DIOLA WOMEN AND MIGRATION: A CASE STUDY

Alice Hamer

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Migration has increasingly become one of the most cumbersome contemporary problems in Africa. In Senegal this dilemma is predominantly domestic in nature and falls into three different categories. One concerns the overpopulation of the central groundnut basin. Another concerns the underpopulation of some lands with marked agricultural potential in the southern part of the country. The third category concerns the overpopulation of the Cap Vert region, Dakar in particular. It is the latter two that are directly related to the seasonal migration of Diola women.

The official policy of the Senegalese government since independence has encouraged the decentralization of the industrial sector in Dakar and its outlying areas. In spite of this, industrial growth in this area has become more concentrated, accounting for approximately 85 percent of all Senegal’s industry. No doubt this is the primary agent pushing many there in search of employment, contributing to Dakar’s soaring 10 percent annual population increase. Population increase has been so rapid that, according to the 1970/71 census, two-thirds of Senegal’s urban population is in Dakar alone. Thus the density of Cap Vert is the highest of Senegal’s eight regions at 1,540 persons per square kilometer. This compares with that of the second most densely populated region, Thiès, at 94 per square kilometer, and with the least populated area, Senegal Oriental, at 5 per square kilometer. This imbalance in urban-rural distribution has resulted in a parallel economic disequilibrium. National expenditure has necessarily favored the Cap Vert region, at the expense of rural Senegal. This is expressed most clearly by the fact that urban incomes are 14 times higher than rural ones.
One source of stress on the Gpe Vert region is the seasonal rural exodus whereby thousands swarm there in the dry months in search of employment. Part of this pilgrimage is made from the Lower Casamance, an area dominated by Diloas who comprise approximately 10 percent of the regional population. This sojourn involves men and women. Indeed, women make up about half of the movement. In addition to augmenting pressures on urban centers, this migration has major negative implications for the rural extension. Rice production, the principal agricultural activity of Lower Casamance, is crucial not only to the consumption of that region, but also to that of all Senegal. As Senegal's primary rice-producing region, it must be the focus of development to curb the 200,000 tons of rice imported annually. The government has already recognized the enormous potential of this area that produces the largest national quantity of rice. The rice of the Diola of Lower Casamance, which accounts for three-fourths of all rice produced by Senegal, can be augmented given certain conditions. One important determinant is that the land be given the virtual year-round attention it demands. As the work of the rice field is done predominantly by women, their seasonal absence necessarily weakens production. These are grim realities that must be taken into consideration for urban planning as well as for regional development in Casamance.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There are several works on the Casamance as well as a few studies concerning migration as it relates to the region. Louis Vincent Thomas has written the most detailed ethnomonic material on the Diola. Good historical and additional ethnographic material on the Diola is further provided in a section of Paul Pellissier's massive study on the peasants of Senegal. Of a more narrow focus are studies such as that of Christian Roche, who did an account of the conquest and resistance of the people of Casamance, 1860-1914. Also relating to a more limited theme is Jean Girard's book focusing on the religious beliefs and practices of the Diola. Historical information on Diolas was recently expanded by the dissertation of Peter Allen Mark, who traced the development of religious conversion among the Boulouf Diola, the subgroup with which this chapter is concerned.

One of the few studies touching on migration in Casamance was published in 1976 by the World Bank. A comprehensive analysis of migration in Senegal, it discusses in particular its disproportionate regional population growth and national employment as it relates to national migration patterns. Another study provides specific

information on the seasonal migration of Lower Casamance itself. In a thorough demographic study made on the area in 1972, Henk L. van Loo and Nella Star devote one full chapter to this issue. Included is much heretofore unknown data on female migration. In addition, there was more recently a special research team of four, presided over by Klaus de Jonge, that examined in Lower Casamance the issues of migration exclusively. The team, which conducted its research from 1973 to 1976, has at present published only the preliminary report. When the final report has been completed, it will be the most comprehensive and contemporary account of migration on the Lower Casamance.

Information on Diola women themselves is wanting. The sole contributions made are by Olga Linares de Sapir, who concerns herself with Diola women's agricultural techniques.

METHODOLOGY

I chose the village of Thionk Essil for a specific case study. Thionk, located in the department of Bignona, is the largest village in Senegal. It is representative of the Boulouf Diola, one of the three major Diola subgroups. The other major subdivisions are the Diola Fogny, who also live north of the Casamance River, and the Diola Kasa, who live south of the river. The Boulouf total 40,000 of the total 220,000 in Lower Casamance. They are, as are the Fogny, predominantly Muslim. The Kasa region alone is that area that remains significantly animist.

To conduct a questionnaire in the village, I selected a sample size of 150 for a population of approximately 6,000. The subjects were drawn randomly from the census entries kept as records in the neighboring arrondissement of Tendouck. Two-thirds of those interviewed were women, as it is a feminine issue. A distribution was also made according to age to guarantee the widest possible range of input. The questionnaire conducted in Thionk Essil had three principal goals: to trace the historical evolution of female migration, to examine more fully its impact on the rural level, and to gather data on rural income attributable to seasonal migration. Village interviews lasted from March to November 1975.

I also conducted interviews in Dakar and Gambia. The goal of Dakar's questionnaires, conducted May 15-31, 1978, was to gather more data on the urban lifestyles of migrants. The objective behind the interviews in Gambia, June 1-June 5, 1978, was to highlight historical background through discussions with some of the earliest migrants there.
FINDINGS

The initial seasonal migration of men as well as women from the Boulouf region is intricately linked with the expansion of European hegemony in Casamance. Prior travel was limited, in part, to the lack of personal security prevalent then. Oral accounts colorfully depict the hazards involved in migration, largely due to the endemic wars over rice fields, as well as to the threat of capture and eventual slavery. Although Thiouk Essil did not practice slavery, it took an active part in the slave trade. Indeed, throughout most of the nineteenth century, the slave trade was Thiouk's raison d'être for contacts primarily with the Manding further north. It conducted slave raids in the Kasa area in large canoes, selling the captives either to intermediaries in the Fogny area or directly to the Manding themselves. When the French established their first trading post in Carabane in 1836, they found Thiouk actively involved in the slave trade, and its persistent involvement eventually led to a punitive expedition being sent against Thiouk in 1860. This initial contact established trading links, which were to develop into concrete trading relations on which seasonal migration would build.

A more direct threat to the travel of Essilians themselves, however, were the maraboutic wars in the late nineteenth century. Although begun in Gambia in 1856, they did not spread to the Diola Fogny areas until 1877-78. These wars only occasionally affected the Boulouf, but their termination was crucial to the safe passage of seasonal migrants.

Accompanying increased security with the European hegemony was expanded trade. The initially most viable commercial transactions between the Manding and Boulouf areas were with rubber, which first emerged as a commercial item in 1879-80. Rubber quickly developed into the principal export item to Europe as its tonnage in exportation of 29 tons in 1883 augmented to a tonnage of 252 between 1896 and 1899. Geographically, Thiouk was able to tap one of the main sources of rubber, that situated between Baulla and Bignona working its way up lagoons and marigots as far as Thiouk. There was also a major source north of Kafountine and one southwest of Ziguinchor. Although rubber was not the principal spark for the seasonal migrations of Thiouk, it touched off migrations of two other peoples. One involved the movement southward from Gambia by Akous into the Fogny region. The other was a seasonal movement northward from Portuguese Guinea by a group of Kanjaks from the shores of the Kao Cachou, rubber production thrived in these regions until the collapse of the wild rubber market in 1913. Its chief importance for Essilians' migrations is that eventually, especially after the termination of maraboutic wars, several Essilians ventured to Gambia themselves to circumvent economic loss from the middlemen who came to Thiouk for rubber. This strengthened trade ties and regional familiarities soon exploited by seasonal migrants.

The palm kernel was the commercial giant that opened the gateways of seasonal migration. The demand for palm kernels was twofold. Gambians themselves wanted them for consumption and the English exported them for the fabrication of various products in the metropolis at far more favorable profit rates than those offered by the French at Carabane. Diolas had a virtual monopoly on this open market. Mandings, as Muslims, had no skill at mounting trees. Traditionally, animist Diolas were, on the contrary, extremely adept from their centuries of experience in mounting for palm wine.

Seasonal migration in Thiouk toward Gambia, by some oral accounts, began even before the 1860s. However, it clearly was at least 1900 before it engaged significant numbers of people. The initial migrations for palm kernel exploitation established patterns that would persist over decades. The mode of travel is one example. Travel was usually done in part by pirogue and in part on foot. Early in the dry season in January, Essilians traveled in small groups by pirogue as far as one of several villages along the marigot in the Fogny region, such as Dioudoulou and Koubank. From there, migrants continued to Gambia by foot—first to Brikama, which served as a focal point for dispersion. The journey consumed one day. But if there was no pirogue available, the march entirely on foot took two days. The journey involved intrigue insofar as Essilians had to travel by night in crossing the border areas to avoid the much feared customs officials. The most arduous part of the journey seems to have been the load migrants had to carry on their heads when walking. People carried a dry season's supply of rice in addition to personal effects atop, including all cooking utensils. But the trip did not involve personal danger, although some early migrants traveled armed with large knives in case personal defense was necessary.

Early destinations chosen also set precedents. From Brikama, Essilians dispersed to several villages in Gambia. The criterion used for selecting a village was its supply of good quality palm trees. Oral accounts explain that this is what accounts for the pattern of residency in numerous villages in Gambia and, later, in Fogny, which border the Atlantic. Three of the villages first chosen by Gambian migrants were Kartung, Gunjur, and Siffo. Later, when Essilians disembarked from their pirogues in Fogny, they sometimes remained there seasonally. Residence in these villages lasted up until the rains began in June-July, after which migrants returned for rice cultivation.
The palm oil fabrication in which seasonal migrants engaged was a time-consuming process. Men and women rose early in the morning to return late at night. As with most labor among the Diola, it involved a sexual demarcation of duties. The men mounted the trees to collect palm kernels, while women transported them to the site of preparation and pillared them for cooking. Palm oil was made outside of the village with which the migrants were associated. Each male migrant from Essili had a guardian, the head of a Manding household in the village outside of which he lodged. Migrants themselves lived in makeshift housing constructed each season. The responsibility of the Manding tutor was to provide food and food preparation for male migrants, a duty specifically designated to the wives of household heads. Female migrants were completely responsible for their own nourishment, the rationale being that it was only the men who mounted the trees for the gifts left behind. As payment, Essili men divided their gains between the Manding household and his wife(s) or sister(s) who assisted him. Palm oil, which was male property, was shared with the male tutor. Palm kernels, which were female property, were divided between the tutor’s wife and the female companion from Thionk. This division in property rights was often to the advantage of women. The potential gains from trade with palm kernels was often much more favorable than the selling of palm oil for local consumption. To profit, however, women had to carry their palm kernels on their heads in large baskets as far as Banjul, where the Compagnie Francaise de l’Afrique Occidentale purchased them. Even when migrants began to seasonally migrate only as far as the Fogny area, they still reached as far as Banjul to trade their palm kernels.

In conjunction with the migration for palm kernels was a seasonal migration in search of two other commodities: oysters and peanuts. Fishing for oysters, a traditional task of Diola women, was unknown to Manding women in spite of the market created for it. There are a few villages where Essiliwomen went expressly to find them, such as Lamin. The attraction to peanut production in Gambia was the more favorable remuneration granted by the government in Gambia in comparison with that of Senegal. The inceptions of these migrations were at least 20 years later than that of palm kernels and on a much smaller scale.

Overlapping with the early stages of palm oil trade was a seasonal migration, on a small scale, southward to Guinea Bissau to tap and sell palm wine. The majority of Essiliwomen engaged in this lodged in Cacheau. There are scattered cases of seasonal sojourns to the Kasa area as well, which had to be bypassed to reach Portuguese Guinea. The men, assisted by their wives in the transport of palm wine and its selling, paid them by either sharing a portion of their wages or by giving them a certain amount of palm wine to sell themselves. It is difficult to establish a fixed date as to its inception. It is possible, however, that it began even earlier than the rubber trade, in which case it is arguable that palm wine was the first legitimate trade commodity of Essili. Although oral accounts confirm its existence between 1900 and 1914, clearly its duration is not likely to have exceeded 1930, as the palm oil trade and increasing Muslim influence in Thionk deterred the once crucially important role of palm wine.

One other source of contact southward with the Kasa area involved a dry season activity not part of prolonged seasonal migration. Before established means of trade were instituted, thek people of Essili often raided the Kasa for cattle. The adventure took place one day after careful planning by an intimate group. In the thick of night, the group descended southward in a large pirogue armed with medicines to reach the village that approached sleep. This trip was enacted in strictest secrecy and discipline due to the risk of battle and death if caught. A rare form of theft from the Kasa region also was bride stealing, once an acceptable form of bride acquisition.

The female component of Thionk’s first seasonal movements was, obviously, not characterized by strong female initiative. Rather, she followed male family members to provide supportive labor. Palm kernel exploitation, the activity establishing protracted seasonal migrations of women, appear to have been conducted by many householders, but initially only by men. This was done as a trial run to guarantee both safety and profitability. Oral accounts mark women’s initial departure to roughly the 1880s, although their involvement remained sparse until at least the circumcision of Eforsé in 1920. Initially, female migrants to Gambia were almost exclusively married women, a mark of the maturity mandatory for departure. A minimum maturation of males, too, was initially necessary, as before the 1920s all men migrating had to be circumcised. There were occasions, however, when single women migrated seasonally to assist a male family member, usually a brother. The revolutionary implications of single women’s departure is indicated by the ritual ceremony before her withdrawal by her parents. As women without children were not allowed in the forest, older family members went as the girl’s representative to it to ask that the girl return in the same chaste state in which she left. This practice lasted for only the first generation of single migrants.

After Islam entered Thionk Essili, it became customary to consult a marabout before departure for a forecast of the potential fruitfulness of the sojourn. The most important point about early female migration is that women were never left alone and were always with parental males.
For several decades following its inception, female migration would continue to be primarily an appendage to that of men, augmented by factors that pushed men and women outward together. One such factor was the consolidation of colonial infrastructure, which stimulated seasonal, temporary, and permanent migrations. Temporary and permanent migration as a source of resistance to imposts is not clearly documented. However, direct refusals to pay them are. Although Faidherbe theoretically established imposts in 1861, as late as the 1890s, Boulouf villages, including Thionk, either ignored or directly refused tax collection efforts. Gradually, however, enforcement became more uniform and the amount augmented. Between 1918 and 1926, the impost was doubled from 5 to 10 francs. This augmentation, principally aimed at stimulating the region's involvement in peanuts as a cash crop, nonetheless stimulated further seasonal migration to Gambia for revenue.

Colonial encroachment introduced some factors that undoubtedly sparked increased temporary and permanent migrations. Among them were forced labor and procedures of impost enforcement. Oral testimonies of the severity with which imposts were often collected are quite uniform. There is the frequent report, for example, of how payment refusal ended in the male head of household being tied nude in the blazing sun in shame and helplessness before his family and neighbors. Whereas these occasions were scattered, that of forced labor was not. Lasting from 1921 to the end of World War II, it was passionately hated. There is one noted case in 1929 when Thionk Essiي refused compliance. Men still recount with bitterness how they had to provide even their own food while working for no pay arduously, frequently being flogged as they worked.

These types of injustices were weighed with all other life misfortunes and fortunes carefully by households in the decision making for permanent migration. The factor of ill luck in Thionk Essiي played perhaps a greater role in permanent migration initially than did direct monetary incentives. This was underscored by Essiي's belief that ill luck was caused by malevolent forces harnessed in the household adversely affected. Removal from that spatial area would, theoretically, foster an escape from any affliction. Before permanent migration began outside of Thionk, some people even moved around the four quarters of the village. In every one of the ten villages visited in Gambia, informants cited misfortune as a primary consideration in permanent migration. The most frequently mentioned examples of mischance were child loss (either high child mortality, infertility, or inability to have male children), poor harvest yields, poor health (recurrent or incurable illness), and constant sickness and/or death of animals. Some of the first permanent migrations occurred soon following seasonal migrations, beginning sometime in the 1890s. If a village had been inhabited seasonally and conditions were favorable, a man might consider a final move. Of utmost importance as a consideration was the access to arable rice fields. Here the Manding's and Fongy's granting of land parcels was crucial. These permanent migrations established vital networks of information and dwelling possibilities that shaped the volume and character of seasonal migration. See Map 8.1.

There are several factors beginning in the 1930s that played a more direct role in the formation of female initiative in migration. Education was one. Primary schools first opened in Thionk Essiي in 1933. The school masters' initial reports recounted the difficulties encountered in recruiting students. But, in the 1940s, parents began to favor the education of their male children. School registers, which reflect the preference for male instruction, show that schools were in existence in Thionk for 14 years before the first girl was enrolled. As boys increasingly swelled the school ranks, their role in the active seasonal labor force declined proportionately. Reflecting the trend of events as well as the educational predilection of women, at one point one informant succinctly commented, "Anyone who migrated in the dry season was illiterate." This statement
does not hold, however, for part of the 1950s and thereafter, when education became an important determinant of male migration. Among males, the most educated left for further scholarship or salaried employment involving trade skills.

The withdrawal of men from the labor force set one of the factors conducive to the switch in occupation of women. With the male component of palm oil production diminished, women were obliged to look for various employment alternatives. Gradually, the occupational void was filled by a demand for domestic skills in urban areas. Women from Thionk Essil first worked as maids in the 1930s in Ziguinchor, in Banjul in the 1940s and 1950s, and predominantly in Dakar in the 1960s. Until the end of World War II, there were small numbers only engaged in domestic employment. The primary needed impetus was the expansion in scale of urban and industrial growth, an almost exclusively postwar phenomenon. A corollary to the increasing number of women being drawn into the salaried labor force was the need for maids to take over these wage earners' household duties. Of monumental importance, too, in mounting the number of domesticics, was road construction. When the transgambian highway was completed in the early 1950s, easy accessibility to urban centers made it much easier to leave for remunerative activities. Oral reports describe the surge in departures in the 1960s in such a way that even a conservative estimate of its increase would be a minimum of twofold. The sum total of all these factors was that, as girls began to work less and less with male family members, they could leave more and more easily.

Since the 1940s, one of the most important determinants of female migration has been the age-old women's association that has modernized its traditional structure by institutionalizing migration. Since its origin, which dates back at least to the early nineteenth century, it has served primarily as an aid society for women who are victims of high infant mortality. Every woman in the village takes part as a member of one of Thionk Essil's 14 sous quartiers. These groups mobilize when a woman has lost at least three children to place her under its personal care until the woman has given birth and the child has passed its most vulnerable period. When the unfortunate woman conceives for at least the fourth time, the association takes her from her household and places her in that of a more senior member qualified to give her the most attentive care. This guardian, in conjunction with a core subgroup of four or five other experienced women, provides all the detailed woman's daily needs; food, clothing, traditional and modern medicines, maraboutic charms, and so on. After the success of the group has been evidenced by the child's acquisition of two years, the mother prepares to return to her husband's household. It has always been an occasion of celebration, although of late the scale has altered considerably. Up until the 1940s, these fetes were of moderate expense. But, gradually, women began to pool their money together for a celebration that they expanded from one to three days and that were enormously expensive. As the returning woman's reentry to her husband's domicile is to symbolize the shedding of her previous misfortune, she is equipped with a new dowry for the fresh and successful marriage about to begin. This includes a bed, a radio, a complete culinary ensemble, and a suitcase of clothes for the woman as well as her child. The largest expense was and is cloth for every participating member of the sous quartier. Whereas in the past women had one new outfit for the celebration, today they have a minimum of three. Moreover, whereas before there was the expense of feeding the village for one day only, today a group must feed the entire village for the first day and the sous quartier for the two days that follow. Today there can be further expenditures by the returning woman's husband, who likely gives another fete for the sous quartier on the exact day the woman returns, approximately one week following the major celebration. And there are additional expenses that have developed over the years. If, for example, an Essilian has moved to Banjul or even to Dakar, the association must rent buses to transport the entire sous quartier of women there for the homecoming.

From the perspective of rural income, these expenditures are enormous. To meet them, each member is required to contribute for each celebration either 10,000, 15,000, or 25,000 cfa, depending on the age of the woman. The more youthful a woman is, the more she must pay. As the possibilities for revenue in a dry season approaching these figures are practically nil, the women must migrate. Oral accounts indicate that migrations to satisfy this demand have been significant only since approximately 1960. Since then, it has been a powerful force pushing married women to urban centers.

One may add to the causal factors of female migration the important element of the disproportionate growth of consumer demands and rural revenue. The earliest seasonal migrations had as consumer objectives three principal items: guns, cloth, and animals. Guns, which seem to have been extremely popular from 1880 to 1890, were used for hunting, firing as a display of force in circumcision ceremonies, and assurance of personal safety when carried as an arm defense in rice fields and when traveling. Cloth and animals were desired heterosexually. Cloth was used not only for dressing, but also for the dressing of the dead before burial and ritual exchange at funeral rites. Animals have always been a symbol of wealth and a mandatory item of sacrifice at circumcision ceremonies. Gradually,
as exposure widened to more varied commodities, purchasing tastes and habits shifted. The demand for cloth, for example, has augmented tremendously among women since the inception of their seasonal migration. Initially, the shift was largely due to the influx of Islam in the 1920s and 1930s, which emphasized cleanliness and dressing. And, as women traveled more, particularly to urban centers, the importance given to dressing rose. No doubt, it grew weightiest during the 1950s and 1960s with migrations to Dakar and emulation of Wolof women. Considerable expenditure today is on the upkeep of a daily stock of several simple manufactured items for which the women are usually wholly responsible: peanut oil, sugar, soap, kerosene, and matches. Frequently, feminine expenditure is also for transportation, medicine, and school fees for their children.

Ironically, even though the women of Thionk Essil have traditionally cultivated disproportionately more and their responsibilities for food acquisition have been more than those of men, their opportunities for rural revenue are much less. The cultivation of rice in Thionk, its primary agricultural product, is divided along sexual lines as is its distribution. The male component of rice cultivation involves preparation of the rice fields alone. Weeding, planting, fertilizing, and harvesting are feminine duties. But whereas the men in Thionk Essil must provide rice for their households throughout the rainy season alone (approximately three months), each woman must supply rice for herself, her children, and her husband throughout the dry season, which consumes most of the year. This explains the heavy exodus in the drought years of the 1970s. In 1972, the most chronic drought year, 55 percent of all Lower Casamance peasants and 75 percent among the Boulouf had to buy rice.

Yet, in the dead dry season when virtually all rural revenue is earned, the men in Thionk have the possibility of potentially more profitable employment. For example, there is for them construction, fishing, and palm oil. Women’s revenues are derived chiefly from the selling of agricultural products. Most frequently, they sell fruits, vegetables, oysters, confections, as well as some artisanal items like baskets and hand brooms. According to one estimate, whereas the average daily wage for individual labor construction in areas surrounding Bignona and Ziguinchor is 300-400 cfa, the mean daily income from market vending fruits and vegetables is 100-200 cfa. Even these possibilities for women have been minimized by the historically difficult problems of transporting their products to the markets in Bignona and Ziguinchor, where potential profit margins are greater.

Historically, Diola women have made minimal personal gain from the most profitable agricultural product, the peanut. Every region of Senegal has been dependent on peanut cultivation for the highest monetary yields from agriculture. This ongoing dependency in Lower Casamance is reflected by the fact that today the selling of the peanut accounts for 30 to 40 percent of all rural revenue. However, the profitability of the peanut in Lower Casamance is very disproportionate. Whereas, for example, the Diola in the Mandinka northeast subregion have made substantial profit, the Diola south of the Casamance River make minimal gains at best. This may, in part, explain why the heaviest female migration comes from the southern area. In Thionk Essil, heavy peanut cultivation, which became significant in the 1920s, was short-lived. When the drought came in the early 1930s, farmers were discouraged by their futile efforts to reimburse the credit given for production supplies by the government. Peanut cultivation switched from a commercial item to predominately one of household consumption. But even where and when peanuts are a plus, the income derived is for male and not female coffer’s. As peanuts are classified as a male crop, men receive the direct monetary revenue involved.

For all these reasons, Thionk Essil plays a part in the large seasonal migration of Lower Casamance. It is estimated that, in this section of Casamance alone, 25,000 people of a total rural population of 225,000 leave their native village in the dry season. This accounts for about 25 percent of the total number of inhabitants in the rainy season. It is a movement of youth. Of all total absentees, 45 percent are single boys and 48 percent single girls. Married men and women account for 9 and 1 percent respectively of all seasonal migration. The majority of girls leaving are between the ages of 10 and 19, reducing by 50 percent the female population in this age range in the dry season. These figures indicate that the age at which girls begin to migrate seasonally in search of employment is low. In fact, girls in Lower Casamance begin to leave at an average age of eleven and a half years, migrating seasonally over a period of seven years on the average before returning permanently, usually for reasons of marriage. The motives of females during their exodus differ significantly from those of males. Whereas among young men 55 percent leave for seasonal employment and 30 percent for school, among girls 80 percent seek temporary employment and only 15 percent leave for school. On their sojourns to urban centers, girls usually work as maids. Their most common destination today is Dakar.
Interviews in Thionk Essil reveal that there is another major cause of production loss. Traditional methods of accounting for labor shortage are being weakened by migration. Women's traditional associations, which have always had a second major function as an employable labor group, are increasingly being called upon for service to compensate for the mounting absenteeism. However, at the same time, the labor capacity of the group is being depleted by the exodus of its members. In addition, there are several other dry season activities neglected by seasonal migrants, some of which represent a nutritional loss for households affected: palm oil fabrication, vegetable gardens, fishing for oysters, salt preparation, and searching for cooking wood.

The most acute anxieties in Thionk Essil over feminine migration encompass social parameters. In particular, much of this involves the evolution of social relationships between men and women. When asked if female migration had resulted in changes in this domain, only approximately 15 percent responded negatively. In regard to single people, for example, it is consistently stated that girls no longer want to marry. There are repeated observations concerning the increasing frequency of girls having children before marriage. Indeed, this is a trend in Lower Casamance verified quantitatively. In one village under study it was found that 90 percent of the single girls of age 15 or more had children and that marriage age is being prolonged. 24

In addition, people give the often expressed sentiment of disappointment with contemporary marriages. Take, for example, the formation of marriage contracts. Heretofore, marriage was an arrangement made by only the parents of both mates. But now, with exposure to different types of marriages, men and women insist on choosing their own partners. Moreover, many complain that exposure to the urban milieu induces an attitudinal change among young girls, which affects their selection of a marriage partner. It is said that they increasingly prefer urban residents and urban life over peasants and country life. They lose their taste for rural work altogether, so that, if and when they return, it is done only halfheartedly. This, in addition to the fact that they meet men from various other villages, accounts for the rise of marriages to partners of other village origins. These liaisons are usually viewed by parents as an unfortunate breach in the continuity of tradition.

Concerns over changing relations between married men and women indicate potentially more negative effects on the household's stability. The migration of married women, which roughly totals 10 to 15 percent of female migration, results in an increasing sense of independence as a result of women's expanded economic role in the family. In scattered cases, it was reported that women nourish
their family even during the rainy season. Moreover, on occasion, it was expressed that urban exposure to other men reduces the wife's initial esteem of her husband. Reports of divorce among married migrants are frequent. On isolated occasions, informants cited cases in which married women have either returned to the village pregnant or refused altogether to return to the village. As one woman expressed it, "Migration is dangerous for a married woman because she is exposed to city men that have money regularly, which her husband does not."

The migration of a married woman will likely trigger some upheaval in her household, especially in cases in which the woman is the only wife. If a migrant has a co-wife, it is she who takes over the dry season activities such as salt preparation and wood hunting. In circumstances in which the relationship between wives is not harmonious, it is most often the mother who performs, the sister of the migrant being the next most likely person to take over her activities. But, in single-wife households, even if these tasks are taken over by female relatives, daily household chores may become the burden of the husband. There were numerous reports of men having to engage in cooking, laundry, and child care. No encounters were made with cases whereby men performed female agricultural duties.

Other concerns over the social impact of female migration are related to behavior changes manifested upon their return to the village. Notably, most of those changes are believed to be among single women. Whereas approximately 75 percent of those interviewed noted behavioral differences among unmarried women, only approximately 20 percent noted behavioral differences among married women. When asked for examples, people most often cited the way in which women dress. Having migrated, a woman can often afford to be well-dressed on occasions of village festivals, frequently alternating the variety of colors and styles of cloth. In Thiong Essil, it is clear that clothes serve as a symbolic assimilation into modern Senegalese life. In second position, people cited speaking Wolof as behavioral change, too expressing exposure to what many villagers see as a more evolved culture. There is a practice rapidly developing in Thiong whereby people employ both to flaunt their urban experience. For the first few days or weeks following the migrant's return, she pays frequent calls on friends and neighbors dressed in some of her best cloth and speaking only Wolof.

When asked if there were any disadvantages to female migration on the village level, approximately 50 percent responded affirmatively. The most frequent illustration was the lack of animation. The festivals of the dry season, it is said, cannot compare with the richness and bloom of former times. In fact, some festivals have become extinct among women, due, in part, to feminine migration. Before Thiong Essil's conversion to Islam, which took place approximately 1920-40, there were annual fetes of female wrestling championships. These were used as means of separating marriageable from ineligible girls. In every dry season there were also celebrations given by certain girls to announce their recent status of marriage eligibility. As these occasions were accompanied by heavy palm wine drinking, they were abandoned with the introduction of Islam. As a substitute, acquisition of maturity gradually became marked by female circumcision rites. A Manding custom, the first Essils circumcised were permanent migrants in Gambia and Islamic Fogny villages. As early as the mid-1920s, a small delegation went to be circumcised at Thiong, the earliest convert to Islam among the Boulouf. The first circumcision rites for women in Thiong Essil dates back only as far as approximately 1940.

In spite of all concerns expressed, an overwhelming consensus of more than 90 percent, male and female, believed female migration advantageous to the household. Almost without exception, the benefits cited are economic. Economic gain is confirmed by the net returns recorded from household samples. Sixty-five percent of the households interviewed with migrants absent received money ranging in amounts from 4,000 to 50,000 cfa. Those receiving combinations of money and consumer goods was 45 percent. Recipient households of consumer items only totaled 23 percent. Items received were various combinations of rice, sugar, and soap. Rice was by far given most frequently, a fact that underscores the necessity of supplementary income to furnish essential foodstuffs.

Indeed, the virtual unanimous consensus among informants, male and female, as to the prestige gained by migrants is attributable to the important economic role female migration plays in the household. Economic benefits explain, also, why there is little opposition to female migration by affected households. In spite of all aforementioned concerns, more than 90 percent of those interviewed stated there was a lack of opposition, financial need being cited almost always as the explanation. Cases of resistance were almost exclusively with married women. Although no question was directly posed concerning the imposition of migration on women by their families, there were occasional admissions of parents forcing their daughters to leave school to seek gainful employment. As one woman commented, "Female migration permits uneducated women to see how the world works while earning money for her family at the same time."
It is an important point of emphasis that female migration satisfies more than essential household needs for many women. It is very frequently employed to buy luxury items, which, in the case of women, is extra clothes. Although clothes were not quoted as part of household gains, it was my personal observation that it was a powerful motivation factor for migration. Many women as well as men, in fact, rated it as the most important motivation in supplementary discussions. This is most true in the case of women’s associations, whose members descend from urban centers expressly to fulfill monetary obligations for festivals. Said one association migrant, "It is an occasion to spend thousands of francs on ourselves alone without having to give one franc to men." This is a dramatic illustration of the strands of consciousness inherent in female migration.

The Dakar interviews serve to illustrate some aspects of urban life for migrants. The 30 women interviewed ranged between the ages of 16 and 34. Twenty-eight were maids. Working as a maid entails a variety of domestic tasks, the number of which depends on the preference of the employer. Duties usually include one or a combination of the following: general cleaning, cooking, laundry, and child care. Working conditions are frequently tediously long and job security low. Approximately one-fifth of those interviewed had kept the same employer for more than a year. Monthly income was dependent on several factors. The city was a determinant, as wages were more elevated in Dakar than in Bignona and Ziguinchor. Age was a factor, also, insofar as older women earned more. Experience was a consideration, since the more experienced were better paid. The ethnic background of the employer was an important element. The fact that economic and social status in Senegal tends to correspond with one’s ethnic background explains the variation in pay scale. The profitability of households is European, Lebanese, and African. Pay depends, in part, on the responsibilities given to the maid, the best wages being given to those with the greatest obligations. Lastly, income was influenced by the lodging arrangement of the maid. If the woman lives in the household where she works, which is unusual, her wages may decrease.

### Urban Lifestyle of Maids in Dakar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hours daily</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of tasks</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly income,</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>22,000</td>
<td>12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in cfa francs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Housing arrangements among those interviewed had little variance. Most women lived in households in which the head of the household was a male relative with a base age of 30. But there were three cases in which those interviewed lived in households shared by a number of other women, either relatives or friends. Occupants ranged in age from 13 to 19. The head of the household in these cases was 15 to 22, and her housing reached high capacity. In one case, for example, there were 18 women living in a single room. In such circumstances, women often make arrangements to eat in other households, making contributions to both domiciles. To help meet monetary needs and aid savings, many women reported membership in tontines. These serve as savings clubs whereby members donate a specified amount monthly to collect a bulk sum on a rotating basis.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The migration of Diola women has, from its inception until now, been motivated primarily by economic gain. Any viable proposals to impede it in any way must involve economic benefits at least equal to those of present urban migration. The alternatives open in the village itself are not likely to deter it, although some aspects of rural development are advisable. Transportation should be improved, as it will help increase the profit margin for many women engaged in market gardens. Projects that ease women’s workloads and give them extra earning time, such as rice threshers, are also attractive. However, the total economic gain of these ventures is not likely to measure up to urban ones, especially if all maids were to remain in the village and engage themselves in that work alone.

As urban economic incentives are not likely to be counterbalanced by rural development, easing the weight off overburdened urban areas might help. The most frequently quoted request in Thiout Eessit itself contains much potential. The establishment of factories in nearby urban centers would provide income to migrants as well as bring them closer to home. The development of factories that exploit available agricultural items, such as Lower Casamance’s abundant fruits, would be a valuable stimulant to rural revenue. The development of other facilities that draw people to cities, such as schools and offices, is a consideration. In short, redistributing urban populations is the most viable policy alternative.
NOTES


3. Ibid., p. 4.


9. Ibid.

10. See Mark, "Economic and Religious Change," chap. 4, for a detailed discussion of resistance among the Boulouf.


13. Ibid., p. 152.


15. van Loo and Star, La Basse Casamance, p. 194.


17. Ibid., pp. 214-16.

18. Ibid., p. 198.


21. Ibid., p. 212.

22. Ibid., p. 211.

23. Ibid., p. 212.

24. Ibid., p. 16.

25. See Mark, "Economic and Religious Change," for a detailed explanation of the correlation between migration and religious conversion.

26. These figures, which are an agglomeration of returns from male and female migrants, should be considered as approximate only. It is assumed that most people underestimate their real income. Klaus de Jonge estimates that migration revenue represents 10 to 15 percent of total peasant income in Lower Casamance.

27. van Loo and Star, La Basse Casamance, p. 217.