

Chapter 5

HESITANT PATRIARCHS

Becoming a Household Head



Immersed in the darkness of a moonless night in late 2006, Alhaji, a man in his late thirties, was entertaining me with his grand fantasies about migration to Europe. Around us, men in their late thirties sat on benches brewing *ataya* or dozed away on the mat as a cool breeze finally swept away the heat of the day. Our conversation proceeded amidst laughter, but then Alhaji became more insistent about the urgency of his need to travel: in Europe he could work hard and send money to his family in Sabi. ‘I am surprised [confused]’, Alhaji said time and again in English, ‘about my condition [situation] here...’ Eventually, an annoyed voice from the mat roared out: ‘What travel!? Your father is alone in the [family] compound: you have to “sit at home” [*taaxu kan di*] by his side; you have to look after the people of the household [*kadunko*]!’ It was Bubacar, one of Alhaji’s closest friends. Without turning his eyes away from me, Alhaji replied in a calm voice: ‘How can I “sit”, huh, [Paolo]? My brothers have been away for how many years? They are not helping. How many times have I called them up? Yes, I have to stay and look after the family, but if I can’t feed them, how can I “sit”?’

Until the early 2000s, Alhaji spent more time in Serekunda than in Sabi, doing odd jobs and chasing business deals. Then, unable either to secure a stable occupation or find a way to travel out of the country, he returned to Sabi. By that time, his father had grown old, and his elder brother had just left for Germany. His younger brother had been in Europe since the late 1980s, whereas his other younger brother from his

father's second wife was still young and determined to stay in Serekunda. Alhaji's father's elder brother had left the paternal house as a migrant trader several decades earlier, and when he returned to the Gambia he moved his family to Serekunda, where his sons grew up and continued to run the family business after his death. As Alhaji's wife and that of his elder brother were the only adults left in the paternal household to take care of his parents, the responsibility of 'sitting at home' thus fell on Alhaji's shoulders. He hosted one or two immigrant workers to assist him with the farming during the rainy season; however, the grains did not last until the following harvest. He therefore turned to his brothers abroad, though in his view he only received money sporadically from them. It was rather his agnatic brothers (father's brother's sons) in Serekunda who, following in their father's footsteps, contributed food money on a regular basis and provided a host of other goods to sustain their ancestral household.

Alhaji's situation was probably not as desperate as he portrayed it. One could often see him coming and going on his brand new motorbike (again, a present from his agnatic brother), sporting sunglasses and shiny clothes, and stopping by at his friends' places to have a chat, or passing by his relatives' homes to exchange news and jokes. On commenting on his slightly flamboyant lifestyle, some wondered whether he perhaps pocketed the money his brothers had sent from abroad. Some others sided instead with Alhaji and reprehended his brothers for neglecting their duties, especially the younger one in Europe who had visited Sabi only once in almost two decades. Others still warned that Alhaji's luck might dry up soon, if his father were to pass away, and with him the moral incumbency on all his agnatic sons to provide support to the last living male elder of the family. Alhaji himself insisted that his brothers in the city had large families to take care of; he claimed he should go and find '[his] own money'.

Stories like Alhaji's are not unique in Sabi. Men migrating to find money leave their fathers and brothers at home to take care of the household. Becoming *kagume* – literally, the leader of the *ka* (household) – is for young men a way out of perpetual motion between countryside and city, and a legitimate, purposeful reason to stop looking for money elsewhere and thus 'sit'. In the context of transnational migration, the Soninke household has effectively become both a home of the diaspora as well as a veritable mooring that sustains the circulation of resources, people, morality and affects; flows that are regulated primarily by gender, age and generation. By assuming leadership of the household, the *kagume* 'sits' in a position of authority from which he lays claims to other people's work, resources and loyalty for the sake of collective subsistence, well-being and family honour. 'Sitting at home' as a household head is therefore the

mode of ‘sitting’ with the highest return of status and power that does not require prior accumulation of wealth. And yet, the prospect of assuming *kagumaaxu* (leadership of the *ka*) is often met with much ambivalence: heading a household can be a headache, or better, can add to the confusion and burdensome thoughts of ‘sitting’ in Sabi.

Shedding light on the hesitancy with which young men undertake a patriarchal career is key to understanding how Sabinko experience and reflect on rural permanence. I speak of hesitancy rather than, say, crisis because in this chapter I consider the ambivalence built into an institution which has been nevertheless enduring and adaptable to various regimes of the economy (cf. Kea 2013). Unlike some other parts of Africa (e.g., Murray 1981), in Sabi male emigration has neither produced female-headed households nor significantly modified the age and gender principles of domestic organization (see also Gunnarsson 2011). Men continue to rule over large households and work on the communal land, while women farm on their individual fields and take care of household chores. Among the Soninke the accepted rules of domestic organization (which were already a product of an (im)mobile society), have accommodated the intensification of international migration and been extended to the travel-bush (cf. Hampshire 2006: 402–4). At the same time, the outward extension of the household has proceeded to the point that both household and patriarchy have now become more socially and geographically complex (cf. Mondain, Randall and Diagne 2012).

This chapter highlights two critical factors that, while constructing the migrant household as a vital core in need of male authority, load it with tensions and contradictions. Firstly, migrants now stay away for longer periods and might take their wives and children abroad or to the city, where in the meantime they might have built a house as a sign of success as well as for their future return. Although, as Alhaji’s case shows, diasporic homes do not necessarily disrupt ties with the village homes, they generate at least a degree of uncertainty with regard to future household developments. A second, related determinant of hesitancy is the extraverted¹ nature of the domestic economy. As households have shifted from a system based primarily on agricultural production to one significantly based on managing resources channelled from abroad, household heads must not only juggle with their brothers’ willingness to remit but also negotiate access to redistribution with other members of the household. Alhaji’s desired quest for money abroad is, in this respect, symptomatic of a longing for autonomy vis-à-vis the possibility of dwindling remittances in the future.

Evidently, therefore, becoming a *kagume* can be hardly described as a one-off event of ascent to office. The chapter describes ‘sitting at home’

as an ongoing process of becoming established and acknowledged as the pivotal figure in the migrant household. In heeding this process, I build on a feminist critique of unitary, normative notions of the household and of household authority (Harris 1984: 145; Guyer and Peters 1987), though my aim is to shed light on the gendered position of the (would-be) patriarch rather than to give a voice to women.² Specifically seeking to trace the dynamics of (im)mobility that give form and content to household authority from the ground up, I combine a gender perspective with a broader approach to relatedness and domesticity (Carsten 2004: ch. 2). Although domesticity is again generally studied from women's perspective, I show that in Sabi, a hesitant patriarchy emerges from daily acts of presence in the *ka*, such as the providing and sharing of food and mealtime conviviality, through which intimacy and power are woven together as well as invested with ambiguity (van Vleet 2008). Such daily, local practices of *kagumaaxu*, complete with their hesitancy, are subsequently shown to feed young men's imaginations of the household and its (un)viability on a wider temporal and spatial scale.

The Ka

The *ka* is a territorial unit of the *xabila*, the agnatic descent group identified by a patronym (*jaamu*).³ Although the *xabila* is not a highly centralized political formation, and the *ka* (pl. *kanu*) is consequently a largely autonomous domestic unit, genealogical history matters in the *ka*. 'This is where it all began', people often say about their paternal *ka*, making reference to the foundational moment of the *ka*, when a man, and eventually his brothers, migrated from the east and established the first household in Sabi (see Gaibazzi 2013). When the elders of a *xabila* preside over a ceremony or mediate disputes (Figure 5.1), they remind the younger agnates of the way or path (*kille*) of the patrilineage to follow in order to ensure continuity and harmony (cf. Kea 2013: 107, 109). Also, when a *kagume* dies and leaves no heir behind, an elder of his *xabila* will 'sit' in that household until male children are mature enough to take on the leadership. What is passed on is not only a sense of shared origins and destiny, but also the blessing (*barake*) of the previous generations, the divine essence that allows individuals as well as collectives to reap the benefits of their efforts. The very existence of a *ka*, not to speak of its prosperity, is the living proof that the previous generations were blessed enough to bring about the present situation.

At its minimum a *ka* is made up of a man, his wife or wives and his unmarried children. Marriage being patrilocal, the sons will remain in

the paternal *ka* after marriage and contribute to moving it onward in its developmental cycle. According to its size and specific history, a *ka* can include a number of such family units related by patrilineal descent, such as a group of married brothers and their descendants. As each man marries wives and begets children, he will wield authority and a degree of autonomy over his *dimbaya* (pl. *dimbayanu*) or ‘nuclear family’ (wives, children, eventually his parents); however, all brothers will be under the authority of the eldest amongst them.

Members of the *ka* are accommodated in what Gambians refer to as a *compound*: a fenced enclosure of varying size, including round huts or quadrangular brick houses, stables for draught animals and sheep, and a small plot (*galle*). The resident population size of Sabi *kanu* varies dramatically, ranging from less than ten to seventy or more people, with thirty people being approximately the average.⁴ Apart from the agnates and their wives, the *ka* can include other affines (*kallu*), such as the nephews and nieces of the *kagume*, as well as unrelated people, such as seasonal workers. Enduring membership in a *ka* is however established by kinship, so that people like migrants and urban dwellers who do not live in their paternal *ka* often think of themselves as members, especially if they actively contribute to its income.

The *ka* organizes production, consumption and distribution. As mentioned in Chapter 2, men work collectively on the family field (*furuba, tee xoore*) to produce millet, whereas in the later afternoon hours they can work on their individual plots (*saluman tee*), though fewer and fewer choose to do so today (see Chapter 2). By extension, expatriate men remit money to buy rice and other staples to make up for their absence from the fields. Married women have a right to use a plot of land from their husband’s *ka* in order to farm groundnuts for sale and for making groundnut paste (*tigadege*) (cf. also Pollet and Winter 1971: 395–57; Weigel 1982: 50). In the Upper River as elsewhere in the Gambia, work parties (Mandinka: *dabada*) larger than the *ka* have become rarer, and people in a *ka* usually consume what the men of the *ka* produce on the main field. The term *kore* – now a rare one – identifies such labour-distribution-consumption units. The *kore* is the labour unit of men, completed by their parents, wives and children, among whom their produce is distributed and consumed (Pollet and Winter 1971: 397). The *kore* can include unrelated members such as *strange farmers* and guest workers, and in the past, the slaves. Today the *kore* has assumed an easier structure, which invariably coincides with the *ka*.

Owing to demographic growth over several generations, compounds are often divided into *follaku* (sing. *follake*, gate) or *banju* (sing. *banje*, side), sub-branches of the agnatic group lodged, as the term suggests,

in separate sections of the *ka*. In four of the twenty compounds systematically surveyed in 2006/7 (see Chapter 1), *follaku* were socially and economically autonomous units functionally equivalent to *kanu*; that is, they farmed their own field and had a separate hearth (*kingide*, *kinju*) where they prepared their meals. In analytical terms the *kore/follake* can be defined as the ‘household’ proper, a definition that highlights kinship as the main criterion of membership as well as the economic dimensions – production, distribution and consumption – which are at the core of domestic activities. Accordingly, partitioned *kanu* can be defined as joint-households.⁵

Becoming a *Kagume*: Ascent to Power or Buck Passing?

A first insight into hesitant patriarchy is given by simply looking at the historical changes in the inheritance of office. The *kagume* (pl. *kagumu*) is normally the eldest genealogical male in the *ka*. Until the 1970s, the first male born (*soma*) of a man was usually expected to ‘sit’ as the leader of the compound, and was less likely than his younger brothers to travel. However, the decline of the rural economy, together with the intensification of international migration, has made primogeniture less significant for inheriting office. Migrant traders in West Africa or Serekunda have often encouraged their first-born to join their firms, or helped them emigrate to the West. Meanwhile, households back home have also encouraged sons to leave soon after they came of age in order to help their families with cash. In turn, since migrants abroad have helped their younger brothers to emigrate following the sibling order, it has sometimes been the younger men who eventually have had to ‘sit at home’. The high cost and legal restrictions of international mobility have exacerbated this inversion tendency, for the men who have matured in this period have had to stay longer at home and eventually act as household heads or assist their fathers with managing the compound for the time being. Alhaji’s life story clearly exemplifies this trajectory.

There are several additional circumstances that make a young man ‘sit at home’ (Figure 5.1). A man told me that he was originally a traveller, but then while visiting Sabi, he found his parents alone in the compound. He was moved to stay by a sense of duty towards them. Another young man returned from Central Africa because one of his elder brothers, also a migrant, told him to go home and marry; which he did. But then his wife did not become pregnant until two years later, and being under pressure to leave his heir behind before going to *hustle* again, he kept postponing his departure, soon running out of cash. Meanwhile, his elder brothers



Figure 5.1 Refilling and Directing the River: Musa, the Eldest Resident Male in Sumbunu-kunda, with his Younger Daughter Gesa at the Forty Days Commemoration of the Death of his Father Junkung, 2012

abroad became accustomed to liaising with him as their main trustee at home, and eventually encouraged him to stay for good rather than sending money for him to leave for the Congo. Some other young men are stuck in Sabi because they have to take care of an ailing parent, or must wait until their younger brothers are old enough before they can look for a chance to emigrate. Sometimes, an adult man lives in the family compound, but because he was born and bred abroad, he knows little about farming and household management; a younger brother may thus stay by his side.

In other words, rather than an achievement, ‘sitting at home’ is often depicted by men as a matter of contingency, subordination to seniors’ will or perceived moral duty. If viewed against the backdrop of households in the 1950s and 1960s, this situation strikes one as a rather important change. Until this time, in Sabi and in most Soninke areas a ‘patriarchal ideal’ held sway (Manchuelle 1989); that is, men aspired to marry several wives so as to beget many children and establish themselves as household heads in their own or in a new compound. Migration, as Manchuelle (1989) has argued, was indeed driven by this ideal of finding resources

in order to invest in ‘wealth in people’. By contrast, rather than in a scramble for power between brothers, in contemporary Sabi men would seem to be rather willing to pass the onus of *kagumaaxu* on to someone else and leave for greener pastures. Aspirations of family autonomy and leadership have refracted into other models, in particular those brokered by diasporization, such as living with one’s wife and children abroad or in Serekunda. But even those who want to leave their wives and children in the paternal *ka* and wish to return to the village tend to stay abroad longer in order to secure financial autonomy for their own *ka* and *dimbaya*. Therefore, even though those who happen to become sub-, proxy or fully fledged *kagumu* tend to imagine their permanence in Sabi as a temporary stop en route to elsewhere, they can seldom shed this responsibility unless the *ka* changes, and may in fact end up staying for years.

The consequences of male emigration for left-behind men has attracted scant scholarly attention. Studies of migrant households in Africa have so far focused on women (Murray 1981; Gunnarsson 2011; Mondain, Randall and Diagne 2012). Similarly, in spite of a growing interest in youth as well as in masculinities in Africa, the role of young adults in the domestic sphere has not been at the forefront of research.⁶ Analyses of domesticity have overwhelmingly targeted women and largely obscured or reified the point of view of the patriarch. By contrast, describing the dynamics of ‘sitting at home’ through the experience of young men who would ordinarily emigrate provides us with an opportunity to understand not only the making of domestic permanence but also patriarchy and its discontents from within. The ambivalent feeling of responsibility and uneasiness with which young men view a fast-tracked ascent to patriarchy prompts us not to take the norms of male dominance at face value as if they naturally ensued from the position the young men occupy. In what follows, therefore, I seek to delineate the contours of male authority by looking at the everyday practices that make and unmake men’s presence and leadership in the household.

In a Meal Bowl: Ensuring Subsistence in an Extraverted Domestic Economy

Food has paramount importance in the experience and imagination of the household. The *ka* thrives on *biraaado*, a word whose root is the verb *bire* (to live, survive), and which can be aptly translated as survival or subsistence. In a place historically affected by the whims of the ecology and the market, providing enough food for the family has been a nagging concern for most households. Yet providing *biraaado* exceeds the immediate needs

of nutrition: to 'make the family survive' (*na ka birandi*) is to project the past into the future by extending cycles of intergenerational reciprocities whereby (social) parents feed children who, over time, replace them and feed them in turn. *Biraado* allows children to grow up, marry and beget and raise children of their own, who will be named after their grandparents, thereby carrying the memory of their forebears forward. Although both men and women have a right to name children after their respective parents, this alimentary-cum-genealogical imagination of the *ka* is particularly important for men; indeed, among the Soninke, as in most other regional settings, it undergirds their claims to moral authority (Meillassoux 1981; Wooten 2009).

The primary duty of the *kagume* is, in fact, to ensure *biraado*. A stern commitment to agricultural production has not exempted households from having to firmly participate in an extraverted cash economy, which has in turn created new needs and wants in and around *biraado*. As various members of the household seek to satisfy such needs by turning especially to migrant relatives, ensuring subsistence implies negotiating access and amounts of redistribution with others. As will be shown, this generates complex situations for the *kagume* and sometimes misgivings around his management of household resources. Documenting what goes into a communal meal bowl (and what does not) thus provides us with a useful entry point into the geography of the domestic political economy and the role of the *kagume* therein.

Biraado refers to the collective food stocks of the *ka*, in particular the grains kept in the granaries or the stores of the compound. The *kagume* normally holds the key of the store where bags of home-grown cereals (millet, sorghum and maize) and store-bought rice are kept, and on a daily basis he opens the store to hand over a set number of tin cups of each type of staple to the women for them to cook three collective meals, typically: the morning millet porridge (*fonde*), rice for lunch and the evening couscous (*futoo*).⁷ These meals constitute the core of subsistence to which all the members of the *ka* (or of the *follake* in partitioned *kanu*) are entitled and should contribute to. By contrast, each *dimbaya* is responsible for extra minor meals from their own stores (*saluma*). In particular, as most people find *fonde* too light to fill their stomachs, the *dimbaya* will provide a mid-morning, second breakfast (*suxubanfo*), normally based on loaves of bread with butter, mayonnaise or more elaborate sauces prepared in secondary hearths located at the back of the houses.

For his part, the *kagume* is responsible for producing the cereals for morning and evening meals. He estimates the size of the plot to farm and either provides the implements to till the soil and weed, or has to borrow them from other household heads. He leads the group of farmers

to the fields and decides the timing of the tasks and whether to take on *strange farmers*. The cultivation of food crops represents the core of the household economy; it is what holds it together and guarantees a minimal subsistence against the vagaries of the quest for money outside the village. In a similar vein, Stephen Wooten (2009: ch. 4) has shown that the advent of commercial horticulture in a Bamana (Bambara) community (Mali) has not displaced the significance of what he translates as ‘for life’ production – an apt translation of *biraado* too – the production of subsistence grains. ‘For life’ production takes precedence over ‘for money’ production, through which householders satisfy extra needs and consumerist desires. In Sabi, agricultural production ideally takes precedence over migration, but in practice the ‘for life’ domain also feeds on the ‘for money’ one. Rice production in Sabi is almost inexistent, which means more rice has to be bought at the store. As noted, this is considered a duty of the migrants who, by remitting money for bags of rice, make up for their absence from the farm fields (Figure 5.2).



Figure 5.2 A Translocal Meal

Aside from rice, there is a general sense that people's subsistence needs and wants are growing. For many elderly people, and even for people in their thirties or forties, commenting on changing times means commenting on changing tastes. Not only was rice more of a rarity in the olden days, but above all people used to eat the morning porridge with no sugar at all. Few people, including elders, have however preserved this habit to date. Now sugar is often considered a component of *biraado*, and it is used in large quantities indeed.⁸ This is not an entirely new phenomenon; commercial agriculture and later the advent of the re-export trade have certainly made more products available to the Sabinko and instigated consumerist desires. At the same time, the greater purchasing power afforded by migrant remittances has contributed to satisfying wants and produced new needs in a way that is less dependent on agricultural seasons. As noticed in other Soninke contexts (Weigel 1982: 83–84), alimentary changes only partly reflect shifting subsistence needs; here, food is also used to express social distinction. As bread has become a breakfast staple, Sabi is aligned with Serekunda in terms of consumption habits.⁹ Some households do not have sufficient money to afford bread, at least not on a daily basis, and since *dimbayanu* and even women themselves buy it, consuming bread marks a difference not only between but also within *kanu*. Accordingly, some *kanu* take pride in having enough collective money to buy extra food for breakfast, as well as a plethora of ingredients that make meals more palatable: meat, fresh and smoked fish, onions, tomato paste, palm oil, flavour enhancers (stock cubes, crystalline monosodium glutamate) and many more. So evident is the difference that money makes that commenting on the taste of food in a given compound is today an implicit reference to their economic situation. One way I could tell when cash was short in my host compound was by noticing meals becoming less luxurious and savoury than usual over a period of some days.

Changing food habits have created several grey areas in internal arrangements for *biraado*. A good example is what Gambians call *fish money* – the daily allowance for buying ingredients for the sauce served with rice and couscous. Normally, the *kagume* provides the grains, and when a woman other than his wife covers the kitchen shift, her husband (*kina*) will have to give her the *fish money*. The cook is also expected to contribute to the ingredients of the sauce with the vegetables she grows in the compound (or in a separate plot) and especially with the paste she makes from the groundnuts she farms during the rainy season. But tracking who puts what in a meal bowl is often a difficult task because arrangements vary greatly between and within households, and over time. It is not only sugar, but also other ingredients, such as cooking oil, that are

increasingly assimilated to *biraado* staples. Likewise, most women nowadays bring the millet which the *kagume* gives them to mechanical mills to have it pounded into flour for porridge and couscous. Since pounding has been traditionally a female duty, it is often unclear whether the *kagume*, the husband or the woman herself should pay for this service. Arrangements may furthermore vary over time according to the financial possibilities of the *kagume*, the internal subdivision and the number of married men and their wives. Most married men to whom I talked reported that they sometimes ask their wives to help them contribute the *fish money*. Consequently, as in the rest of the Gambia: 'In many marriages, husbands' insufficient economic support was one of the major sources of conflicts' (Skramstad 2008: 123). When women themselves are short of cash, they often buy merchandise on credit from shopkeepers and may ask their own relatives to help them sort out their debts.

For the *kagume*, the shift in household consumption is both an opportunity and a threat. It is an opportunity because it entitles him to greater shares of his dependents' work and resources for the survival of the household. As men tend to concentrate farming on the communal field, the *kagume* has almost exclusive rights on male farm labour. With reference to the upper Senegal River valley in the late 1970s, Weigel (1982: 92) found that the *kagume* managed on average 65 per cent of the remittances, which he used for buying food supplies and for meeting other expenses. I suspect that Sabi household heads would deem this percentage too high, considering that many migrants save up money to build houses and buy properties in the city. My household survey in Sabi nevertheless found that over three quarters of the migrant householders send money to their *kagume*. Nine household heads out of twenty also said that the money they received was enough to cover extra *biraado* items, such as meat and condiments, and to pay for milling the grains. In some of the larger households with several men abroad, migrants have also introduced systematic ways of pooling individual contributions in order to buy rice in bulk and to create a communal pot for the *fish money*. As the main recipient and manager, the household head exercises in such cases discretionary power over considerable sums of money.

It is true that household heads like Alhaji tend to downplay the amounts they receive, complaining that migrants keep most of the money for themselves and give only a paltry sum to their *kagume*. Yet such complaints can be strategies, first to avoid being overwhelmed by requests from other householders, and second to increase the inflow of remittances from abroad. For instance, during an informal visit to a household in 2007, I told the *kagume* that the compound was in my view well built with large mansions. He countered that the buildings were old and his brothers

abroad were not doing enough for him and for the compound. A few days later, I returned to that compound to interview M. (c. 40), one of his migrant brothers recently arrived in Sabi for his holiday. After a while we touched on the same topic:

M: People are never satisfied ... if you don't do it, some would say 'You don't want to help me' and 'You are bad person': that would make me feel bad.

P: Do you hear these things abroad?

M: Of course, you hear that people in Sabi say: 'Look, this boy [young man] has been over there for a long time and he's done nothing. Look at the other boy in the other house, he did this and that' ... Sometimes even my elder brother [the *kagume*] here [does that] ... I don't say anything, but sometimes I say 'What about you? Why don't you go and try? I helped myself, nobody helped me!' ... Just last week I received a call from my [other] brother [who is abroad]. He said that he's helping the big [*sic*] brother here all the time, but [the latter] is still complaining. Maybe, he wanted to stop helping him. But I said: 'You're not helping him, you're helping all the family. Don't be mad about that'. You know this man [the *kagume*] went nowhere and he thinks everything is easy over there, that you just pick up money in the street and you want to keep it to yourself.

Jealousy (*suuxe*) vis-à-vis the accomplishments of relatives and neighbours is said to be a strong lever on people's motivation to remit and invest at home. Thus, the *kagume* can mobilize discourses of virtuosity and even fuel competition for prestige in order to ensure an appropriate flow of money from his dependents abroad.

However, although complaining can be a strategy, it also betrays a weakness, namely that the *kagume* is forced to mobilize moral arguments to elicit the distribution of resources he does not possess. On the one hand, by keeping to the basic provision of staples, the *kagume* can step away from the plethora of new needs which have arisen in households, and shift the responsibility for the growing list of products which householders strive to include in the *biraado* to married men and women in his *ka* (though he is also one of them). On the other, by so doing, he legitimizes the autonomy of *dimbayanu* and individuals in his compound, and with it the potential detour of money from the remittances earmarked for *biraado*. The problem for the *kagume* is not only controlling expatriate members and their resources; he is also forced to negotiate access to migrant resources with other stayers, and with their moral power, and willingness, to mobilize people and attract resources. In some households, people may eat together from the same bowl to honour the conviviality of communal consumption, but then they may retreat into their sections

and supplement their diets with other delicacies. In addition to breakfast, some people find couscous not palatable or filling enough, and if money is available, they buy bread or prepare other dishes. Although this is not a new arrangement, people watch very closely what other members of the joint-household are willing to share and what they systematically consume amongst themselves. Needless to say, accusations of stinginess and selfishness abound in households.

Not all *kagumu* are therefore in a position to voice complaints. During one interview, I asked the *kagume* to say whether he deemed the remittances he received sufficient. He rapidly scanned the surroundings and then shook his head and whispered that he was not satisfied with the efforts of his younger brothers. As I leaned forward to hear what he was saying, he explained that he was whispering because he was afraid that the women in the compound might hear him complain and report it to their husbands and sons abroad. He feared that this could have repercussions on him. Like other householders, the activities and behaviour of the *kagume* are under scrutiny. The rumours circulating about Alhaji's flamboyant lifestyle can be read against the backdrop of stories of *kagumu* who mistake remittances earmarked for *biraado* for personal allowances, or squander the fruit of their sons' hard work by, for example, inviting their friends to lavish restaurant meals. For the migrant it would be extremely difficult to protest, partly because of the distance, partly because of the risk of causing a family row which might eventually turn against him. Villagers have thus developed transnational systems to prevent the misappropriation of collective resources. Some migrants have credit arrangements with local shopkeepers to buy and/or deliver rice and other goods directly to their compounds. Shopkeepers are then paid upon the migrant's return or through informal remittance networks (usually external to the household). In this way, the migrant avoids sending raw cash to family members, who may spend it inappropriately. Sometimes the mother or the brother of the migrant acts as the main contact and keeps the migrant informed about the supplies. It must be said that the difference between prevention of misappropriation and marginalization is narrow. Such systems can be put in place with the complicity of given household members to bypass the *kagume* altogether, thereby undermining the substance of his authority while leaving his formal position apparently intact for public decorum.

In sum, declining rural incomes and forms of saving have deprived household heads of assets linked to production. The increasing monetization of *biraado* has further exacerbated dependence on off-farm incomes. As a consequence, the *kagume* relies on normative discourses to maintain a sufficient level of pooling between the components of the household.

To be sure, migrant *hustlers* learn from childhood to remit to their families, and indeed their virtuosity sometimes channels more remittances than needed towards their *kagume* 'sitting' in Sabi. However, as *hustlers* are also subject to multiple requests from other household members, the moral power of the *kagume* is often negotiated with other people too.

Around a Meal Bowl: Creating Conviviality and Male Authority

Meal bowls are also 'good to think' about the social work that *kagumu* and other adult men perform on a daily basis in migrant households. Women carry out most of the domestic chores and rearing of children, and except for farming, they spend most of their day at home. Men, in contrast, are often outside, looking for food and money for their families, or sitting with friends in the *ghettos* or seating platforms. Yet they are expected to be home at given times, in particular during the main meals: eating out on a daily basis might be taken as a sign that food is short or tasteless at home. But sit-down meals are also a vital event for honouring the conviviality of the house, marking gendered spaces and instructing male children in proper rural conduct; in short, for creating and ordering relatedness. By taking a close-up look at the social space around the meal bowl, I thus seek to show how male presence in a migrant household has an accrued value, or is by contrast undercut by other subtle dynamics. Since, as a long-term guest, I was also expected to go back home for meals, I will mainly draw on my observations in Sumbunu-kunda, my host household.

In 2012, the Sumbunu *ka* had two sections which were pooled as one household. All the male elders had either died or settled abroad and in Serekunda. The men in the section where I was lodged were all grown up: Musa (39), Ousman (36) and Ibrahima (24), all sons of the same father and mother. With Tamba (32) gone to Angola to join his only brother Sankung's (42) business, only male children were representing the other section of the *ka*. Ibrahima, Tamba's son, was four years old, whereas Dadi and Hussein, Sankung's sons, were eleven and six respectively. In kinship terms, since all of the grown-up men were agnates of the same generation (i.e., brothers), these boys figured as the sons (*lenyugu*) of Musa, Ousman and Ibrahima.

Besides fathers and sons, there were also two nephews (*negaremmu*) with us at this time. One was Suleyman (8), the son of Kumba (Musa's half-sister, or father's second wife's daughter) who, having divorced her husband in Serekunda, had returned to her father's compound, bringing her three young children along. The latest arrival was Ali (12), the only

child of Haja, a married woman from the Sankung's section. Haja had lived in Serekunda in a house built by her husband who had emigrated to the U.S., but illness had sapped her energies, and being alone and struggling to carry out her daily chores, she decided to find solace and support in her paternal compound.

With a total of five children and three adults (plus myself), occasions to observe the dynamics around the meal bowl abounded. Meals map the social space of the *ka*. A small bowl is usually delivered to the male elder(s), and then a large one is delivered to the adult men. The women will eat from another collective bowl. Until the age of four or five, children eat with their mothers from the women's bowl, and then either join the older children's bowl (if there is one), move to the men's one or team up with the elders, depending on the size, composition and internal organization of the *ka*. At Sumbunu-kunda all men and male children ate from the same bowl. Kneeling down around the men's bowl marks an entry into a gendered space of sociality governed by specific rules. Eating from the same bowl has strong and explicit connotations of sharing and unity, though not necessarily of relaxed commensality and equality. Food is consumed quickly and often in silence, with people kneeling (or sitting on small stools) shoulder to shoulder and portioning food with their right hand, or more rarely with a spoon.¹⁰ When a conversation begins, it is the adult men who start it; children and boys are often too shy to speak freely in front of their seniors, and they are in fact expected to maintain a deferential attitude.

While the space and time around the meal bowl is not necessarily one of austerity and tension, it is certainly one of gendered discipline and respect in which the grown men instruct the young ones. Musa was older than Ousman, and food was delivered to his hut, but of the two, Ousman was the one who grew up in Sabi and knew how to govern the household, organize the farms and look after the livestock. Though Musa certainly added his contribution, Ousman was also the more active one in reprimanding the children for their misconduct around the meal bowl. During lunch and dinner, the sauce would not be poured on the rice or millet until every child had washed his hands and knelt down appropriately and close enough to the bowl to avoid spilling food on the floor whilst eating. Time and again, adult men pointed to the grains of rice lying on the floor before a child, remarking on the waste of *biraa* he had caused, and occasionally forcing him to gather them up (which is also said to fetch *baraji*, divine recompense). Ousman would sometimes glance at a child, waiting to see if he corrected himself, before saying something. And when someone shifted the bowl while taking a handful of food, he sometimes hit them on the head, a punishment which even has a specific name

(*kukki*). As Dadi once explained to me after I witnessed such an event: 'It's good, so when you go to another compound they will say you have respect [*daroye*]'. The boys were expected to show respect in a number of other ways, such as by avoiding looking up and staring at others, something Hussein was often reprimanded for. Also, as I was considered a guest (*mukke*), the older boys began to emulate their fathers/uncles by dropping chunks of meat or fish they found in the sauce on my side of the bowl. Meat is meant for the seniors to share, so that Ousman and his brothers would eventually redistribute it among the children.

Of all the boys around the basin, Ali was the most frequent target of correction. Ali stood out as a city boy: he was chubbier than most children, he had a prickly character and he was prone to whining in the way that most Europeans would accept as childish behaviour, but that in the Gambian countryside denotes lack of character and discipline. Ali preferred to eat at his maternal rather than his paternal *ka*, which was located only two hundred metres away, and where he was supposed to spend time. 'Over there', Ousman explained once with a smile, 'when they see a boy from the city, they beat him like a donkey'. Being among his maternal uncles did not, however, spare Ali from being scolded. At meal times, Ali often landed both knees on the floor, instead of keeping at least one upwards under the chin, and as he was eating somewhat hastily, he often spilt food on the floor. When told off, Ali would often sulk, and sometimes he would answer back impolitely. The informal relationship between uncles and nephews enabled him to get away with his bravado, the theatricality of which was often met with laughter and compassion by the adults. Ousman would tell Ibrahima, who was annoyed by Ali's quick temper and bold attitude, to be patient with the boy: 'That's the life he is used to, you have to go little by little'. But on some occasions, Ousman too would teach him a lesson, though he rarely went beyond threatening him with corporeal punishment. Ali was often described as *bono* (spoiled, wasted), a statement about his lack of discipline. 'The life he is used to' was not simply that of the city, but also that of too close a proximity with his mother, unbalanced by the presence of an adult man. A boy of his age was expected to have moved away some distance from his mother and to help adults instruct his younger agnates. But his father had been away for over ten years, prevented from returning by his 'illegal' status, and in Serekunda his mother lived far away from her relatives. Now that Ali was spending time with his uncles, the latter remarked, he had to learn to know and respect his seniors.

In a household like Sumbunu-kunda, where all the fathers of male children are away to *hustle* for money, social fatherhood is, in sum, performed by the adult men who stay behind. At times, however, I had the

impression that men felt the children's mothers jeopardized their efforts. During late afternoon hours, children often turned to their mothers for extra food. As husbands and relatives abroad sent money to these women, the latter were able to purchase food items, from candies to bread, in shops in order to satisfy the appetites and palates of their children. When we later called for dinner by shouting the names of children around, it so happened that the child or his mother would shout back that he was *fogu* (full, satiated). A man would then reply, sarcastically, *nuwari* (thank you), meaning: more food for us. Alternatively, the child would eat two or three handfuls to honour the commensality and then he would get up and go. On other occasions, we would start eating even if the child was not around, remarking that 'his bread is there' or 'his mother is there', that is: he is not going to starve for his mother will provide for him. The subtext to all such apparently petty comments and events is that the increasing importance of secondary, more privatized meals in a single *dimbaya* can withdraw children from the space around the meal bowl, and thus from the presence of male sociality and authority.

Lest I caricature Ousman and his brothers as severe would-be patriachs whose authority is subverted by the passive resistance of the married women, let me clarify that the picture is often more complex than that. In Sumbunu-kunda, I never had the impression that women meant to withdraw their children from around the meal bowl, let alone call into question the role of adult men. On the contrary, women often took pride in their sons' conduct at meal time or their ability to perform certain manly tasks in the compound and in the bush. Women were certainly not shy to grab a stick and threaten to whip their children, but when they were met with stubbornness, or when children fought and insulted each other's families in shameful ways, they called on Ousman or Musa to deal with them. Conversely, while women did provide most of the care and affection to the children, men also played a role. When slightly before dusk Ousman opened his small shop by the gate and sat on the veranda, boys and girls often flocked to him to tell about their games, school and skirmishes of the day. Laughter and jokes reverberated from a distance, and the smaller children could be seen climbing onto his lap.

The ritual of the meal, and the other mundane activities that extend from it, are one among several activities through which domesticity is produced as a gendered and pedagogical space. In many households like Sumbunu-kunda, where all the fathers of children have gone *hustling*, adult men are required to act as social husbands and fathers, as well as carers for the ailing elders. Male authority emerges in this space especially from the kind of disciplinary and affective presence that, in addition to farm work, is believed to turn boys into *hustlers*. As with food so

with sociality: this role of household governance is not automatically acknowledged by other members of the *ka*, and is rendered slippery by the numerous intended or unintended detours in the making of everyday commensality and communality. The complaints and sarcasm with which such detours are met by men are indicative of the anxiety surrounding the acknowledgement of male authority in the household.

Governing Change: Cooperation, Conflict and Translocality in Household Formation

Having taken a close-up view of the meal bowl as a microcosm of ordering principles of domesticity, let me now zoom out and give a panoramic view of the cumulative effects of these forms of conviviality. I have already commented upon the wider significance of *biraado* for the patrilineage. In this section I pay specific attention to the longer temporality and wider spatiality of the everyday practices of cooperation and conflict in order to bring into focus how the position and the perception of ‘sitting at home’ is shaped by translocal dynamics. Governing the household as a *kagume* implies ensuring cooperation, thus preventing conflicts from escalating into schisms that fragment domestic unity. I will show that diasporization and the creating of new homes in Serekunda by migrant householders contribute in positive and negative ways to the onus of male authority, and in particular it makes it more difficult for the *kagume* to predict and control the evolution of household formation.

In addition to sustaining a sense of descent, honour and shared destiny, the continual social and geographical emplacement of the *ka* has been vital for sustaining Soninke mobility. The *ka* provides a safe haven against the odds of life in ‘exile’. One may recall here the characterization of the travel-bush or exile as a space of danger and uncertainty, and of home (*kaara*) as a safe, enduring place. The *ka* occupies the most important position in the hierarchy of homes (household, village, nation, etc.) denoted by the term *kaara*. As I was told time and again: ‘When the path of travel fails, you can always come back: this is your home’. This has happened often enough in the recent history of Soninke migration to make such statements something more than an idealization of homecoming. It was village households that absorbed the kinsmen fleeing Sierra Leone when civil war broke out there in 1992, as well as the many other migrants who in the subsequent years returned from conflict-ridden or inhospitable countries in West and Central Africa. Similarly, in a period where migrants in the West are affected by ever more uncertain situations – illegalization, deportation and, increasingly,

unemployment – families back home once again bear the costs and failures of the adventure of travel.

The refuge function of rural households is crucial for women as well. Weddings are quite literally rites of passage from the parental to the marital *ka* that mark the beginning of what might be called, drawing on the imaginary of Soninke migration, ‘marital exile’. One will never hear a woman describing her husband’s compound as her *ka*; for her, going to *kaara* means going to her father’s compound, whether this is located a few metres away or in a different village. In addition to ordinary visits, married women return to their *ka* in case of need or crisis. Haja and Ali’s return to Sumbunu-kunda exemplifies the role of the *ka* as a source of support, care and affection in times of hardship and logistical difficulty. Even more telling is the case of Kumba, whereby the return to her father’s compound signified the end of marriage with a reversal of the outgoing movement marked by the wedding. It is also standard practice for women experiencing conjugal problems or difficulties in their marital *ka* to come back temporarily to their parents in order to force their husbands to reconsider their position or to begin negotiating better treatment. Thus, as a proto-diasporic group, married women also have practical as well as affective interests in cultivating the presence of their *ka*, and therefore legitimizing *kagumaaxu*, at least in their paternal *ka*. This is also the case for *follaku*. One man in his mid thirties once told me that his elder sisters insisted that he should ‘sit at home’ because their parents had died, and now, with his only other brother living abroad, their section had been left untended. Even though their father’s younger brother was the *kagume*, they complained that when they wanted to visit home and commemorate their father they had ‘no place to go to’.

The everyday presence of adult men in the *ka* is, in other words, framed within a longer temporality and wider spatiality of social, political, economic, moral and affective exchanges that are vital for villagers’ sense of belonging and security. However, households are rarely fully cooperating, pooling and consensual units. If meal bowls are a powerful symbol of sharing, the micro-detours and tensions surrounding them stand for wider disputes over resources and aspirations of autonomy. With reference to the Mandinka household in lower Gambia, Pamela Kea (2013: 110) has argued that the enduring character of its moral economy is premised on a ‘logic of negotiation’ where men and women make claims on the labour and resources of their dependants. The overall outcome of negotiation is the reinforcement and enforcement of gender and generational hierarchies in the household, something that is also clearly evident among the Soninke, whose cohesion was noticed and admired by many Mandinka elders I knew. On the other hand, negotiation is an important element

of the domestic moral economy precisely because competing claims are structural to the household. What on the outside may appear as large and cohesive units, on a closer look may constitute the outcome of what Amartya Sen (1990) called ‘cooperative conflicts’ in which the members of the household continuously bargain over contributing to the totality versus dividing resources of various kinds.

In the Mande world, the tension between cooperation and conflict in domestic groups is epitomized by the competing idioms of matrilineal and patrilineal solidarity (Bird and Kendall 1980: 14–16; van Braun and Webb 1989: 516–17; Jansen 1996: 661–62; Razy 2007b: 73; Wooten 2009; Kea 2013: 109–10). In Mande, the figure of the mother is associated with ‘peace and harmony’ (Jansen 1996: 661). The concept of *maarenmaaxu* (in Mandinka: *badingya*) – literally, being children of the same mother – is used as a metaphor of solidarity and equality in several domains other than that of kinship. The opposite of *maarenmaaxu* is *faabarenmaaxu* or *faabanbanaaxu* (in Mandinka: *fadingya*), being children of the same father. Agnatic relations are in fact thought to be fraught with hierarchy, rivalry and individualism. Ideally, the combination of these two forces produces the ‘hierarchical solidarity’ (Viti 2007: 168) that holds the household together, where mutuality is complemented by an incentive to excellence that enables change and progress. In a harmonious polygynous marriage, women use their authority and affective grip on their children to encourage the latter to support the *dimbaya* and the *ka* as a whole. However, much as they symbolize unity, mothers are viewed as potential splitters too. From the point of view of men, the danger of children becoming too close to their own mothers (as in the case of Ali) is that they will develop an attachment with their siblings of the same mother, and will be more unfeeling towards their brothers and sisters born of the other wives of their father. Although this emotional dynamic is normal, the (colder) sense of morality associated with the patrilineage should prevent these attachments from degenerating into rivalries and divisions. The *kagume* is thus expected to ensure the balance between *maarenmaaxu* and *faabarenmaaxu*. Not surprisingly, both divisions within a *dimbaya* or a *ka* usually come to the fore after the death of the father or elder, the unifying figure, after which cohorts of siblings may part along the maternal line.

Migration influences dynamics of cooperation and conflict in many ways, one of the most significant being the increasing translocality of household formation. In the past, when a joint-household split, the two resulting households would either remain within the premises of the same *ka*, or the ‘junior’ household would found a new *ka* in the proximity of the old one or in a different location. Some *dimbayanu* also moved to other villages, especially to farming villages on the Senegalese side of the

border, which have eventually become permanent settlements. These short-distance resettlements continue, but diasporization has added a layer of complexity to the process. To simplify, let me concentrate on the houses that migrants have built in Serekunda.

Unlike the rural *ka*, houses built in the city are the migrant's private property, his investments for the future and eventually a place of future return. Nevertheless, whilst he is still abroad, the migrant may decide to take his wife and children to the city, even when his parents are still alive and, normally, his wife should be working and cooking for the family. One accepted reason for doing so is to provide a quality education for the children. Yet this may conceal other motivations too. As an alternative to family reunions abroad, a wife may put pressure on her migrant husband to buy or rent a house in Serekunda for her, where she will manage her household away from her in-laws, control *biraado* and *fish money*, and moreover skip farm work. So significant is this arrangement that, in order to win them over, some migrants promise the girls whom they court that they will take them to the city right after the wedding. And some effectively do so. After this move, the migrant may still contribute to *biraado* in the Sabi *ka*, thus making it difficult to describe as scission properly speaking. His householders may nevertheless feel that, as a young *kagume* put it, 'he [my brother] spends all he has on his wife' and 'he has dumped us'.

Internal divisions and translocality can work together. Even though urban houses are private properties according to state law, some rural relatives de facto subject them to a process of re-collectivization. One often hears the parents as well as the siblings of a migrant speak of his urban compound as 'our house in Serekunda'. Some wealthy Sabinko even reserve a section of their urban compound for rural guests, and after the death of the owners, the heirs may be encouraged to keep the compound as a collective family property rather than divide it up or sell it. At the same time, this translocality is often *in* the *ka* but not *of* it. That is to say, the rural–urban extension of the household usually involves one *dimbaya* or *follake*, or even the migrant's mother and the cohort of her children, whilst other sections in the *ka* may not have access to the urban houses or have ones of their own. At the local level, the village *ka* may thus appear as a unique formation, with one hearth and one budget for *biraado*; but when viewed from a broader spatial perspective, it may constitute one pole of a translocal formation in which a significant portion of migrant resources gravitate around the urban property.

The multiplicity and simultaneity of the forces of integration and disaggregation within and without the *ka* make it difficult to establish precise rules or cycles of household formation. It is perhaps this broad range

of possible developments that confront village *kagumu* with an open question about the future. Whereas a man may be in a secure economic situation at one stage, when the moral and social geography of a household changes, the flows of redistribution may follow a different course. Wondering about what would happen when Alhaji's father passed away, his friends reminded him and themselves that governing a household works well insofar as other members keep a foot in it.

* * *

One afternoon in early 2007, I was interviewing Alhaji on the veranda of his house, a brick mansion built by his father's brother with diamond money. As I asked him about the economy of the compound, Alhaji reiterated his complaints about his brothers, especially the young one, who had been away for long years without building anything and sending only miserly amounts for *biraado*. 'The same mother and father!' remarked Alhaji, invoking a normative sibling solidarity to criticize his brother, then adding: 'They think they are not from here, they live a good life there', further emphasizing that his brothers had stepped out of rural hardship. The bitter irony of Alhaji's *kagumaaxu* was, indeed, that his position was undermined by his full brothers and rescued by his agnatic ones, who had formed an autonomous *ka* in Serekunda over a generation ago. This is not very usual in Sabi, but rather than an exception to the process of household formation I have just described, Alhaji's story represents a specific instance of it, one in which cohesion and disaggregation worked together in particular ways.

Despite all positive examples of *kagumaaxu* in Sabi, in the eyes of young men, Alhaji's story epitomized the hesitancy with which young heads of household must entrust their future to other household members. Running a household, especially in a regime of internal and international migration, implies betting on a 'cooperative solution' (Sen 1990), securing the compliance of a multiplicity of persons and mediating diverging aspirations of autonomy and masculinity polarized by urban investments. Powerful norms and mores internalized as virtuous habits during childhood still ensure the loyalty of many expatriate householders; yet many Gambians would find that relatives are always a surprise. It is indeed the word surprise that Alhaji repeatedly uttered on that pitch-dark night when we sat together at his friends' gathering, and when he tried to convince me that he should migrate in order to find 'my own money', not only because, as a man, he was expected to *hustle*, but also because, I would argue, he deemed it safer to reduce his dependency on others in view of future changes in his household structure. Confronted with the unexpectedness of kinship solidarity, some young men thus argue that

they can only 'sit at home' if 'those abroad do everything for me'; even better if migrants provide the *kagume* with an income-generating activity, as we saw in Chapter 3, when Mohamed's brother helped him set up a shop for him to have his own money in lieu of relying on him all the time.

However, travellers sustain *kagumaaxu* also because they depend on it and acquire renown by investing in it. Instead of breaking away, many migrants leave their wives and children in the compound, and when things go wrong abroad, they rely on their fathers and brothers back home to tighten their belts and provide *biraado* for everybody in the compound. Even when migrants proceed to emancipate their nuclear families, as the case of Haja and Ali showed, this process is not necessarily irreversible or disruptive. Migrants' motivations to remit are often reductively described as an insurance strategy (Stark and Lucas 1988), a label which does not quite capture the complexity of motivations, sentiments and power relations that hold people together as members of an enduring domestic moral economy, and especially conceals the mundane work carried out by those who stay in the household to weave relatedness across wide distances. In this chapter, I have shown that *kagumaaxu* maintains its centrality because it helps regenerate on a daily basis the forms of conviviality, the hierarchical solidarities and the gendered spaces that project the translocal *ka* into the future as a community of destiny. The honour and hesitancy of *kagumaaxu* lie, therefore, not simply in (un)fulfilled kinship obligations or (in)secure migrant economies, but in the recognition of this daily labour of presence through which home and domesticity are produced and maintained over time (Buggenhagen 2012). When I asked Alhaji about whether his own brothers had sent him anything of late, he replied: 'I have got pictures from them'. He then leaned forward and, with his head on one side and eyes wide open, asked: 'Do they think I can eat those?!'

Notes

1. I adapt François Bayart's (2000) concept of extraversion – outward orientation of state politics and national economy – to the domestic realm.
2. Reference here is to a later anthropology of gender that, albeit still largely concerned with women, sheds light on the making of gendered subject positions (Abu-Lughod 1993; Moore 1994).
3. On the Soninke *ka*, see also: Pollet and Winter (1971: 356–58) and Razy (2007b: 71ff).
4. Estimate based on my household survey in 2006/7 (see Chapter 1).
5. The Mandinka equivalent of *kingide* – *sinkiroo* – is often used to define the household (Seibert and Sidibe 1992: 18; Kea 2010: 113). Too much emphasis on consumption,

however, risks leaving out of the picture the migrants, who do not consume within the premises of the compound but still contribute to food stocks.

6. With respect to Senegambia, a partial exception to this tendency is Donna Perry's (2009) article on fathers and sons in a Wolof region of northern Senegal bordering the Gambia. In a recent article, Alice Bellagamba (2013) offers a nuanced analysis of mostly urbanized male elders' struggle for recognition in the Gambia.
7. A minority of poor households, however, eat millet also for lunch.
8. Rice and sugar are also a common Ramadan gift for more distant relatives outside the *ka*.
9. One is led to think that increased rural–urban circulation has played a role in this. Polak (2007), reporting on a Bamana/Bambara (Mali) village, also highlights generational changes being mediated by consumption habits such as sugary porridge and other breakfast foods. Such habits have been largely introduced by rural–urban migrants.
10. Metal spoons are associated with European manners, and people may thus not use them, so as to avoid signalling distinction from the rest or from their rural origins.