming in Soninke society. The villagers' constant exchanges

with migrants ensure that the local society and imagined community of the Soninke persists; that even absent members of the community are integrated; and that society maintains a positive dynamic and coherency. My analysis showed how immobility destabilised these social interactions and meaning. The examples I have given here showed that immobility alienated the diaspora from the village, thus jeopardising villagers' sense of self-determination and their involvement in decision-making and local development. Immobility also undermined interpersonal relations and impaired the social becoming of young men.

In the context of involuntary immobility, one strategy of social becoming was for young men to pursue alternative forms of livelihood that were not based on migration. According to my observations, there were hardly any communities in the village that could facilitate upward social mobility. Parents were not supportive of schooling, as they were more concerned with maintaining the generational hierarchy and imposing their authority upon younger family members[32]. Moreover, villagers showed little support for or interest in the projects or forms of livelihood that young men were pursuing in the village. Finally, the young men were influenced by hegemonic masculinity, which linked manhood and migration, and they wanted to signal that they were pursuing the ideal life trajectory and therefore, they resorted to "waiting" for mobility. But the ideal of a migrant livelihood could not be sustained by the young men. Another reaction to immobility was then to contest dominant notions of youth and social becoming. The *grins* in Kounda nurtured a form of youth rebellion, which had the potential to transform youth from a socially marginal and transitional position into an intra-generational category with collective agentive capacity. But the local youth culture also reflected young men's aspiration for community in an imagined world, which they could not physically access. They withdrew from the local community and resorted to a form of consumption, which other community members experienced as a negative reciprocity. Consumption was the young men's ways of exploring and connecting with "the world", but this experience of globalisation did not lead to geographic or socio-economic mobility.

---

[32] In his study of the activities of Malian migrant associations, Daum notes several other factors that might explain the Soninke villagers' resistance to schooling: "*L'introduction de l'école au village rencontre en fait des resistances importantes, qui sont de plusieurs orders: relation à l'idéologie, rapport à l'administration, rapport aux travail rural, mode d'éducation, rapports de pouvoir liés au savoir enfin*" (Daum 1998:128).

On the basis of the analyses I have put forward in this paper, I propose two overall conclusions. Firstly, the lives of young Soninke men in Kounda are marked by transnational exchanges at encompassing levels of social interaction and meaning; migration has been an indispensable feature of the Soninke society and the ideal life trajectory of men, and these are prominent reasons why young Soninke men aspire to migrate. The "migration culture" I have described here might be one of the reasons why it is so difficult to "manage" migration from a political perspective. Migration is a structural feature of Soninke society and an essential part of peoples' livelihoods and shared ideals of the good life; this could be part of the explanation why restrictive immigration policies have not stopped South-North flows but instead, appear to have made migration more risky involving increasing human and economic costs.

This establishment leads to my second overall conclusion, which is that the immobility of young Soninke men contributes to a current social crisis. The immobility of young Soninke men negatively affects the social system, both undermining various levels of social interaction and meaning, and complicating the young men's construction of meaningful livelihoods and social identities. The analysis shows how members of the Soninke society currently grapple with accommodating immobility, mainly led by the activities and ideals of young men in the village. It remains to be seen whether immobility will lead to further social decline and an escalated crisis or rather, to new forms and meanings of livelihood and identity. Despite the social crisis and the hegemonic "migration culture" in the village, youngsters in Kounda are inventing new cultural practices, and these do not rely entirely upon the ideal of migration.

This paper also contributes to social-scientific theorising about migration and development. Firstly, I have highlighted the ideas and practices that generate migration culture in everyday life, and the experience of transnationalism in migrants' place of origin. These are aspects of migration which tend to be overlooked. Secondly, I have analysed a theoretically novel and under-examined aspect of migration dynamics, namely involuntary immobility. This study challenges the common assumption that immobility is normal and unproblematic and renders support to the 'livelihoods approach' that considers migration on a par with other livelihood

strategies, and not an abnormal rupture in normal sedentary life. Thirdly, my focus on the barriers to international migration and socio-economic mobility in the global South draws attention to an inherent feature of the contemporary neo-liberal world order, which particularly anthropologists have sorely neglected in their studies of globalisation, as they have been more caught up with its "connecting" dimensions and cultural issues of resistance and appropriation.

Finally, this paper has illustrated how large scale global realities are embedded in concrete life worlds. Young Soninke men experience life globally, as their everyday is defined by both transnationalism and immobility. Not only migrants live transnational lives; so do the people living in the migrants' place of origin. But this does not mean that they participate on equal terms in the world of global flows. Globalisation is not merely defined by networks – real or imagined – but also by a hierarchy of mobility (cf. Carling 2002, Bauman 1998). This paper highlights both of these aspects of globalisation and shows that, while villagers' enmeshment in global networks reinforces young men's migration aspirations, it makes the experience of immobility the more frustrating.

References

Appadurai, A.1996. *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.

Barrett, Michael. 2004. *Paths To Adulthood. Freedom, Belonging and Temporalities in Mbunda Biographies from Western Zambia*, pp.1-37. Sweden: Uppsala University Library.

Bauman, Z. 1998. *Globalization - The Human Consequences*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Berking, H. 1999. "The Phenomenology of Gift-Giving". In: Berking, H. *The Sociology of Giving*, pp. 1-31. London: Sage Publications.

Bourdieu, P.1996. "The Work of Time". In: Komter, A.E. (ed). *The Gift: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*, pp. 135-147. The Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press.

Bourdieu, P. 1997. "Marginalia – Some Additional Notes on The Gift". In: Schrift, A.D. (ed). *The Logic of the Gift*. New York, London: Routledge.

Brettell, C.B. 2000. "Theorizing Migration in Anthropology". In: Brettell, C.B. & Hollifield, J. (eds). *Migration Theory: Talking Across Disciplines*, pp. 97-135. New York: Routledge.

Carling, Jørgen. 2001. "Aspiration and Ability in International Migration. Cape Verdean experiences of mobility and immobility". Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the cand.polit. degree in Human Geography, Department of Sociology and Human Geography, University of Oslo.

----2002. "Migration in the age of involuntary immobility". *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 28(1): pp.5-42.

Carsten, Janet. 1995. "The Substance of Kinship and the Heat of the Hearth: Feeding, Personhood, and Relatedness among Malays in Pulau Langkawi". *American Ethnologist*, 22(2): pp. 223-241.

Chastanet, M. 1992. "Survival Strategies of a Sahelian Society: The Case of the Soninke in Senegal from the Middle of the Nineteenth Century to the Present". *Food and Foodways*, 5(2): pp.127-149.

Christiansen, C., Utas, M & Vigh, H.E. 2006. "Youth(e)scapes". In: Christiansen, C., Utas, M & Vigh, H.E. (eds). *Navigating Youth Generating Adulthood: Social Becoming in an African Context*, pp.10-23. Uppsala, Sweden: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.

Daum, C. 1995. "Les migrants, partenaires de la coopération internationale : Le cas des Maliens en France". *Document technique no.107, réalisé dans le cadre de programme du recherche "Migrations internationales et développement"*.

Daum, C. 1998. *Les Associations de Maliens en France : Migrations, développement et citoyenneté*. Paris : Karthala.

de Haas, Hein. 2008. "Migration and development. A theoretical perspective". *Working paper 9, International Migration Institute* (Oxford).

Ferguson, J. 2006. *Global Shadows: Africa in the neo-liberal world order*. US: Duke University Press.

Fortes, M. 1975. "Strangers". In: Fortes, M. & Patterson, S. (eds). *Studies in African Social Anthropology*. London, New York, San Francisco: Academic Press.

Frederiksen, B.F. 2002. "Mobile minds and socio-economic barriers: Livelihoods and African-American identifications among youth in Nairobi". In: Olwig, K.F. &

Sørensen, N.N. (eds). *Work and Migration. Life and Livelihoods in a globalizing world*. London and New York: Routledge.

Gauvrit, L. & Le Bahers, G. 2004. "FSP Codéveloppement Mali. Practiques associatives des migrants pour le développement de leur pays d'origine : le cas des migrants maliens de France originaires de la Région de Kayes". Mali: Cellule Technique du FSP Codéveloppement Mali.

Hunter, M. 2002. "The Materiality of Everyday Sex: thinking beyond prostitution". *African Studies*, 61(1): pp. 99-120.

Inda, J.X. & Rosaldo, R. 2002. "Introduction: A World in Motion". In: Inda, J.X. & Rosaldo, R. (eds). *The Anthropology of Globalization – A Reader*. USA: Blackwell Publishers.

Jonsson, Gunvor. 2004. "Victim or Agent?: The construction of young women's sexuality in the South African Lowveld". Unpublished Honour's dissertation, University of Pretoria, South Africa.

Jonsson, Gunvor. 2007. *The Mirage of Migration. Migration Aspirations and Immobility in a Malian Soninke Village*. October 2007, Master's thesis no. 466. Copenhagen: Institut for Antropologi.

Kandel, W. and Massey, D.S. 2002. "The Culture of Mexican Migration: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis". *Social Forces*, March, 80(3): pp. 981-1004.

Kane, Francine & Lericollais, André. 1975. "L'Émigration en Pays Soninké". *Cahiers ORSTOM*, 12(2): pp. 177-187.

Kuagbenou, V.K. 1999. "Les Maliens en France". In: Bocquier, P. & Diarra, T. (eds). *Population et Societe au Mali*. France: L'Harmattan.

Levi-Strauss, C. 1969. "The Principles of Reciprocity". In: Strauss, L. *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, pp. 52-68. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode.

Manchuelle, F. 1989a. "The 'Patriarchal Ideal' of Soninke Labour Migrants: From Slave-Owners to Employers of Free Labour". *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 23(1): pp. 106-123.

Manchuelle, F. 1989b. "Slavery, Emancipation and Labour Migration in West Africa: The Case of the Soninke". *Journal of African History*, 30: pp. 89-106.

Manchuelle, F. 1997. *Willing Migrants: Soninké Labour Diasporas 1848-1960*. USA: Ohio University Press.

Massey, D.S., Arango, J., Hugo, G., Kouaouci, A., Pellegrino, A., and Taylor, J.E. 1998. *Worlds in Motion. Understanding International Migration at the End of the Millennium.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mogensen, Hanne. 2004/2005. "Skillingen, Broderen og Tabletten: Penge og sundhed i det østlige Uganda". *Tidsskriftet Antropologi* ("Penge"), 49.

Morrell, R. 1998. "Of Boys and Men: Masculinity and Gender in Southern African Studies". *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 24(4): pp. 605-630.

Muurling, N. 2005. "Finding Money at Home and Abroad: the affairs of a transnational jelimuso". In: Wooten, S. (ed). *Wari Matters: Ethnographic explorations of money in the Mande world.* Münster, Germany: Lit Verlag.

Olwig, K.F. 1999. "Narratives of the Children Left Behind: home and identity in globalised Caribbean families". *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 25(2): pp. 267-284.

Olwig, K.F. & Sørensen, N.N. 2002. "Mobile Livelihoods: Making a living in the world". In: Olwig, K.F. & Sørensen, N.N. (eds). *Work and Migration. Life and Livelihoods in a globalizing world.* London and New York: Routledge.

Pollet, E. & Winter, G. 1971. *La Société Soninké*. Brussels: Editions de l'Institut de Sociologie, Université Libre de Bruxelles.

Quiminal, C. 1991. *Gens d'Ici, Gens d'Ailleurs. Migrations Soninké et transformations villageoises*. France: Christian Bourgois Editeur.

Quiminal, C. 1994. "The Changes in the French Migratory Policy and Their Consequences Upon West Africa". *The Journal of Social Studies*, 66(October): pp.59-74.

Sahlins, M. 1972. "On the sociology of Primitive Exchange". In: Sahlins, M. *Stone Age Economics*, pp 185-204. Tavistock Publications.

Schulz, D. 1997. "Praise without Enchantment: Griots, broadcast media, and the politics of tradition in Mali". *Africa Today*, 44(4).

Schulz, D. 2002. "'The World is Made by Talk'. Female Fans, Popular Music, and New Forms of Public Sociality in Urban Mali". *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, 168(XLII-4): pp. 797-829.

Shack, W. A. 1979. "Introduction". In: Shack, W.A. & Skinner, E.P. (eds). *Strangers in African Societies*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.

Shack, W.A. & Skinner, E.P. (eds). *Strangers in African Societies*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.

Simmel, Georg. 1950 [1908]. "The Stranger". In: Wolff, K.H. *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*. London: The Free Press of Glencoe.

Skinner, E.P. 1963. "Strangers in West African Societies". *Africa*, 33(4): pp. 307-320.

Skinner, R.T. 2004. "Determined Urbanities: Diasporic *Jeliya* in the 21st Century". *Mande Studies*, 6: pp. 139-161.

Timera, M. 2001. "Les migrations des jeunes Sahéliens : affirmation de soi et emancipation". *Autrepart*, 18: pp. 37-49

Vigh, H.E. 2004. "Navigation: Unge i konfliktfyldt terræn". In: Hastrup, K. (ed). *Viden om Verden: en grundbog i antropologisk analyse*. København: Hans Reitzels Forlag.

Vigh, H.E. 2006a. "The Social Moratorium of Youth". In: Vigh, H.E. *Navigating Terrains of War: Youth and Soldiering in Guinea-Bissau*, pp. 89-117. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Vigh, H.E. 2006b. "Social Death and Violent Life Chances". In: Christiansen, C., Utas, M. & Vigh, H.E. (eds). *Navigating Youth Generating Adulthood: Social Becoming in an African context*, pp. 31-60. Uppsala, Sweden: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.

Whitehouse, Bruce. 2003. "Staying Soninke". Unpublished research paper in Anthropology, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island.

Whitehouse, Bruce. 2007. "Exile Knows No Dignity: African Transnational Migrants and the Anchoring of Identity". Unpublished PhD dissertation in Anthropology, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island.

Åkesson, Lisa. 2004. *Making a Life: Meanings of Migration in Cape Verde*. Sweden: Göteborg University, Department of Social Anthropology.