Jola Agriculture at a Crossroads

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Résumé

Cet article explore la relation entre le gouvernement étatique et les paysans des fermes de Jola, dans la région de la Basse Casamance au Sénégal. Il évoque les cas de particuliers dont les vies par leurs trajectoires révèlent les changements dans les relations politiques et économiques entre l'état et les fermiers. L'article retrace les stratégies utilisées depuis l'indépendance par les fermiers vivant dans la communauté rurale de Jola pour faire échouer les efforts du gouvernement visant à contrôler la production des céréales et les importations de l'étranger. Il évalue en outre l'impact de la sécheresse et du conflit politique sur la production du riz. La conclusion en est que l'état sénégalais a joué un rôle prépondérant dans l'élaboration des politiques agricoles par l'intermédiaire des organisations paraétatiques, par l'élargissement dans la prestation des services et les marchés organisés en coopératives. Relatant les expériences des acteurs individuels et les moyens ingénieux qu'ils ont mis en œuvre pour faire face à l'adversité, l'article met l'accent sur l'importance d'aller au-delà de la somme des statistiques pour considérer les êtres humains et leurs expériences vécues.

Introduction

Beginning in the 1960s, relations between the Senegalese government and Jola peasant farmers underwent a gradual transformation. At the time of independence from France, Jola producers were already engaged in the commercial cultivation of groundnuts as a
cash crop. But even though subjected to market forces, peasants still retained a measure of autonomy from the state by producing enough rice to feed themselves. Their rice-growing system was (and is) sophisticated, based on a profound and scientifically sound knowledge of soils, water conditions, and rice varieties. They were also able to exercise a measure of freedom in terms of whom they sold their groundnuts to, and where.

From the end of the 1960s onwards, however, agricultural production among Senegalese farmers, including those Jola who grew groundnuts for sale, was adversely affected by a long-lasting drought. A difficult ecological situation was made considerably worse by inefficient government control of the groundnut crop. The state monopolized the production and marketing of this crop through special cooperatives. Government agencies (the parastatals or filières) distributed seed, often of the wrong kind, sold fertilizer and equipment at a profit, and bought the groundnut crop at prices below those of the world market. In the years from the end of the 1960s to the mid-1980s, the price paid to groundnut producers fell by forty percent (Duruflé 1994, 35). Even after the state became relatively disengaged from agriculture, government interference in peasant production continued. Peasants had little control over production activities.

They cannot set their output prices. State intervention does not allow them to bid down the price of fertilizers and seeds. They are restricted from selling their groundnut output to anybody but the marketing board. The banking system does not target peasants at all, putting them in a permanent state of financial rationing (Boye 1993, 489).

This article argues that drought is not only a climatic event; it is also a social and economic phenomenon — a consequence of the particular political economy shaping a nation’s growth, or lack thereof. The view that the agricultural economy of a country is largely dependent on uncontrollable factors such as insufficient precipitation is too simplistic. “An examination of Senegal’s long-term economic development clearly brings out the responsibility of economic policies...” (Berthélemy et al. 1996, 18). Or, as other experts conclude,

[Senegal’s economic problems] ... were attributed in part to exogenous factors, particularly recurrent droughts and deteriorating terms of trade. But they were also due in large measure to
inadequate macroeconomic policies, as well as inappropriate production, trade, and pricing policies (Hadjimichael et al. 1996, 52).

In order to illustrate how government policies, particularly those creating parastatal organizations in charge of agricultural production and trade, have adversely shaped the lives of farmers, I will use examples taken from the life trajectories of particular Jola farmers living in a community with a mixed rice and groundnut economy. In so doing, I hope to introduce into the discussion real persons with life-threatening subsistence problems. So far, much of the discussion about agrarian economies has been dominated by abstract, general, and depersonalized arguments that ignore actual actors and their struggles. I hope that this article helps, in some measure, to place farmers at the center of the agricultural agenda. To reiterate, the central proposition of this article is that climate alone is not responsible for the poor agricultural performance of a population of Senegalese farmers. Rather, inappropriate government policies with respect to production, trade, and the pricing of domestic and imported foodstuffs have also contributed to the decline in agricultural output. To demonstrate how state policies have affected farmers, a perspective that focuses on real people, with real problems, is advocated here.

**Background: Theory and Fact**

The relationship between state governments and peasant farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa has been conceived in two fundamentally opposing ways. According to Hyden (1986), the African peasantry is relatively autonomous from the state and, thus, remains “uncaptured.” In his opinion, a peasant mode of production, based on the output of small households using a simple technology, reduces the possibility for centralized control. So does the African peasant’s mentality, which he claims is prescientific: namely, nonreflective of the natural world, theoretically nonsystematized, and not adjusted to experience (Hyden 1986, 698). Guided by the law of subsistence, African peasants thus operate in a precapitalist mode, where use value predominates over exchange value and militates against profit maximization. Peasant economies are not monetized, labour power is not a commodity, and there are few processes for increasing capital. The prescientific, precapitalist mode of production that prevails in the agricultural sector, Hyden concludes, places serious
limitations on national development.

An opposite view to that outlined above is held by scholars who argue that African peasants do, indeed, respond to market forces. They do maximize incomes by producing cash crops, by becoming involved in parallel markets, and by opting for wage labour in the off season. According to Bates (1981), African governments interfere in markets for agricultural products, for inputs into farming, and for manufactured goods (Bates 1981, 3). Intervention in markets then becomes the basis for political control. The governments of Africa design agricultural policies that create state parastatals to control the purchase and marketing of cash crops, as well as of food crops. They lower the price of agricultural products to please the urban population. In addition, they set prices for domestic and imported food by withdrawing tariff protections to local producers, by paying producers of cash crops a price below the world market price, and by other measures as well (Bates 1983).

Also arguing against the "uncaptured peasantry" position outlined above, and critical of the peasant mentality assumption, Barker (1989, 132-33) points out that peasant farmers are rational beings; they respond to prices in many cash-crop markets. They even try hard to establish some kind of marketing system when market institutions collapse. In fact, the marketing relationship is what fundamentally ties together the peasant farmer and the state. "The government collects taxes, sets official crop prices, undertakes local administration, and implements development policies and projects" (Barker 1989, 36). Individual farmers, and their communities, in turn, act upon the central government and its local agencies. Many of the forces of change, Barker concludes, flow through the crucial relationship between state and peasant farming.

In the context of the manner in which Senegalese farmers must operate, Bates' and Barker's approaches, emphasizing the importance of market forces and the preponderant role played by government in shaping agricultural policies, fit economic realities much better than Hyden's scenario. In fact, rural Senegalese have always constituted a "captured" peasantry. Government interference in agriculture has, arguably, been the single most important factor slowing down economic growth. It is even more important, I contend, than adverse climatic conditions. After Senegal became independent in 1960, the government became committed to the growth and diversification of the agricultural sector as the basis for
an expanded economy. To that end, it established a vast system for the control of the rural peasantry through a series of public organisms or parastatals (filières), which monopolized the marketing and processing of crops, the credit extended to producers, the inputs provided to rural areas, and so forth (Duruflé 1994, 37). The state intervened directly in agriculture through parastatal organizations such as the Office National de Coopération et d’Assistance pour le Développement (ONCAD) and its successor agency, the Société National d’Approvisionnement Rural (SONAR), as well as through regional development agencies such as the Société d’Aménagement et d’Exploitation de Terres du Delta (SAED) and the Société de Mise en Valeur de la Casamance (SOMIVAC). The various parastatal organizations, or public enterprises, performed an array of functions, including extension and training, securing inputs such as fertilizer, providing agricultural credit, introducing new technology, and facilitating the transformation and marketing of products (Duruflé 1994, 37; Commander, Ndoye, and Ouedrago 1989). The inefficient and often corrupt way in which these agencies performed their assigned tasks aggravated the effects of armed conflict and diminished rains.

At the same time that the Senegalese government was attempting to transform agriculture, a conflict developed between the central government and members of a separatist movement, the Mouvement des Forces Démocratique de la Casamance (or MFDC). A demonstration staged in Ziguinchor in 1982 by members of the MFDC in support of Casamance independence from the rest of Senegal ended in bloodshed. Eight years of latent conflict and military repression followed, resulting in the MFDC taking up arms in 1990 and employing guerrilla tactics against the government (Marut 1994, 214). The armed conflict continues to this day (Gasser 2002). The impact of the Casamance rebellion on agricultural production in the countryside is difficult to estimate. But it must be considerable. Thousands of people living in the communities located in the border with Guinea Bissau, and in the villages on the frontier with the Gambia, have abandoned their homes and rice fields to take refuge in towns such as Ziguinchor and Bignona, and in the Gambia. In some years, farmers living in endangered areas do not dare go out to their fields to cultivate. Added to the refugee problems are the lost opportunities created by the cessation of projects such as the Projet de Gestion des Eaux au Sud (PROGES), which was building small-
scale irrigation dams in many Casamance tributaries with the full participation of the local inhabitants. The insecurity has also affected the trade in vegetables sold to the tourist hotels, as well as secondary activities such as craft production. Just when a six-month truce looked hopeful, a Senegalese army offensive against the rebels in January of 2003 dashed the hope for peace [Afrol News, online, 24 June 2003]. Clearly, then, until this persistent conflict is resolved to the satisfaction of the contenders, little hope remains for the Jola of Lower Casamance to reach even a semblance of food security in the near future.

In addition to the ongoing conflict between the Senegalese government and the MFDC, the state has had to cope with a severe and protracted drought, which began at the end of the 1960s and continued on and off for at least seventeen years. Until the mid-1960s — that is, up until forty years ago — Lower Casamance was subject to a five-month rainy season, with annual precipitations averaging well over 1,500 millimeters in the Ziguinchor area. The rains were abundant and reliable, raising expectations that Lower Casamance would be the future grain basket of Senegal. Unfortunately, these conditions have changed dramatically. For all intents and purposes, the rainy season has everywhere been reduced to less than four months. Whereas both Ziguinchor and Oussouye received more than 1,400 millimeters of rain during the decades from 1930 to 1960, with many years above the 1,600 millimeter line, there was a steady decline beginning in 1960, first to the 1,400 millimeter, then to the 1,200 millimeter line, until it finally reached the decade of the 1980s, with rainfall lows hovering around, or below, the 1,000 millimetre mark in Bignona and Sindian, near the Jipalom community.

Posner et al. (1988) suggest rainfall minimums for each of the subregions, a benchmark below which the cultivation system is in imminent danger of failure: 1,000 millimeters for Ziguinchor, 1,100 millimeters for Oussouye, and 900 millimeters for Bignona. With these benchmarks in mind, Ziguinchor and Oussouye have experienced insufficient rains in five out of the last fifteen years, while Bignona has experienced four deficit years in the same period, although the three additional years were only slightly above the 900-millimeter minimum.

Clearly, the adverse effects of insufficient rainfall could have been reduced if proper measures had been taken by the Senegalese
government to distribute adequate seed varieties, to provide fertilizer and equipment at affordable prices, and to make loans to enterprising farmers. Moreover, real efforts should have been made to improve irrigation facilities by building small dams and canals. But very few of these measures were instituted, and the neglect of rural areas had especially dire consequences for farmers during dry years. This point may be illustrated by outlining relations between the state government and the Jola peoples living in the Lower Casamance region of southern Senegal. Again, the focus of the discussion is on the negative impact of misguided governmental policies on the productive behaviour of individual Jola farmers during times of drought. The argument rests on the premise that exogenous factors such as drought are never the sole cause of lowered agricultural output. Rather, inappropriate government policies have contributed significantly to the poor performance of Senegalese agriculture.

**Impacts at the Local Level: Individual Examples from a Jipalom Community**

Farmers living in a Jola community called Jipalom (Linares 1992) practice a mixed economy, with rice grown in low and swampy terrain, mainly for subsistence, and groundnuts grown in the plateau solely for sale. With over six hundred inhabitants, Jipalom is located north of the Casamance River, in an area severely affected by years of drought, and subject to the vagaries of governmental policies regarding farming. The involvement of the inhabitants with a commercial crop, their exposure to extension agents, and the fact that I befriended many farmers while living in their village for two years all justify my choice of them to illustrate the argument.

The inhabitants of Jipalom have, through the years, employed various strategies and subterfuges in order to avoid restrictions imposed by government extension services, cooperatives, and parastatals (filières) in control of local cereal production and foreign imports. These agencies also regulate the exports of groundnuts (peanuts), until recently one of the main "engines" behind the Senegalese economy. The case histories presented below are essentially descriptive and documentary. I will focus upon particular individuals whose life trajectories reveal changes in farmer / government political and economic relationships. The details are
taken from my field notes, gathered from 1964 to 1994 with other purposes in mind. The responses by farmers from the village to the production of rice, their mainstay, and to groundnuts, planted for sale, must be placed in the context of twists and turns in government-sponsored prices and policies. Through these narratives, I hope to convey a feeling for the experiences of particular actors and their strategies for coping. It is important to take into account individual variations. The manner in which opportunities are perceived, experienced, and seized upon by particular persons, anxious to forge a better future for themselves and their children, still depends upon individual vision, initiative, and purpose. To understand the plight of rural Africans, one must venture beyond aggregate statistics and generalized descriptions to touch upon the lives of real human beings and their ingenious ways to circumvent the system.

AT THE TIME OF INDEPENDENCE (1960)

The State

At the time of independence in 1960, groundnuts represented eighty percent of Senegal's exports. This trade engaged eighty-seven percent of the active population, and its processing represented forty-two percent of all industrial activity. In addition, "une partie substantielle des revenus budgétaires de l'ancienne colonie provenait des taxes sur l'exportation de ce produit" (Casswell 1984, 40). The trade was dominated by a handful of French companies operating through African or Lebanese intermediaries, who handled the buying and selling of the product, as well as the import and distribution of consumer goods through local stores (Casswell 1984, 40-41). Many groundnut producers were heavily indebted to the traders who served as middlemen.

Jipalom

In 1960, the inhabitants of this community grew rice for subsistence and groundnuts for sale. Thus, they participated in the national cash economy, as well as practicing self-provisioning. In the years before the cooperatives for groundnuts were established in 1961, Brama, the oldest son of Afansu, the ranking elder of the village, was a very successful commerçant. Using the free labor of his three brothers, Brama would send his truck after the harvest to
buy one thousand tons or more of groundnuts, which he would then ship in barges to Ziguinchor, the regional capital of Casamance, to be sold to a Lebanese merchant. Once, Brama had enough cash to buy an entire store for two million CFA francs (about US $8 000). All Jipalom residents, as well as most residents of the neighbouring villages, sold their groundnuts to him. Brama would, in turn, sell the crop to Lebanese intermediaries and, from them, buy consumer goods, which he sold at the store he owned in a neighboring village. Thus, at this juncture, Jola farmers were still free to sell their groundnuts to private traders at a preferential price subsidized by France above the world market price.

The First Years after Independence, 1961-66

The State

Immediately after independence in 1960, the new Senegalese administration accorded to the Office de Commercialisation Agricole (OCA) the monopoly of groundnut purchases from the newly created cooperatives, which were intended to take over all production and commercialization services. The cooperatives would collect groundnuts for OCA, which, in turn, would deliver to them supplies, seed, materials, and other necessary goods destined for the rural population (Mbodj 1992, 99). Adherence to the cooperatives was optional at the start, and a reduced number of local merchants were authorized, for a while, to continue to trade. Thus, the peasants still exercised a measure of independence. However, OCA did not last long; in 1964, its functions were transferred to the Centre Régionaux d'Assistance au Développement (CRAD), which, in turn, was dissolved. After 1966, the role of developing cooperatives — and of buying, stocking, and selling groundnuts, as well as of purchasing and distributing imported rice, were all turned over to ONCAD, which was mentioned previously. In the following year (1967), all permits to private merchants were withdrawn (Casswell 1984, 42). The cooperatives, which collected about fifteen percent of the groundnut harvest before 1960, collected seventy percent of the crop in the middle of the 1970s (Mbodj 1992, 101).

Jipalom

By 1965, Brama had died, and the people of Jipalom sold their
groundnuts in March, either to his full brother, who continued the business, or to another Jipalom resident, who had set himself up as a trader in a neighbouring village. A number of individuals also sold their crops to a Lebanese merchant from Bignona, the largest town north of the Casamance River, who would send his truck around to collect the groundnuts. Not a single Jipalom individual used the government groundnut cooperatives, which they considered to be an extension of the Union Progressiste Sénégalais (UPS), the government party in power. At the time, all Jipalom residents identified themselves with the Parti du Rassemblement Africain (PRA), one of the opposition parties. Hence, right after independence, farmers were still free to join or not to join the groundnut cooperatives. Nonetheless, the price they received for their groundnuts was based on the government’s official price.

By the end of June 1965, not a single Jipalom farmer had been paid for their groundnuts. Claiming to be short of funds, the cooperatives that were set up in other communities such as Suelle and Sindian were slow to pay, but private merchants were even slower. When farmers were finally paid, earnings for the 1964-1965 season varied markedly.

With these limited funds, Jipalom farmers were supposed to pay taxes. Cattle were taxed 250 FCFA a head, goats 50 FCFA, sheep 85-100 FCFA. By way of example, three Jipalom brothers in 1967 paid 3 500 FCFA for the cattle. One brother, Afo, paid 565 FCFA for five goats and three sheep. The following year, however, he and his wife hid the goats to avoid paying taxes. Hunting guns pay 3 000 FCFA tax; Afo paid for one and kept the other one hidden. Houses were taxed to the tune of 1 200-1 500 FCFA for a large one. With the exception of children and elders above sixty years of age, all adults paid taxes amounting to about 700 FCFA per person. Hence, people went to great lengths to hide animals, guns, and whatever else they could. But even then, they had to pay a significant amount of their earnings, from fifteen to twenty-five percent to the state. In any case, the government had certainly “captured” the peasantry through price-fixing, taxation, and the increasingly important role played by the cooperatives.

Doubtless, the Jola were participating in a market economy at this time; their economy was significantly monetized. They sold their groundnuts for profit and, with this money, paid taxes and bought a whole array of consumer goods, from pots and pans to
cloth, medicines, cooking oil, tomato paste, and so forth.

The people of Jipalom were also involved in wage labour migration. The village has a slow-growing, stagnant, or even declining population, consisting of 517 persons in 1958, 547 persons in 1964, 637 in 1972, and 605 in 1988 (Repertoires des Villages du Sénégal 1958, 1964, 1972, 1988). Located more than thirty km from the town of Bignona, beyond regular walking distance, the community is far from a market or important waterway. This isolation has certainly played a decisive role in fomenting the desire among its inhabitants to seek their fortunes in larger urban agglomerations such as Banjul and Serekunda in the Gambia, or Ziguinchor, the administrative center of Casamance, or Dakar, the capital of Senegal. In my 1965 records, for example, thirty-three unmarried girls and thirty-four unmarried boys, or roughly one third of the labour force, was listed as being absent from Jipalom during the dry season. The girls worked as domestics in the city, and the boys either attended school or looked for temporary urban jobs.

In addition, of the fifty-seven men in the mature men category, thirty-three (or fifty-eight percent) had left the village for places such Dakar, Gambia, and even France, to work as bakers, chauffeurs, mechanics, masons, carpenters, tailors, night watchmen, and mechanics. They men sold their labour power in the cities. Whether migration was permanent or not, migrants sent remittances to their kin back home. These were judged to be insufficient, however, by the large majority of recipients.

A Decade of Drought, 1970-80
The State and the filières

From 1966 to 1980, when ONCAD was in operation, its purpose — that of encouraging cooperatives and the development process — was progressively abandoned in favour of a purely marketing role. Whatever profits ONCAD may have had, these were transferred directly into the government coffers or used to complement urban salaries through subsidies to imported rice. Technical services were poor, and corruption within the ONCAD ranks was rampant. To this was added recurrent years of drought, beginning the last years of the 1960s, and continuing through the next decade and beyond. What became known as "le malaise paysan" was manifested by "un abandon partiel de la culture arachidière en faveur de l'agricul-
ture de subsistence, par un refus quasi généralisé de rembourser les dettes ... par un recours croissant aux circuits de commercialisation parallèles...” (Casswell 1984, 47, 49). By the time ONCAD was abolished in October of 1980, more than half of the entire groundnut crop was being sold illegally in the Gambia, and less than three percent of the debts incurred by farmers were being reimbursed (Caswell 1984, 51).

**Jipalom**

On June 1970, Sirif, now the eldest residing son of Brama, the deceased Jipalom elder, went to visit the local branch of ONCAD in Bignona. He was purchasing one hundred kilograms of unshelled groundnuts because there was a blight the previous year and his seed stores had been ruined. Actually, Sirif would have preferred to buy six hundred kilograms of groundnuts if he had been able to pay for them. The person actually getting the seed from ONCAD, under his own name, was a chauffeur friend of Sirif, who had “connections.” The seed was bought “on credit,” using bonds: for every one hundred kilograms of groundnuts, a farmer had to return 125 kilograms after the harvest. ONCAD channeled its services to rural farmers through village cooperatives that were collectively responsible for their debts. In Bignona, however, it distributed to individuals, preferring to sell to those that had “connections.” Sirif was using their services in town because, if the crop failed, it was easier for him to default on the payment, and his friend could not be pressured because he was not a farmer.

Sirif was still suffering the effects of the 1968 drought, which had a disastrous effect on both, the groundnut and rice crops harvested in early 1969. It had rained very little (only 826 mm in 1968, compared with a mean of 1,495 mm for the preceding fourteen years), and he had to buy five fifty-kilogram bags of paddy rice at 5,000 FCFA each to feed his family. He was planning to cancel the debt with this year’s (1970) groundnut harvest. However, 1970 turned out to be a dry year (1,163 millimeters in Bignona), although nothing like the drought years that followed: 1971 (905 mm) and 1972 (655 mm), plus two more years with barely sufficient rainfall (1,054 millimeters and 1,084 millimeters respectively). Thus, Sirif had to default on the payment of his debt to the Bignona branch of ONCAD. The cash he had was spent in the purchase of imported rice to feed the family.
When I again visited Jipalom in 1976, prices for food had gone up significantly. For example, whereas a fifty kilogram bag of milled rice could be purchased for 5 000 FCFA in 1970, it could now be purchased for 8 500 FCFA. Given the high government-established price for imported rice, and because the 1975 season had decent precipitation (1 353 mm), plus the fact that the 1976 season had started well, the Jipalom crowd continued to grow rice for subsistence, which allowed them a measure of independence from the state. But years of drought had taken their toll. Households that were once self-sufficient in rice were now buying several hundred kilograms of imported rice, whose marketing price was fixed by the government.

By 1976, the men of Jipalom had expanded groundnut cultivation by clearing large tracts of plateau land from the forest. The immediate incentive to increase production was found in the price now paid for groundnuts, which had gone up dramatically: from 21.2 FCFA a kilogram in 1970, it had climbed to 41.5 a kilogram in the 1974-75 season, following the partial boycott of the fertilizer and equipment being promoted by the programme agricole of ONCAD because farmers claimed they were too expensive. The price stayed the same, even rising slightly in 1979-80, despite (or, probably, because of) continued boycotts by the farmers, who refused to pay their debts to the filière. Thus, even though farmers were subject to price-fixing by the government, they could still refuse the services provided by the filières. Government agencies were dependent on farmers’ willingness to purchase inputs from them and, most importantly, to pay their debts. Hence, the state and the farmers were linked together by patterns of mutual dependency.

Still, More Dry Years: Groundnuts and Grains, 1981-85

The State

These were crucial years for the government parastatals concerned with the grain trade. After ONCAD was abolished in 1980, a number of organisms were put in charge of buying and distributing local and imported crops (Jolly and Diop 1985): the Caisse de Péréquation et de Stabilisation des Prix (CPSP) was reorganized to handle all imports of rice and millet / sorghum; the Projet Intégré pour le Développement Agricole de la Casamance (PIDAC) was
charged with buying local rice and millet; the Commissariat a l’Aide Alimentaire (CSA) coordinated, at least in principle, food aid and played a role in the assembly of local millet, sorghum, and maize and, finally; the Société Nationale de Commercialisation des Oléagineux du Sénégal (SONACOS) bought and processed the groundnut crop for export through local-level, village cooperatives. The rules governing the function of all these entities were confusing; “regulatory uncertainty,” as it is called, also entered the domain of official prices. As official prices became more dysfunctional, a thriving parallel market developed.

In macroeconomic terms, Senegal’s commercial grain imports grew, from thirty-one percent of total grain available in 1974-77, to thirty-eight percent in 1981-84, causing major foreign exchange costs. At the same time, the groundnut subsector ceased being able to cover food imports; it registered an annual deficit of 13.5 billion FCFA during the 1980-83 period (Newman, N'Doye, and Sow 1987, 1-4). Because of this situation, in April of 1984, the government put in place the Nouvelle Politique Agricole (NPA) with the aim of diversifying and augmenting local food production, while reducing dependence on groundnut production and on rice imports (Martin and Crawford 1991). Despite undeniable efforts to raise the prices paid to farmers for their crops, and to minimize the role of public agencies (the filières), the policies put in place by the Senegalese government under the Nouvelle Politique Agricole (NPA) in 1984 did not meet with unqualified success. The main problem still remained: “how to ensure the institutional support services necessary for raising agricultural productivity,” including agricultural credit, production extension services, and advice on marketing procedures (Martin and Crawford 1991, 94).

Jipalom
In communities such as Jipalom, where uplands abound, millet and sorghum, grown for subsistence, and groundnuts, cultivated as a commercial crop, may compete with each other for labour time (even though they may be intercropped) or, more directly, with rice production (Linares 1997). Because they are much more tolerant of dry conditions, these crops may supplant rice altogether during drought years. Thus, in 1981, following a severe drought year (619 millimeters for 1980 at the Bignona station), the household heads in three out of the five Jipalom wards, or over half of the inhabi-
tants, did not cultivate rice at all. Posner et al (1991, Table 2, page 9) calculate that the surface cultivated in rice in the Bignona Department in 1980-84 fell to forty percent of what it had been in 1960-64. By 1981, domestic production covered only 55% of the family's needs (Jolly et al. 1988, 1). In Bignona, the per capita rice deficit was 170 kilograms (Posner et al. 1988, 8). Everyone in Jipalom was buying rice; household supplies lasted for only six months after the harvest, and often for less. Imports of rice into the Basse Casamance had gone up, from two thousand to three thousand tons in 1960-65, to thirty thousand tons in 1982-83 (Posner et al. 1988, 8). What Jola household members did instead was to plant millet and some amount of sorghum for family consumption, and groundnuts for sale. Thus, their coping strategy was still to combine self-provisioning with commercial production.

Because 1978 had been very wet (1 499 millimeters in the Bignona station), everyone in Jipalom cultivated large tracts of plateau land in the 1979-80 season. Sirif ploughed the fields he had at home, using his team of oxen — named Panamá and Amérique — and a borrowed plough. He seeded a fast-growing variety of ground-nuts called "Kusangel" (burukusai in Jola), which he had kept in store for some years. But drought came (only 884 millimeters of rain), and the 1980 harvest was disastrous. From the entire area, Sirif harvested only five bags (about 300 kilograms) of groundnuts in their shell, just enough for seed. Another agnate from the same ward successfully planted "Kamisak", also fast-growing. But the majority used "Selection", the slow-growing groundnut seed that was being distributed by the government agency, ONCAD. This led to a total crop failure. After the harvest, these individuals were supposed to reimburse the agency in kind, but, of course, they defaulted. A farmer could have purchased "Kusangel" in the Bignona branch of ONCAD, but it cost 55 FCFA/kilogram, and very few people had the cash to buy the 50 kilograms of seed that was needed. Thus, not only did ONCAD distribute the wrong kind of slow-growing seed, but it also sold the right kind of fast-growing seed at a non-affordable price. To this was added the "frequent delays in delivery of seeds and fertilizer, as well as many errors in the types and quantities of fertilizers provided" (Berthélémy et al 1996, 87).

In 1981, after ONCAD had disappeared, the people of Jipalom organized themselves into a village-wide, groundnut marketing
cooperative, which also sold, or rented, ploughs. Animal traction had developed greatly during the years of drought because, with the shortening of the rainy season, it was ever more crucial to prepare the land for sowing as rapidly as possible. Thus, access to ploughs at a just, and possibly subsidized, price would have improved yields considerably. The 1981 price paid by the Jipalom people for a French plough bought through the cooperative was 15,000 FCFA, and it could be had on credit for almost twice as much. In 1981, only three Jipalom individuals could afford the complete oxen-plough-and cart equipment used in upland fields. Some individuals such as Sirif were considering investing in a slightly more expensive (about 20,000 FCFA), English-made plough, brought in contraband from Gambia, because it was superior to the French model. Sold locally by ONCAD, the French plough was considered by Jola farmers to be fragile and not to furrow well. Again, extension agents were selling the wrong kind of equipment.

By 1985, however, the cost of the plough used for plateau crops had increased to 37,790 FCFA at the official price asked by the Projet Intégré de Développement Agricole de la Casamance (PIDAC). Hence, the official price for the essential equipment sold by the government agency PIDAC had increased dramatically, making technology more than ever outside the reach of many of Jipalom's inhabitants. In 1985, only sixteen Jipalom production units (twenty-nine out of fifty-six households) owned all, or part, of the animal traction technology used mainly on the groundnut fields. With such high costs for equipment, it is not surprising that Senegalese farmers in general, and Jola farmers in particular, were, and still are, seriously underequipped.

During the 1985 groundnut-buying season (the traite), the crop sold at 55 FCFA/kilogram. Jipalom residents still referred to SONACOS, the parastatal oil crushing firm in Ziguinchor, to which they now sold their groundnuts, as ONCAD. Individual earnings from the groundnut harvest varied greatly. Table 1 lists earnings during the 1984-85 traite by household heads living in a ward (or quartier) of Jipalom. Profits were usually individualized — each household head kept his share — even though ownership of equipment was collective.

It is important to note that agnate G, sharing a team of oxen and a plough with his brother, harvested the same quantity of groundnuts as agnate I, who did not use animal traction, but benefited
from the help of an unmarried, adult son. Also, it should be recorded that the person who harvested the most groundnuts in Jipalom was an immigrant from another Jola community, albeit a long-time Jipalom resident. He owned the basic equipment (oxen, plough, and cart) and had two sons to help him. Most important, he did not cultivate either millet or sorghum in the 1984-85 season. Thus, he earned 495 000 FCFA or US$1 237.50 from his groundnuts (in 1985, the exchange rate was about 400 FCFA = US$1.00).

Insofar as growing rice was concerned, the 1984-85 season can be classified as a drought year (949.4 millimeters of precipitation in the Bignona station; the two previous years had been worse: 613 millimeters in 1983, and 924 millimeters in 1982). Jipalom household heads were now largely dependent upon the cash made from the groundnut crop to buy supplementary, imported, milled rice to feed their families. Although some household heads continued to receive remittances from their relatives working in the city, these were never sufficient to feed the family for long periods, especially since, in January of 1985, before the traites for groundnuts had occurred, the price of imported rice had been increased by twenty-three percent through a government decree. Outside Dakar, it retailed for 162 FCFA/kilogram (Newman, NDoye, and Sow 1987, Table 4, page 9). It has been calculated that, on a very rough average, a household head bought an average of 360 kilograms of imported milled rice a year to feed his family during years of drought (Jolly

Table 1: Earnings from Groundnuts by Farmers of Jipalom for the 1984-85 season.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agnate</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Earnings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agnate A</td>
<td>One of 4 brothers, sharing the equipment, on local field</td>
<td>44 000 FCFA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnate B</td>
<td>Sharing equipment with A, on local fields</td>
<td>33 000 FCFA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnate C</td>
<td>Sharing equipment with A &amp; B, on good, borrowed fields in adjacent village</td>
<td>143 000 FCFA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnate D</td>
<td>In another faraway village, with (a) borrowed fields, with (b) plough but own oxen</td>
<td>264 000 FCFA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnates E &amp; F (+son)</td>
<td>Sharing equipment, on local, very tired fields (divided by 2 = 41 250 FCA each)</td>
<td>82 500 FCFA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnate G</td>
<td>Sharing equipment with brother (H), on local fields</td>
<td>49 500 FCFA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnate H (he is a trader)</td>
<td>Sharing equipment with G, on good fields which he owns in adjacent village</td>
<td>165 000 FCFA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnate I</td>
<td>Does not own any equipment, but farms with resident son.</td>
<td>49 500 FCFA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnate J</td>
<td>Old man, alone, without animal traction</td>
<td>22 000 FCFA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnate K</td>
<td>Did not do groundnuts</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and Diop, 1985, 23). If this were so, eight out of the eleven households in Table 1 (or seventy-three percent) did not make enough money in 1985 (that is, 58 320 FCFA or more) from the groundnut trade to buy the rice they needed. Fortunately, however, from an almost exclusively monocrop rice economy, the people of Jipalom had begun to cultivate other crops such as maize and manioc.

**The Jola and the Government, 1989-94**

*The State*

From the mid 1980s, Senegal followed an adjustment policy that, among other measures, envisioned the liberalization of prices, of domestic markets, and of trade, with the aim of lowering production costs and reducing the power of public enterprises. Previously, in 1980, ONCAD, burdened with a debt of millions, was abolished, as was a system of public credit favouring agriculture. These measures were followed by the announcement in 1984 of the Nouvelle Politique Agricole (the NPA), with the following main objectives: (1) government withdrawal from parastatal organizations; (2) the liberalization of crop prices; (3) improvement in the functioning of agricultural markets and; (4) encouraging self-sufficiency through the substitution of local cereals for imported ones (Cissé and Daffé 2002, 55). The distributions of inputs such as fertilizer, as well as the conduct of trade and the extension of credit, were left to the private sector. Subsidies for agricultural inputs and products were also eliminated. In general, the results of the NPA were disappointing. Farmers had to purchase fertilizer and seed at competitive market prices. Groundnut production remained under state control, rice imports were limited for only a few years, after which they again increased, and the role of government, in many rural development agencies, continued to be predominant (Cissé and Daffé 2002, 62).

**Jipalom**

Rainfall for the two preceding years (1987, 1988) had been abundant, so many of the Jipalom rice fields were again being cultivated in 1989. But many of the old rice varieties were no longer planted, having been substituted by fast-growing, newly-introduced varieties that were ill-suited to very rainy conditions. Moreover, the ever-chronic shortage of labor was becoming increasingly severe.
Although voluntary, migration by the younger generation was seen unfavourably by the elders. The younger generation, away in the cities, who were coming back less and less frequently to help their parents cultivate during the rainy season, were present this year. I counted some forty young men and women, less than a third of the migrants, who had returned. This meant that associative work among the men was in the decline. In addition, fertilizer had become so expensive that it was used even less frequently than before, and farmers could not afford to purchase the improved varieties of groundnut seed. Soils were becoming increasingly impoverished because they were not being properly fallowed, and the millet and sorghum crops suffered. No one seemed to have access to credit so ploughs and draft oxen were not being obtained. In general, little had changed.

Unfortunately, the climatic recovery was short-lived. The years 1991 and 1992, again, were years of drought, and the people were as dependent upon rice imports as they had been before. An increase in the production of local cereals, as envisioned by the NPA, had not occurred.

The men now sold their groundnuts directly to the SONACOS outlet in a neighbouring, fairly large village. Thanks to a new road, they could transport their crop and sell it for sixty-five FCFA if they had to reimburse the company for the seed, ninety-five FCFA if they did not. This did not mean a great improvement in the price paid to farmers. Imported rice was retailing for 150 FCFA/kilogram and was, again, very expensive. The only important innovations in Jipalom's agriculture were an increase in the cultivation of maize by the men and the making vegetable gardens in the off-season by the women, who took the product to sell in the Bignona market. This meant additional food security and some cash in the hands of women.

**Conclusion**

Beginning in the late 1960s, a devastating drought affected the Senegalese countryside, including the Casamance. Before the drought began, almost everywhere in Lower Casamance, domestic production met food needs. It has been calculated that in 1962-63, in the Department of Bignona, where the Jipalom community is located, the per capita surplus of rice being produced was one hundred kilogram (Posner et al. 1988, 8). With reduced precipita-
tion levels, the situation has changed drastically. Because a high proportion of rice fields had to be abandoned as a result of salt intrusion in the lowest paddies and drought stress on the upper fields, rice production declined markedly during the years of drought.

Despite these constraints, I have argued in this essay that neither drought nor war can by themselves account for the poor performance of the Senegalese agrarian economy in general, or of Jola agriculture in particular. Following Bates’ and Barker’s theories, I have tried to demonstrate that ever since independence in 1960, the Senegalese peasantry has been “captured” — held hostage, that is — by the continuous interference of the Senegalese state in local agricultural activities. This took place mainly through government parastatals such as ONCAD, which monopolized the distribution of inputs, including seed and fertilizer; the sale of farm equipment; and the commercialization of the groundnut crop. But even after the 1980s, when the state withdrew its control of some agricultural activities, the presence of the centralized government in the affairs of farmers continued. Among the causes of the agrarian crisis are a backward technology, poor access to inputs such as fertilizers and seeds, low prices paid to producers, and unfavourable climatic conditions (Niang 2002, 163). To the production squeeze are added other circumstances, whose effects are hard to quantify: among these are the devaluation of the franc CFA at the beginning of 1994 and the lack of serious investment from Dakar. All these factors have affected rural production in adverse ways.

In order to illustrate how parastatal organizations and government extension agencies affected the daily life of farmers, I have examined the case histories of individual Jola farmers as they struggled to produce enough rice to feed their households, and to sell their groundnuts, first to local cooperatives, then to state agencies, at an adequate price. I have also recounted their difficulties in purchasing seed, fertilizer, and farm equipment. It should be clear from these discussions that Jola farmers are in no way prescientific, as Hayden labels all African farmers, but instead demonstrate great initiative and courage in trying to circumvent government institutions and innovate. Saving what was good in old practices — including self-provisioning — and continuing to rely on time-proven social networks, allowed enterprising persons to make sense out of administrative chaos and also take risks, while
attempting to adopt new crops such as maize, and make new, off-season vegetable gardens.

Bibliography


