Bodywork: Dress as Cultural Tool

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Bodywork: Dress as Cultural Tool

Dress and Demeanor in the South of Senegal

by

Janet Andrewes

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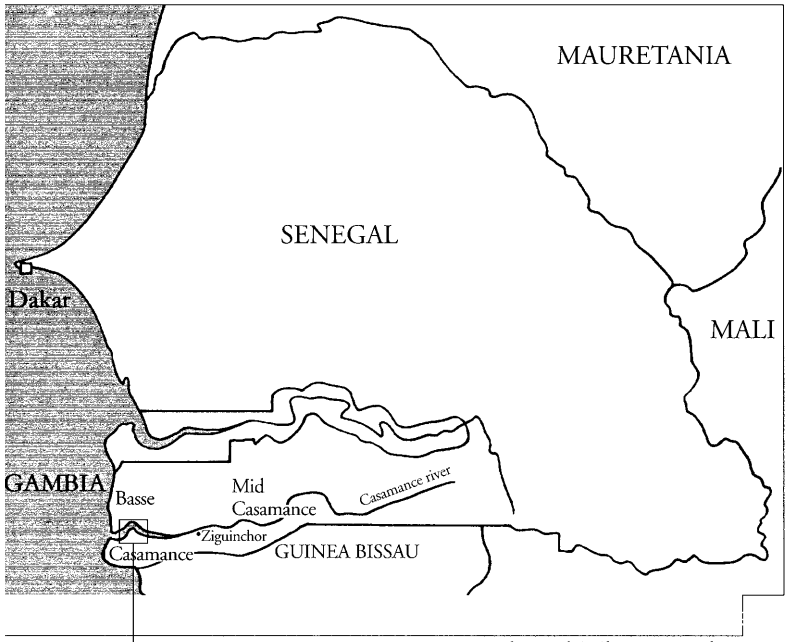
In memory of my mother, Katherine Sheila Barne



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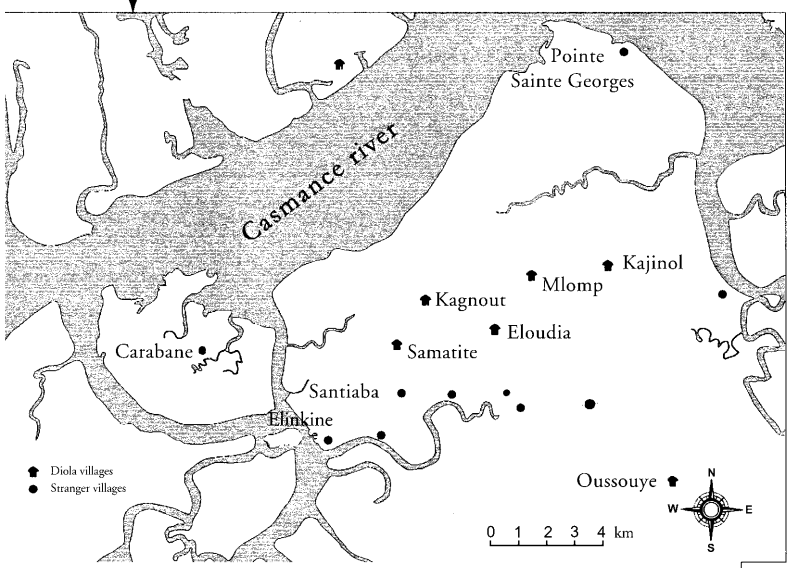

Fieldwork area

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Oussouye is a small market town in the west of the Basse Casamance,[1] the region that forms the south western border of Senegal and that distinguishes itself from the rest of the country by its abundant rainfall and by its lush green vegetation. The daily market is only one of the reasons for the bustling character of the place. People come here from the surrounding villages not only to buy food and household necessities but also to visit the hospital, to make applications or depositions at the local administrative offices, to visit relations or friends at the prison, to attend the church or the mosque, or to visit the *marabout*.[2] Stroll around by the market place for an hour or two and you can hardly fail to come across Gouho Diatta, who owns the small village inn, the *Auberge du Routard*, hurrying along on his scooter dressed only in an ancient pair of shorts, Monsieur Ndaye the tailor, splendid in a light blue damask robe, yellow pointed shoes on his feet and a little white crocheted bonnet on his head, and Benedict Lambal, the mayor of the town, neat as ever in a clean cotton shirt and well pressed trousers. You may then be struck by another distinguishing feature of the region: the heterogeneity of the way people look and of the clothes they wear in this part of the world when compared with the rest of Senegal. This has to do with their religion: while the population of Senegal is almost entirely Muslim, the people who live in the Basse Casamance, the Diola, belong within three different religious traditions. Many of them are Muslim but, alongside them, there are large communities of Christians and also of Animists and each of these groups has its own more or less distinct appearance.

This study takes a fresh look at the link between a way of dressing and the cultural identity—in this case the religious identity—of the wearer. Recent anthropological interest in clothes and in dressing has pointed to the strong and subtle ways in which dress represents

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[1] See map, p. vi.
[2] An Islamic healer.

and communicates social and cultural identity. Authors have shown dress to be both reflective of and conducive to social ranking (e.g Weiner 1989), ethnic identity (e.g. Eicher and Erikosima 1995) and gender construction (Pancake 1992); it can function as a sign of status (e.g. Cort 1989), a badge of recognition (e.g. Hendrickson 1996), a form of social protest (e.g. Frederick 1997), an expression of identity (e.g. Masquelier 1996), and a form of hegemony (e.g. Kuper 1973); it can also be seen as a way of establishing political authority (e.g. Schreiner 1997) or of challenging it (e.g. Chapman 1995). In these essays, it has been the semiotic potential of dress, whether signalling differences and distinctions or establishing cohesion, that has tended to interest the authors. Together they have overwhelmingly demonstrated that dress has an important role to play in any society.

However, these authors have tended to see dressing essentially as a surface activity, a matter of representation; dress is treated as a form of material communication, a signal or symbol which fits unproblematically on to the body. In so doing, they have tended to ignore the relationship that exists between dress and the dynamic potential of the body. Clothes are not made to be hung on a clothes line but rather to be worn on a live, moving body. The literature tends to omit, or does no more than mention, the fact that dress is also a powerful tool, which influences, guides, shapes and moulds the body of the wearer, affects and effects its movements, its stance and its gestures. It therefore overlooks an important part of the relationship between dress and cultural identity, viewing the link as you might understand it by looking at a photo, as a static link: a certain way of dressing symbolizes a certain way of life. It might be more realistic and more precise to view the link between dress and identity as a dynamic connection, one that might be made evident in a video clip for example. Whether we realize it or not, we recognize much about a person's class or background by the way he or she moves or stands, holds a glass or holds the body, for there are few things more characteristic of a cultural or social group than the common gestures, a particular way of walking, dancing or standing. These culturally relevant movements and gestures are inevitably influenced by the conventions of dress and appearance management that hold within the group. So that when we speak about the potential of dress to communicate, identify and classify, we are usually speaking not only about dress itself, taken as a sign of identity, but also about the way dress influences the practice of identity. We are also noticing the

way in which a manner of dressing enables and empowers the wearers to carry out their social or cultural identity and put it into practice.

So here I shall be using the word 'dress' with its more verbal connotations, as it is used in terms such as 'dressing the turkey', or, in the equestrian arena, in words like 'dressage',[3] a way of preparing or training. Dressage shapes the horse's body and influences its capacity to perform by long hours of training and exercise, and, though we may be unaware of it, clothes do just that. By their constant presence on or around the body, clothes guide the wearer's stance and leave their mark on the body's muscle structures and on the way it uses the space it exists in. Clothes prompt the body to move in particular ways, slowing it down by their copious volume for example, or stimulating it to speed and movement by liberating certain parts of it. These forms of demeanour are not only typical of a certain way of life, they are also part of that life. A university professor's gown not only symbolizes the dignity of the office. It also enables her or him to practice the dignity proper to that position and to experience the decorum which accompanies it.

This study is searching for a perspective on dress that not only looks at what people do with their clothes, but also looks at what the clothes do with them, attempting to get to grips with the way in which dress forms the body and prompts it to act in a culturally appropriate manner. It will be looking at this *formative* function of dress and at the way in which dress manipulates the body's performance.

This perspective on dress puts the issue in touch with the recent literature on the body,[4] which examines the relevance of physical posture and demeanour to cultural attitudes. Bourdieu, for example, in his concept of habitus, grounds the cultural core of the person firmly in the body and in the body's movements and gestures. For Bourdieu, it is the location of the habitus in the body that makes it so secure and so enduring. He sees habitus as depending for its development on upbringing, on the human inclination to imitate and on the kinds of routine work that the body carries out. Yet it only takes a moment's reflection to realize that bodily demeanour also depends on the characteristics of the clothes which that body is in the habit of wearing. Jackson (1983, 1989) is another author who

[3] The word used for training a horse to execute intricate figures movements.
[4] E.g. Jackson 1983, 1989, Bourdieu 1977.

has written recently about the relevance of bodily disposition to cultural attitudes. He is against culture being seen as something 'superorganic', existing only in our heads or as a set of abstract ideas. For him, culture is essentially a set of practices, a form of interaction with the material world. He is unwilling to put the 'meaning' of physical disposition into words, for, like Bourdieu, he sees the relevance of such dispositions as being their situation beyond words. He claims rather that "uprightness of posture may be said to define a psychophysical relationship with the world" (1983: 328). Though neither of these authors mentions clothes as a way in which bodily disposition is effected, it seems clear that dress does belong in this context. Since dressing is a universal practice, it cannot be overlooked as a universal technique of the body. Clothes have the capacity to prompt 'uprightness', and to bring about this 'psychophysical relation with the world'. They constantly prompt, mould and shape the body's movements and position it into the conventional stance, allowing the wearer to experience and understand in a special way the ideas and notions which belong within that convention.

It is this idea—that dress has the capacity to transform the body and imbue it with essential ideas—that is to be looked at here. In the case studies, I attempt to show how a particular way of dressing produces, or helps to produce, a particular type of body, which is attuned, through practice, to the cultural beliefs and attitudes of the group in which this way of dressing holds. It looks at three small villages in southern Senegal which adhere to three different religious traditions and it compares not only the villagers' way of dressing but also the way in which the villagers organize and use their bodies in movement, gestures and stance. It links these differences to the contrasting ways in which the villagers relate to their physical, social and supernatural environment. It suggests thereby that the principles and concepts which lie at the heart of the communities' culture are entrusted to the body—embodied—partly by way of conventional forms of dress. In so doing I hope to forge a bridge between the two areas of research mentioned above: research into the sociology of dress and of the body. Dress is a forceful and subtle way of expressing identity, as writers on dress have shown. But dress must also be seen in its relation to the body, as a form of practice which, by shaping the physical disposition of the body, empowers the wearer to experience a shared cultural identity and a shared cultural understanding.

The Diola . . .

The Diola people, the majority of whom live in the Basse Casamance, in the delta of the Casamance River, have only partly converted to Islam and Christianity. For centuries groups of people have come and settled in this area, attracted by the richness of the alluvial soil. They brought with them their own religious traditions and their own special knowledge about the nature of the world. Historians such as Baum (1999) have traced the way in which these traditions of knowledge merged and intertwined, and formed themselves into new traditions similar enough to refer to, together, as Animism. These traditions shared a view of the world that saw the presence of the sacred in the physical world around them and that identified the natural and the supernatural environments. Though each newly arriving group brought along its own practices and ideas, these merged together to form a mosaic of similar though not identical cultural practices. At the end of the nineteenth century, a new set of ideas and beliefs about the world was introduced: Christian and Muslim missionaries arrived in the area, bringing with them new and different forms of knowledge about the world and its make-up, forms of knowledge that could not easily be merged with the Animist ways, nor with each other. Though many observers, for example Thomas (1959/60), the "dean of Diola ethnography" as Baum refers to him, assumed that the Animist traditions would disappear with the arrival of the European colonial powers and the world religions, this has not been the case. On the one hand, important features of Animist culture, such as the initiation rituals (*bukut*), are celebrated on an increasingly large scale, not only by Animists but also by the converts to the world religions. On the other hand there are communities in the south of the region where the beliefs and practices associated with the spirit shrine religion, Animism, remain powerfully alive. So these days you find three traditions of beliefs in the Basse Casamance—Christianity, Islam and Animism—to some extent interacting with each other, but still distinct. These three traditions also have their own practices in the way they organize matters of dress and the management of outward appearance.

The Diola are rice farmers. Prior to the Land Reform Act, which the newly independent State of Senegal passed in 1964, they owned all of the land around the mouth of the Casamance river and they

are proud of their rice culture and their abundant harvests. The importance which these sturdy peasants attach to dressing correctly and to maintaining an appropriate appearance has been a source of wonder to several authors,[5] who all tell the same story about the high proportion of income that is spent by the Diola on their clothes. This is particularly striking to the authors in view of the fact that three or four generations ago the Diola had been known for wearing very little at all. A missionary who visited the Casamance area in the mid-nineteenth century observed that the Diola "are very nearly naked" (Baum 1999: 170). He describes how the adults, both men and women, wore no more than narrow strips of cloth, made of locally grown, locally woven cotton, in strong contrast to neighbouring ethnic groups who were renowned for their elaborate and elegant garments. These days, however, the Diola appear to be making up for lost time, and for present day Diola, both men and women, the collection and maintenance of a suitable wardrobe is an ambition they almost all of them appear to share.

The transition to more elaborate forms of dress among the Diola accompanied political and cultural changes. Up until the 1920s, when the French colonizers eventually took over the Casamance region, using military force to do so, the Diola had lived in relative isolation, each small village being a politically and economically independent unit, based on extended family ties. With the advent of the French this changed, and the Diola were gradually forced into wider social and cultural networks, initially those of French West Africa, subsequently those of the modern State of Senegal. Although, outwardly, the character of these Diola villages has altered comparatively little since that time, and although the villagers have managed to hold on to many of their customs and social practices, there have been, nevertheless, far reaching changes. The arrival of the French opened up the area and made way for the Roman Catholic missionaries from Europe and Islamic proselytisers from the east and the north, who made a powerful impact on the Diola and who brought about a steady stream of converts.

One of the first things that the missionaries, both Muslim and Christian, demanded of their converts, and even of the people who were not keen to convert, was that they change their way of dressing—

[5] E.g. van der Klei 1989, Hamer 1981, Kamerbeek 1985.

or rather that they take to wearing clothes. They found the near-nakedness of the Diola farmers offensive and primitive, impossible to combine with the ideas and practices of the new religions. Though dress is often taken to be a surface activity, in contrast to religion, which affects the inner person, the people who remembered the first contacts with missionaries, and the stories they passed down, inevitably mention this. The Christian missionaries brought bolts of European cloth with them and taught the women to sew simple shifts and *camisoles*, in order that they cover their breasts. The Muslims insisted on the local weavers sewing their strips of cloth together to produce garments that covered the whole of the body, as prescribed by the Koran. Among the Diola it was the agents of religion who prompted people to wear clothes and even today it is a person's religion that remains one of the decisive factors, along with age, gender and economic resources, that determine what a person wears.

The Basse Casamance today is divided into three regions, two of them to the north of the Casamance river, and one of them south of the river. The inhabitants of all three regions consider themselves and refer to themselves as Diola, but their customs, including the way they practise their religion, differ considerably. The Kalunay is the area to the north east of the river; the inhabitants of the Kalunay were among the first Diola to convert to Islam, at the end of the nineteenth century, persuaded to do so by Mandinko migrants from the east. The Muslim customs and beliefs are by now deeply entrenched in the daily life of these villages. The inhabitants of the Boulouf, to the north west of the river, converted much later to the Islamic way of life. It was only in the second half of the twentieth century that it became increasingly rare to find a community of Animists, and the Animist tradition there finally petered out along with the century. Nowadays, the Diola communities north of the river are almost exclusively Muslim, in line with the rest of Senegal whose population is 95% Muslim. South of the Casamance river, however, in the region referred to as the Casa, the Diola communities belong to one of three religious traditions. There are a number of Diola that have converted to Islam, and many that have become Christian, but there are also many communities where the Animist traditions still hold sway. In the larger villages, the populations tend to be mixed, not only in terms of religion but also in terms of the ethnic groups that live there; they are neither exclusively Diola nor do they follow one religion. In Oussouye, for example, most of the local traders and

shopkeepers are Peul, while many of the people working in the local administrative offices are Wolof from the north of Senegal, and both of these ethnic groups are almost without exception Muslim. At the same time, the Diola who live in Oussouye may be Christian, Muslim or Animist. These communities are defined on the basis of membership to church, mosque or spirit shrine and cannot always be located geographically. Some of the smaller villages however are almost exclusively Animist, mainly those in the west of the Casa region. Other small villages, most of them so-called 'stranger' villages, are Muslim and were founded by Mandinko newcomers who arrived in the Basse Casamance at the end of the nineteenth century from what is now Mali; they were given land to cultivate by the Diola landowners. As these people came without their women and then, for several generations, married Diola wives, they usually identify themselves these days as Diola. However, like the Diola of the Kalunay, to whom they relate in many ways, they still remember their Mandinko roots and recall them in various contexts. There are also Christian[6] villages, in most cases villages where European missionaries settled in the middle of the twentieth century.

I carried out the fieldwork for this study in two small villages, one of which was Animist and one Muslim, and among the Christian community of one of the larger villages. Samatite numbers about 350 people in total but many of them live more or less permanently in the town these days.[7] Of those that remain, all except one are Animist; Samatite, despite its small size, has the most extensive and well-kept rice fields in the area. Santiaba, also small, is a Muslim 'stranger' village. It is next door to Samatite but there is little contact between the two villages. The relationship could be called one of mutual disdain. The people of Santiaba look down on their neighbours because, among other things, they do not know how to dress properly, while the people of Samatite feel themselves to be superior on account of their ability to produce abundant amounts of rice. I also looked at dress and dressing among the Christians of one of the larger villages in the region, M'lomp.

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[6] In general, 'Christian' in the context of the Basse Casamance refers to the Roman Catholic tradition of Christianity, the religion of the European missionaries who have been coming to the Casamance since the end of the nineteenth century. Protestant missions have been set up more recently in the larger villages and in Ziguinchor, but as yet their influence has been smaller.

[7] These migrants still belong in Samatite however because this is where they have their rice fields, which they come back to cultivate in the rainy season.

. . . Their dress . . .

Up to now, the anthropological literature on dress and appearance has not contained much work on the categorization of different types of dress or garments.[8] However, in the present context—the relevance of dress to the body and the body's demeanour—it would seem sensible to at least make a distinction between tailored clothes, flat-cut clothes and wrapped cloth. Flat-cut clothes include all those garments that have no shape or curves in their lines. Though the fabric may be cut and sewn, the seams are essentially straight, and the garments make no attempt to fit or adapt themselves to the rounded and articulated mass of the body. Many of the styles of garment originating in the Middle East and North Africa are made in this way, and these are the kinds of clothes that are worn in the Muslim villages in the Basse Casamance.

Tailored clothes, on the other hand, are constructed along more intricate and complicated lines; tailoring techniques allow garments to fit closely to the curves, protuberances and articulations that make up the human body. Tailored clothes constrict the body and interfere with the body's muscular structures to such an extent that they have to be seen as relating to the body in a quite different way than flat-cut clothes or wrapped cloth. They control and take over the body, and they demand a 'standard body', which is only allowed a small margin of deviance in its volume and in its measurements. It seems as though the body that is adapted to tailored clothes is to some extent hidden from view, submerged and enclosed; the tailored clothes, cut to the shape of the standardized body, take its place. In general, European clothes have been based on this type of dress ever since the art of tailoring emerged in the courts of southern Europe in the course of the sixteenth century. Tailored clothes are identified with the sophistication and civilization that has characterized European society from that time on.[9] It follows from this that the missionaries

[8] A notable exception is the essay by Eicher and Roach-Higgens in Barnes and Eicher (1992).

[9] Since the 1960s Western women's dress has gradually been working itself out of the category of 'tailored' clothes. The emphasis on the beautiful body, which no longer wants to be covered up, the influence of Japanese designers with their more inventive use of fabric, and the arrival of stretch fabrics have all influenced the relation between the body and female dress in the West. These factors have largely been passed by in the missionary community of the Basse Casamance however.

who came to the Basse Casamance at the end of the nineteenth century were also accustomed to wearing tailored clothes and that they passed on this custom to the converts that they made here. These are the garments that are usually worn among the Christians of M'lomp.

Flat-cut garments may be less demanding when it comes to the body's volume and measurements than tailored clothes are, but they ask a great deal more of the body's performance. The *grand boubou* for example, a garment that is worn by men and women in the Casamance—which is simply a long, wide piece of fabric folded in two and sewn at the sides, leaving room for the arms and with a hole cut out for the head—is not an easy garment to wear in the correct fashion. It demands that the wearer's body has acquired the social know-how to carry the garment in the appropriate fashion and with the appropriate dignity. Some men and women never achieve the bodily grace needed to wear the *grand boubou*. Once a person has learned to wear the *grand boubou*, however, it helps him or her to maintain and augment a physical elegance. The wearer is compelled to move at a suitably leisurely and deliberate pace, keeping the body upright. To learn to wear the *grand boubou* is in fact to go through a form of test, which some people never pass. Though these kinds of flat-cut clothes often hide much of the body, the dynamics of the body are more clearly on show, and they allow the body more freedom. The body that is produced by the *grand boubou* remains more independent, more all-of-a-piece, than the body that wears tailored clothes.

Anthropologists and others have convincingly illustrated that all social communities dress. However, not all communities wear clothes; in some communities, dress codes do not include garments in their conventions. In these cases the body may be dignified and embellished with body painting or bands of cloth wrapped around the body, with tattoos, scarification patterns, metal, bone or shell decorations, piercings or in other ways. The dress practices of the small-scale Animist communities described by the missionary in Baum's book fall into this category. These 'traditional' Diola had a striking way of dressing their bodies, but it did not include clothes. Apart from the narrow strips of cloth covering the genitals, they were known for the small coloured beads that were pressed into cuts in the skin on the chest and for the silver metal earrings that they wore around the lobes of the ear. They went bare foot, and the married women shaved their hair. Although the present-day inhabitants of Samatite do own and wear

clothes, in some contexts village dress practices make clothes of secondary importance to thick cotton cloth wraps—the *pagnes noirs*—that they still wear and value.

. . . AND THEIR DEMEANOUR

Furthermore, the differences do not just attach to the styles of dress and to the amount of effort that people are expected to put into dressing correctly. One also sees that the particular way of dressing that belongs to the Muslim, Christian or Animist villages in the Basse Casamance appears to produce three different sorts of bodies, three different types of people. It is no exaggeration to say that not only the manner of dressing but also the manner of walking, standing and just 'being' is distinctive for all three religious groups. As the Diola themselves put it, the *façon de faire* is different for each of the villages. Particularly if you look at the older members of the community, at the people whose bodies have been moulded by the habits of a lifetime, it is generally not too difficult to tell which community he or she belongs to. One could put it like this: the lean, straight body of the Animist, man or woman, is above all a 'functional' body. It stands at ninety degrees to the ground, and its lean physicality is attuned to its interaction with the natural environment. The particularly Animist gait has been produced by the absence of shoes or sandals; years spent walking about with bare feet on the sandy soil generates a certain relationship between these two elements—the body and the ground. The Animist body is a 'working' body.

The Muslim's body, on the other hand, which is attuned to the social rather than to the natural environment, inclines ever so slightly backwards, eased to the rear by a number of factors. For the woman, it may be the heeled slippers and the generous *foulard*, the wide scarf wrapped around the head, that produces the backwards tilt; for the man it may be the pointed leather shoes, *babouches*, which have no back to them, or the walking stick or the rolled umbrella, which produces the suitably ponderous stroll. For the man, this particular stroll, purposeful but unhurried, may be maintained by the weight of the many garments he wears. If he is important enough he may wear as many as five, worn in layers: loose fitting trousers, chemise, tunic, *Zabador* and over the top a capacious *grand boubou*. The women

also wear the voluminous *grand boubou*, but then usually in a somewhat lighter fabric. Furthermore, by the time a Muslim woman is old enough to be a mother-in-law, she will wish to be larger and better cushioned than her Animist cousin. For the Muslim, a correct appearance and an appropriate demeanour are an integral part of social positioning; in an intensely hierarchical society, the body must know how to achieve and maintain its proper rank. It is a 'hierarchical' body, or, you could say, a 'performing' body.

While Muslim bodies are inclined slightly backwards, Christian bodies do just the opposite. While Muslims stroll Christians stoop, their heads bent forward, heavy with facts. My interpreter, Marie Badji, the daughter of a Christian university-educated agronomist told me that Christians feel less at home with their bodies than Muslims do. Christians have tended to imitate the 'civilized' styles of dress that were brought to them by the French, and by the missionaries: fitted, tailored clothes, which enclose the body, restrict and control it. These clothes also produce a distinctive type of body, though it is more difficult to describe. It is less certain of itself than either of the bodies described above, because, compared to those bodies, it has somehow been enclosed and has withdrawn. For an educated Christian, perhaps, the mind becomes more important than the body, the inner person more important than the outer. The body remains a site of social distinction, but it is the surface that becomes the focus. The Christian body is an 'enclosed' or 'controlled' body—enclosed by the dress and controlled by the head.[10]

The aim of this study is to elaborate on the descriptions given above and to place them in the social and cultural contexts of the three Diola villages. It sets out to illustrate how the three types of body described are attuned to the social and cultural relationships that make up the villagers' identity, the set of relationships that tie the individual to his or her natural, supernatural and social environments. It suggests that the principles and concepts which lie at the heart of a society's culture are entrusted to the body—embodied—

[10] To refer to the Christian body as an 'enclosed' or 'separate' body is to arrive, to some extent inadvertently, at the 'closed' body which authors such as Burkitt (1999: 48) perceive to have emerged in the late Renaissance and which he relates to the "dualisms of the modern world" (idem: 4). The step is 'inadvertent', in that here I am simply describing a demeanour and a certain style of carriage, which appears to be prompted by wearing tailored clothes.

partly by way of its conventional forms of dress. Dressing prompts an experience which is a form of understanding. In forging this link between dressing and knowing, the study aims to contribute towards a fuller understanding of the interpenetration of the cognitive and the affective aspects of being a person.

Structure of this study

First of all, the study offers a theoretical grounding for its approach to clothes and to the body. It starts off by putting a question mark behind the overridingly representational approach to clothes and dress that sociologists and anthropologists have tended to take. For many years the semiotic perspective dominated the study of dress. This approach produced plenty of insights into the communicative capacities of dress and the way in which dress performs as the 'connective tissue' (Wilson 1985: 12) of modern society. The materiality of dress, however, its functionality and the role of dress as a substantial presence were lost to view and dressing was seen as an almost entirely abstract activity. About fifteen years ago this distanced, structuralist approach began to give way to a more substantial view of the subject in collections of essays such as those edited by Weiner (1988) and Hendrickson (1996). Looking at cloth and dress in various pre-capitalist, often African, societies, they saw cloth and clothes as having a more fundamental role in human experience, transferring essential substances, transforming and establishing human relations, not just as a sign but as an act. The inadequacy of seeing dress as exclusively symbolic became particularly clear in work done in African societies.

Nevertheless, the relationship between clothes and the human body that fills them and makes them come alive—the relationship that I want to illuminate here—was largely absent from these approaches. Nor was it present in the burgeoning body of literature on the sociology of the body, which started to appear at the beginning of the 1980s. While the body seems to have been left out in the cold when anthropologists and sociologists discussed dress, it seems that dress was left hanging in the cupboard while they discussed the body. Not only Mauss (1935) and Bourdieu (1977) but also authors such as Jackson (1989) Csordas (1994), McNeill (1995) developed views on the techniques and practices of the body which offered excellent

opportunities for including dress. Yet none of these authors seem to have been interested in the way in which dress, as the constant partner of the body in human society, inevitably prompts and guides the body's dispositions. In the perspective on dress developed here, the body is viewed not just as the object of social processes—in this case of dressing—but also as social agent itself, intercommunicative and active. The body is worked upon by dress but, in turn, it works, experiencing in interaction with other bodies the collective social norms, and enabling the wearer to make sense of them.

The study goes on to give a short geographical and historical description of the Basse Casamance region. This includes an account of the most important economic, political and religious transformations that have taken place in the region since it was colonized by the French at the end of the nineteenth century. The object of this chapter is to provide a wider context in which to place the three chapters that follow. These chapters look at the villages—the inhabitants, their social life, their religion and their way of dressing—in greater detail. In many ways the three villages are similar; all three are Diola villages and share many social and cultural features. The dimension that distinguishes them one from the other is religion. The influence which religion has on the villagers' relationships with their environment is the main differentiating feature. These chapters—Chapters Three, Four and Five—have three main aims.

(1) Firstly, they focus on the key concepts, or organizing principles, that frame and shape relationships within the three villages. In describing the social and cultural arrangements of the three communities, I look in turn at the relationships which the villager has

(a) with the supernatural environment,
(b) with the natural environment,
(c) with the social environment and
(d) with the self.

In describing these relationships certain basic ideas, or recurring themes, come to the surface and characterize the villages.

(2) Secondly, these chapters describe the appearance of the villagers. They describe not only the ways in which the men and women dress but also the way in which this manner of dressing relates to the appearance of the body itself, to the style of walking and moving and to the way in which the body is taken into account. They ask in how far dress practices produce distinctive types of bodies.

(3) Thirdly, the chapters relate the appearance and the demeanour of the villagers to the basic ideas or organizing principles described above under 1. In how far do the appearances and demeanours described endorse and enforce these key principles?

In a short postscript, Chapter Seven, I move away from the strict confines of village life and look at the way people dress in the nearby town of Ziguinchor. Within the villages, various factors but mainly the presence of an authoritative religious voice of some kind—*féticheur*, imam or priest—restrict the choice of dress. But the villages are not exclusive entities and to some extent the situation described is only half of the story. In the wider context, in the larger villages and in the towns, the three distinct cultures mingle with each other and interact. In Ziguinchor, for example, people are offered a wider range of dress possibilities. Some people, for various reasons, remain at the far end of this range of possibilities and remain easily identifiable as Christian or Muslim. Others develop an 'expert' body, learning to dress in a selection of ways and adapting their demeanour to this end. As for the Animists, it is as good as impossible to retain this way of life in the city, away from the rice fields and from the spirit shrines. In the town, the *pagne noir*, which is at the heart of the Animist way of dressing, becomes an object for the museum.

The final chapter, Chapter Eight, considers some of the implications of the different ways of dressing described in the three villages. In particular it considers dressing as a relationship between the body and the clothes that it wears. This relationship can be one of equality, i.e. a partnership, or it can be a relationship in which one of the parties—the body or the clothes—is subordinate to the other.

The scope of the study: dress as a cultural tool

The scope of this study is a narrow one: illustrating the way in which different types of dressing produce different types of bodies and 'demeanours', and relating these differences, in dressing and in demeanour, to the social and cultural environment in which they are found. Although the movements, gestures and stances that make up demeanour are a relevant part of everyday social intercourse, and although people notice demeanour and take it into account, nevertheless anthropologists tend to be somewhat lost for words when it comes to giving details or examples. We speak easily enough of

someone 'exuding anger' or 'radiating joy' and, instinctively, we classify people into classes or cultures on the basis of the way those people stand and walk, greet each other, enter a room or take a seat. Yet these forms of behaviour are not often examined in detail. The signs and signals we pick up and interpret in real life are difficult to discern consciously, let alone to put into words; on the whole we live these forms of expression rather than observe them.

The three small Diola villages offer an exceptional situation for observing just how differently people develop in their physical manners and habits. The three villages have different styles of dress but they also have different types of body. The contrast is all the more striking since the villages are so close to each other. Local people notice these differences in the *façon de faire*—the manner of doing things—of the villagers, and acknowledge their link to differences in religious affiliation. The villages therefore offer a useful opportunity for looking at the formative function of dress and at the implications of this function. However, the villages are tiny, protected and inward-looking, and they do not necessarily offer a complete picture of the Diola people at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The Diola have for some time been engaged in a bitter struggle with the Senegalese authorities about the political status of the Basse Casamance territory, and although this has to do with the Diola's religious diversity there are many other factors. The wider context of this difficult situation is not looked at here.

Furthermore, the three 'types' of body that I describe here are specific to the place and time that these people live in: the three small villages in southern Senegal at the end of the twentieth century. They are the product of a particular history and of a particular set of relationships, a set of relationships that by their nature are constantly on the move and fluctuating. In other words, I am not attempting to describe 'the' Muslim, Christian or Animist body in any structured way. Nor have I tried to give a full account of how dress is used and practised in the three villages. Rather, I have tried to pinpoint and describe, for each of the villages, a distinct type of body that I found there and then to relate this characteristic body to the circumstances of the village. First of all I wanted to find out in how far the particular body style was related to a distinct way of dressing. But I also wanted to find out in how far the body, and the form of dress, as well as the relationship between them, should be seen to relate to, and be embedded in, the worldview of the villagers.

The study remains local and limited however. There is probably no necessary link between tailored clothes and Roman Catholicism, for example, even though the French sisters who live in M'lomp encourage their Christian flock to wear Western clothes and teach them how to make them. The sisters find the flowing garments worn by Muslims 'primitive', and consider tailored, Western clothes to be more 'civilized'. So what I am attempting to look at here is the link between tailored clothes, the demeanour of the Diola Christians who wear them, and the beliefs and practices of the Roman Catholic religion as it is taught in the Basse Casamance these days. As regards the Muslim styles of dress, there is here a more formal connection between the religion and the robes that the Muslims wear, for it is part of Islamic teaching that the woman's body should be covered and that the lines of the 'natural' body should not be visible. However, this Koranic prescription is open to many different interpretations, and these interpretations often result in a more concealed body than one finds in the Casamance. In particular, the women of the Basse Casamance are not veiled; they have to cover their heads with a scarf, but the effects of the headscarf are very different from those of a veil. In other words, the 'Muslim body' described here, like the 'Christian body' described here, is particular and bound in time and space to the villages.

The fieldwork

The fieldwork for this study took place over ten years and included as many visits, some of four months, some of three or four weeks. Most of the visits during the first five years were spent in Oussouye and during the second five years in a small house in Samatite. During these visits, I took part in all kinds of activities and I collected information. I interviewed at least 250 people at one time or another: men and women, girls and boys, local politicians, missionaries, Islamic leaders, *fëticheurs*, tailors and traders. I also worked in Dakar and in Ziguinchor, talking to and observing members of the Diola community who lived there. Dress is a wonderful subject to be researching among the Diola, or among anyone in Senegal, because people love to discuss their clothes and the way they look. The women particularly were generous with their knowledge and I spent a lot of time being shown not only what they wore but also how they wore it: how to

wrap a *pagne*, the two-yard length of material used as a skirt, around the waist, a *foulard*, a long, wide scarf, around the head and how to master the *grand boubou*. I learned more than I had ever expected to about clothes and cloth, make up and tattooing, shoes of all kinds, hairstyles and hair care, skin care, underwear of all descriptions, the care of the teeth and how to keep them white, the care of the gums and how to keep them exciting.[11] I filled many notebooks with the information they gave me and I learned that dressing is more about doing than about knowing.

Apart from collecting information and taking part in all kinds of dressing activities, I also observed. This period in Senegal was in some ways the extension of previous years spent working in the dress trade, first on a trade magazine, later making and selling clothes. One of many tasks as sub-editor and dressmaker/saleslady was to watch people, mostly women but also men, selecting clothes, trying them on, and then deciding whether or not to buy them. I spent many hours looking at people looking at themselves in the mirror. I learned a great deal about dress and dressing during those hours, and I learned to observe. This study owes perhaps as much to this time in London and Amsterdam as it does to the ten years in Senegal.

[11] Gums are an important erogenous zone among modern Senegalese.

CHAPTER TWO

DRESS: A FORM OF COMMUNICATION OR A CULTURAL TOOL?

1. Introduction

In 1982, a symposium was held at *Musée de l'Homme* in Paris that aimed to give the subject of dress a place on the anthropological agenda. According to Yves Delaporte, the chairman of the meeting, dress—which he describes as "a social fact par excellence"—had been badly neglected by anthropologists; publications were few and far between and not a single ethnographer had specialized in that area. The subject had been looked at by various sociologists: Barthes (1967) and Eco (1979) had written about the semiotics of dress for example, and two classic studies, by Simmel (1971) and Veblen (1899), had discussed dress in relation to the formation of social class. In the context of cultural studies authors such as Hebdige (1979) and Willis (1972) had noted the importance of dress styles in the development and maintenance of sub-cultures. For anthropologists, however, the meaning and relevance of personal appearance had hardly been examined or discussed, even by the classic ethnographers such as Malinowski (1922) and Firth (1936). The speakers at the symposium discussed a wide range of topics, such as the need to find an effective method for classifying different types of dress, the history of dress types, the symbolism and function of traditional dress. But the main aim of the conference was to provide the first building blocks towards the construction of ". . . a general theory of dress" (Delaporte 1985: 33). Whether or not Delaporte's call to action had any influence in the matter, the early 1980s proved to be a turning point for the study of dress in anthropology. Since that time any number of books on the subject have appeared, many of them in the form of essays, and they have covered an even wider range of sartorial topics than had been covered at the Paris symposium. Although there is no sign of having arrived at "a general theory of dress"—nor of any desire to develop one—the subject has proved to be highly significant to social life, as a symbolic, an economic and an aesthetic good.

From the essays it becomes clear that all social groups develop conventions of dress and appearance, which are used by the society to order relationships and to help regulate difference and change. Often, codes are instigated on the strength of these conventions, formally or informally, and these are used and manipulated by individuals to tell their own stories. Whether consciously or unconsciously, people convey in their appearance all kinds of information about their histories, their political ideas, their economic situation, their present ideals and their dreams for the future. As a form of communication, dress is powerful, flexible and subtle.

2. Dress as a form of communication

The language of clothes: the similarities . . .

On the face of it, language would seem to be a self-evident analogy when we are thinking about how we communicate through our dress and through the way in which we manage our personal appearance. To start with, dressing the body belongs, like language, in the select category of activities that are universally and uniquely human. All humans and only humans complete their bodies by dressing them up in one way or another. Dressing and speaking are two important ways in which we join in the social dialogue, because dress, like language, is in the front line of self-expression, a way of stating who we are and where we stand. Speaking and dressing belong in a class of their own because, in the social arena, they are obligatory. They are not simply expressive possibilities that are offered to the individual; they are, rather, responsibilities that are demanded of him or her. There is a social obligation to join in the conversation—sartorial or verbal—and to dress or speak in an appropriate, or at least in a recognizably inappropriate, manner. To refuse to do so is to run the risk of being considered to be mad or in some other way chronically unsociable. Dressing, like speaking, offers the individual the possibility of finding a personal version of the code at hand, one that fits both the occasion and the speaker/dresser. In the modern world, to be refused this form of self-expression—under the press censorship of a dictator or under the sartorial censorship of Mao's China—is to be refused an essential part of personal freedom.

From the listener's point of view, we tend to assess people not only be hearing what they say, but also by looking at what they are wearing. We may be interested in a person's stated opinions but we

fill in the gaps and dissolve the ambiguities in those opinions by observing the manner of dressing. Looking at what a speaker has on is a kind of short cut to finding out a bit more about the person behind the words, a way of reading between the lines. It is confusing and unsettling to be confronted with someone whose appearance cannot be matched with his or her claimed opinions. In fact, when this happens, the sartorial 'language' is generally more convincing than the verbal one, probably because the amount of information gathered from the assessment of a person's dress and performance is greater than that which we can collect from verbal statements.

One can go further. Just as there are language communities, so there are also dress communities, groups of people who have a form of dress in common, implying a common core of understanding, a shared way of looking at the world, shared priorities. To a greater or lesser extent, people who dress themselves according to similar criteria can be said to have a common outlook and to have the same set of basic assumptions about how the world is. Thus to be in a situation in which the manner of dressing is new and alien, for example to be a visitor in West Africa, is comparable to not understanding the language. An important dimension of communication is lacking and the stranger inevitably misses out on some of what is going on, even in cases where he or she does in fact understand the words that are being spoken.

Dress communities and language communities do not necessarily converge, since the two forms of communication are learned in different ways, using different faculties. For example, the 1970s saw the emergence of an international community of punk dressers that overlapped several language zones. The global popularity of identical logos and brand names does not necessarily lead to the constitution of world wide sartorial communities. It is quite possible that the boy in Amsterdam who puts on a DKNY T-shirt and Nike trainers is responding to a different code than the boy in Brixton or Dakar with the same kit. Nevertheless it is justified to say that there are various types of international communities, bikers, for example, bankers, 'greens' or ultra-right activists, who are able to recognize and feel at home with each other on the basis of their dress, even in cases where they have difficulty speaking each other's language.[1]

[1] Two pop festivals were held in The Netherlands on one and the same day. A visitor from Germany, on a motorbike, dressed in leather, is interviewed on Dutch

The 'language of clothes' seems to cross borders more easily than verbal language. The solidarity the wearers feel with each other, the recognition of a shared outlook and shared ideas about the world, understood in a particular style of appearance, establishes an important bond. It may even form a sturdy basis for common action, for instance among teenage gangs, where getting your clothes right is an important part of showing that you understand the group's morality. Malinowski coined the happy phrase 'phatic communion' to describe the way in which people can feel in touch and at home with each other on the basis of a common tongue, but the bonds formed in 'sartorial communion' run just as deep or deeper.

. . . and the differences

However, despite the above comments, the differences between the two activities, dressing and speaking, are as striking as the similarities. Language is abstract and, in essence, intangible, whereas dress is material and very touchable. The meanings that language deals in are stable and above all systematic, while dress codes are transient and utterly unreliable; they may change from one day to the next. The meaning contained in a sentence is processed by the mind, which understands it as a logical sequence. The information that is passed on in dress is processed visually and all at once, using the interpretation of the receiver; you cannot look up its message in a dictionary. Though you may understand the message as it is intended, you are not often sure why or how you do. Words pin down the boundaries of their meaning in a way that would destroy the implications of dress. In dress, meaning is always ambiguous and shifting, frayed at the edges; the echoes and the secondary alignments take on an importance which it would be difficult for words to take on. Furthermore, the physical presence of clothes, and the capacity of their materiality to entrance or shock the senses of the viewer, is essentially opposed to the neutral transience of words. It is the triviality of words that makes them such suitable vehicles of significance;

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radio. Why did he choose to come to this festival and not the other? He came to Holland knowing only that there were to be two festivals. He walked around at the first one; that was not for him. He walked around at the second, and stayed. Did he decide on the basis of the music? No, not at all. He knew from the clothes that were worn by the visitors, though without speaking to any of them, that this was where his friends were, this was where he belonged.

there is no distraction in words and one looks effortlessly through them to the meanings they are charged with. This is not so with clothes; their many attributes—colour, shape, feel, smell, sound, and then their total effect—may add to or detract from their significance but they can never be overlooked.

So one of the first questions asked in the new generation of essays and studies that began to appear in the 1980s was whether it is useful or helpful to see dress as a form of language, as had so often happened up to then. The book that had been responsible more than any other for establishing the notion of 'the language of clothes' was Barthes' *Système de la Mode* written in 1967. In this *tour de force* of semiotic analysis, Barthes identifies in the French fashion styles of the late 1950s, as they were converted into 'written clothing' in the French fashion magazines, the elements, syntax and propositions that go to make up linguistic semantic production. He identifies 60 components of a woman's outfit and looks on these as the articulated parts of meaningful whole messages. Using the terminology of the linguist, he demonstrates how a range of meanings is conveyed in the oppositional features of the garments worn: oppositions of texture, colour, length of skirt, and so on.

Though Barthes' aim in this book was to look at and analyse 'written clothing'—that is, fashion clothes as they are reported on and written about in fashion magazines—rather than to understand clothes themselves, his analysis was so powerful and so thorough that his perspective dominated the subject of dress for some time to come. Dress came to be seen as a structuralist system, rigidly encoded. It was the abstract, invisible aspects of dress that came to the fore in this perspective, giving priority to the sign content of clothes and disregarding, or even disdaining, the tangible, physical presence of dress. Barthes transformed clothes into a mental exercise and under the microscope of his scientific scrutiny clothes were bereft of their most obvious and essential characteristics. The imaginative brilliance of his work seemed to blind people to the obvious differences between the two forms of communication. At its most communicative the meaning produced by dress tends to be hesitant, ambiguous and many-stranded, on the point of escaping or inverting; and this is its strength. Even though it may be possible to think (as Barthes did) in terms of dress systematically representing social and cultural divisions, nevertheless to think only in terms of clothing as text (as Barthes also did) is to miss out on the most important dimension.

It is precisely in being able to blend, extend and subvert cultural divisions that dress is at its most powerful and at its most semantically useful. Furthermore, the result of Barthes' book was that, after its publication, the comparison between dress and language tended to focus on this one point: could dress be said to operate as linguistic system? The book's ideas were so intriguing and so powerfully argued that the systematic aspects of the two activities came to be seen as the only relevant link between them.

Dress as a category of material culture: McCracken and Miller

The phrase 'the language of clothes' enjoyed a period of popularity and it became fixed in the public mind by a book of the same title by the novelist Alison Lurie (1981). In this book she takes the comparison to its outer limit and finds in dress a vocabulary, grammar, syntax—and even punctuation. But the freshness of the metaphor had worn off and it became clear that the semioticians had pushed the analogy too far. Gradually, the comparison was considered to have become stale and confusing, a straightjacket rather than an enlightening juxtaposition, which masked as much as it illuminated. The leverage that the metaphor once offered had been used up. Authors writing in the 1980s, such as Miller (1987) and McCracken (1988), preferred to look for the potency of dress as a medium of communication in the materiality of dress and in its object-like qualities rather than seeing it as some kind of code. They point out that there is more to be gained from describing the contrasting ways in which language and objects handle the transmission of meaning; by identifying the differences, rather than the similarities, it becomes clear just how effective objects, including clothes, can be as media of communication.

Using the discursive form—language—people discuss, ask questions and build up arguments. Language has a wide variety of grammatical and syntactical forms at its disposal whereby it is possible to relate and refer to all kinds of abstract ideas and far-away events and to express new and individual notions. Language has the capacity to generate an endless supply of new thoughts because of its 'ascending scale of freedom', in McCracken's words (1988: 64). At the lower end of the speech process, the speaker is constrained to adhere strictly to the phonemic and grammatical rules; he must use words, sequences of words and categories of words exactly as they are prescribed to him by the code. The result, however, is that at

the top end of the speech process the speaker is given relatively great freedom. He can make combinations of his own and he can, if he is clever enough, generate new ideas and express new opinions. McCracken finds no parallel to this in dress. Citing work carried out by Neich (1982) in New Guinea, he shows that all the dress code can do is produce a series of pre-packaged messages. These messages may refer to a wide variety of cultural phenomena and they may contain a wide variety of distinctions, but the code itself offers the individual no way of manipulating these messages. Neich analysed body painting among the people of Mount Hagen and showed how, by selecting various elements of body decoration and combining them into syntagmatic sequences according to a particular, approved code, certain messages could be produced. By choosing a decorative unit from each paradigmatic class the Hagener manifests himself as donor, donor's helper, warrior, and so on; he is totally *un*able however to manipulate the code and produce a message of his own. In his adherence to the rules on the selection and combination of the decorative units at his disposal, the Hagener is able to position himself as 'warrior', 'donor' and so on within a delimited universe but no more than that. The dress code for him is not a generative but a restrictive code, offering a voice to the society but not to the individual. It involves communication, certainly, expressing in a forceful way various aspects of Mount Hagen life, but not the kind of articulated communication found in language. It is impossible to enquire after the health of an aunt in Winnipeg in dress, as McCracken puts it.

In other words, the more text-like and rigidly coded dress becomes, as in the ranked uniforms of an army, the more it looses its real effect as communicator. The number of stripes on the sleeve of a soldier's jacket may form a clear message, but it is not a message that can be attuned to the will of the individual 'interlocutor': in fact, in an army uniform, the individual all but disappears. Though any form of code inevitably puts some constraints on its users, the language code is particular in allowing them a relatively great amount of freedom, incomparably more that the dress code can do. This is because the dress code deals only in 'thinkable' concepts, the equivalent of the linguist's 'open' category of words: nouns and adjectives, verbs and adverbs. This category is referred to as 'open' because it is always possible to add new words to it. There is no equivalent in the dress code of the 'closed' category, or function words: prepositions and pronouns, auxiliaries and articles, those words that refer

not to thinkable categories but to the purely functional, relational concepts. It is this set of words that forms the powerhouse of language communication and allows the speaker who learns and adheres to the rules of the language to express new and original ideas.

Dress, on the other hand, innovates not by adhering to the rules of a dress code but rather by breaking those rules, bending them and pushing them forward; not by taking them at face value but by playing around with them, parodying them, inverting them and turning them inside out. To investigate sartorial innovation it is no use turning to language; to bend and break the linguistic rules would be to end up very quickly in an Alice in Wonderland situation of non-communication and complete isolation. The fact that dress communicates by flouting the rules is due to the very different relationship that clothes and outfits have with the cultural meanings they carry, when compared with words and sentences. To understand this one has to turn to the materiality of clothes and to their object-like qualities.

Unlike language, where the link between the form of a word and the meaning that it carries is arbitrary and unmotivated—though more or less permanent, or at the least stable—clothes substantiate the cultural categories they represent. The various meanings attached to garments are continually in flux, engaging and disengaging themselves over the seasons and the years, but the link is never haphazard or illogical. The association may come from several sources, historical, social or biological for example, and there is no limit to the number of meanings that can attach themselves to a single garment. So an outfit can provide a whole history lesson or it can be viewed as an act of political revolt. The link between a garment and its meaning may be apparent and consciously made or it may be hidden deep in the subconscious; in practice the more hidden the association is the more durable it is likely to be. As Sahlins (1976: 179–204) points out, garments not only 'mean', they also instruct. We may learn about what it means to be male or female, young or old, master or servant within a particular culture through the garments that are considered to be appropriate for these people to wear. But since the cultural process never stands still these roles are constantly on the move and they constantly need to be kept up to date. In dress practices, new roles and new ideas are given shape and form in the new designs that enter society. This may be done by combining the symbolism of existing designs or by finding new symbolic associations that are lurking just below the surface of the collective conscience.

Sahlins describes, for example, how women became feminists and businesswomen, in dungarees and pin-stripe suits, male and female made way for gays in appropriately androgynous attire, and young and old made way for teeners, sub-teeners and pre-teeners. An account of this combinatory potential of dress is traced in the new meanings that have been generated around trousers, as they have been worn by women since the sixties, when they were re-appropriated from men (not for the first time) in the form of trouser suits. Ever since that time, trousers—tailored, coarse, dark and plain or on the other hand flowing, fine, light and elaborate, in the form of dungarees, jeans, stretch pants, perfectly tailored dinner jackets, wide flowing trousers in silk prints, divided skirts, or a combination of all of these—have generated a series of meanings about the position of women in the twentieth century. Dress designers, whether professionals or members of the community, are endlessly inventive in creating new significances and new messages on behalf of that community in the garments and outfits they develop.

The content of dress styles and fashion is not arbitrary and unreasonable, but motivated and logical. In as far as their innovations are successful, dress designers and fashion stylists contribute to society's instruction manual, enlightening us about who we are or have become. Wilson (1985: 56–58) is right to rail against the authors, often male, who claim that the link between dress styles and their implications is entirely arbitrary and irrational. To make such a claim is to underrate the power of dress and, in some cases, the social insight of dress designers. The sartorial revolutions of the 1920s and the 1960s presaged and gave expression to deep-seated and far-reaching social changes. Chanel's 'poor little rich girl' look put paid to frills and flounces in urban dress and rightly predicted a century in which class and power relationships would be ordered differently than in the previous one. The appearance of the mini-skirt was central to the mid-century sexual revolution.

For Miller (1987: 85–108), it is not only the capacity of objects to generate new meanings that interests him, but rather their ability to communicate ideas and emotions that language is not able to transmit, or rather, not able to transmit so powerfully or so precisely. Looking at the objects and artefacts with which modern consumers surround themselves, and including clothes in this category, Miller refers to the distinction made by Langer (1942; 90–93) between the 'discursive' and 'presentational' modes of communication. Langer

attacks the notion that language is the only vehicle for rational, logical communication and she is concerned that language should not retain the monopoly on the 'rationally knowable'. She points out that everyday language is a poor medium for expressing abstract ideas and relationship, especially where these touch us emotionally. When it comes to communicating these essential concepts, language tends to let us down. Words are good for arguments and propositions, but the necessity for clarity in language means that they tend to leave aside a great deal of information. By nature, words are discrete and there is no association or gradation between words with a similar form. 'Cap' and 'cup' have entirely different meanings despite their similar form and there is no putative third word with a shared meaning in between the two. Words do not combine their meanings by combining their form, and words such as 'brunch' remain an artificiality, made up for the occasion. Words can be graded or modified to some extent by the use of prefixes and suffixes, but this is a clumsy process. Furthermore, Langer points out that the sequential logic of a sentence can only handle a certain number of qualified relationships at one time.

The constituents that make up the visual form however—line, proportion, colour, light and shade, texture—have no such limitations. These aspects are infinitely gradable, and they can represent an infinitely graded range of meanings. At the same time, being presented simultaneously, they are able to convey the subtlest of relationships, contradictions or apprehensions. Langer is adamant that what she calls the presentational form is not simply a one-way channel of expression, like tears or laughter, but the logical representation of transferable knowledge. The fact that the form is non-discursive does not render it irrational or illogical. Even though Langer was discussing art rather than dress, the arguments she uses to contrast 'word meaning' with 'visual meaning' remain valid in dress. Words are limited in the degree of gradability which they allow, and the logic of sentences limits the number of relationships that can be referred to. Dress has no such limitations. Apart from the properties mentioned above—line and proportion, colour and texture—there is also, in the case of dress, the whole build-up of an outfit—threads, fabrics, garments and accessories—offering an even greater number of possibilities for expressing relationships, secondary meanings and ambiguities.

There can be no doubt that dress is a powerful and effective form

of communication, its strengths lying not only in the properties that it shares with language, but also in the characteristics that distinguish it from language. In the introduction to *Clothing and Difference* (1996) Hendrickson writes:

> . . . the body's surface . . . is a field for representation which, being concrete, has lasting semiotic value. Being personal it is susceptible to individual manipulation, being public it has social import (1996: 2).

It is these three aspects of dress that give clothes their potency and relevance. Dress, being both material and public, is a form of conversation that is carried on in full view of society. Dressing takes place in a public forum and involves all of society's members. Clothes give expression to a society's way of life by objectifying the classifications that make up a society's way of thinking. By looking at 'correct', standard or prized ways of dressing it is possible to understand more about a society's key ideological values and principles. Furthermore, correct or standard ways of dressing are always in flux, open to influence by individuals or groups, so dressing becomes a form of ideological discussion. So Hendrickson is right in pointing out that dress and appearance management, being (i) concrete, (ii) personal and iii) public can be seen as a real way of taking part in social life.

This study, however, attempts to build on the insights gained into the representational capacities of dress and to add another dimension to Hendrickson's point of view. Dress is not only a medium of *representation*, played out on the body's surface; it also has a *formative* function. Dress can also be seen as a tool, which influences, guides and extends the body, affects its movements, its stance and its gestures. Dress can be seen in relation to the way in which the body experiences and is experienced by the world around it. In matters of cultural identity—the set of relationships that position a person or a group of people within their social and cultural environment—the body has a code and a technique of its own. As mentioned, there are few things that are more characteristic of a cultural group than the common gestures, a particular way of walking and standing, or a special form of dance. And these culturally relevant movements and gestures are inevitably influenced by the conventions of dress and appearance management that hold within that group.

So on the one hand the symbolic and representational potential of dress relies, also, on this formative function. Clothes are certainly an example of material culture, but that is only half the story, for

clothes are meant to be worn on the body. Clothes without a body are clothes without movement and it is only with movement that dress 'represents' to its full potential; the body's energy is indispensable to its significance. On a hanger, clothes emit only half of their message, and sometimes they emit only an embarrassed silence; on a hanger it is only in the imagination of a potential wearer that they have anything to say at all. On the other hand, this formative function of dress points in another direction, inwards rather than outwards and away from the representational. Understanding the formative function of dress means looking more closely at the body and at embodiment; getting to grips with the implications of this aspect of dress means looking at dress as a form of practice and as a form of embodied experience.

3. Dress as a cultural tool

Dress in Africa: the experience of the dressed body

In the course of the 1990s, several anthropologists published descriptions of the role of cloth and clothes in African societies, both small-scale and modern (e.g. Hendrickson [1996], Barnes and Eicher [1992] and also Weiner and Schneider [1989]). In these essays it is the vitality and the active presence of dress that comes to light, a role that is inadequately covered by the more distanced, semiotic approach with which dress had generally been considered up to that time. Symbolic value, particularly of cloth and cloth wraps, remains an important aspect but to think of cloth only as a form of communication is to miss the sense of engagement that emerges from these descriptions. Cloth is often seen as being part of the community's sacred paraphernalia, having the spiritual life of the community woven into its threads. Several authors describe the way in which cloth passes on 'essential substances', through the generations, and mention the function of cloth wraps in this respect. It is the binding, mediating function of cloth wraps that is their most striking feature, connecting the living to the dead at funerals, babies to their mothers at birth and baptism, husband and wife at marriage ceremonies or spirit to spirit medium in ceremonies of spirit possession. In many African communities cloth is produced domestically, from cotton or raffia for example, and the division of labour associated with its production is strictly regulated. In this way, fabric becomes more than

just a powerful and self-evident metaphor for the weaving together of socially distinct roles. Cloth wraps, the fabric of society, not only symbolize the sacred integrity of the community; they are themselves sacred objects.

In discussing dress in the African context, various authors felt it was time to break away from the Western, theoretical approach to dress and appearance management, which was proving too narrow to be useful. Authors moved towards seeing dress not only as style but also as a set of practices, practices which included the body (e.g. Burke 1996, James 1996 and also Commaroff 1986). Bastian, for example, is impatient with "the tendency to focus on the production of clothing's raw materials or to analyse clothing practice strictly in Western, theoretical terms" and upbraids Heath (1992) for discussing Senegambian dress practices in terms of language (1996: 99). Though theories on material culture offer a great deal of evidence on the semiotic power of dress, there are certain aspects of dress and dressing that these perspectives do not have access to. They cannot help to explain the lived experience of dress. Dress not only attunes the mind to society's cultural blueprint; it also attunes the body to that same set of cultural possibilities and opportunities. In the African context, Bastian feels it is more important to discuss "what it means to be clothed, to experience clothing on one's body, . . . in short what might constitute the embodied practice(s) of clothing" (1996: 100). Furthermore, it becomes difficult to see dress separately from its interaction with the body on a continent such as Africa where dress and body decoration are so closely related. Cloth wraps, for example, a basic form of clothing in many African societies, can easily be seen as a form of body decoration. In any situation, Western or African, the body is the inevitable starting point of dress, as well as its inescapable partner. This is particularly evident and visible however in a society in which cloth wraps are only one step away from the sort of techniques that have always been used to dress and decorate the body, such as tattooing and scarification. In the African context, it feels out of place to write about dress and the body as though they were separate entities.

The perceived need of these authors to focus on dress practices and to include the body in this focus was echoed outside of Africa in the sociology of the 'dressed body' (Entwistle [2000], Entwistle and Wilson [2003]). Entwistle notes the explosion of interest in the body within the social sciences and is puzzled by the lack of cross

fertilization between this area of study and the equally flourishing interest in dress and fashion. In the series of essays which Entwistle introduces, the authors set out to develop a perspective that sees dress as 'situated bodily practice'. The fact of embodiment, and of the body being the site of the self, has often been disregarded by authors who have written about dress and Entwistle wants to retrieve this point of view in relation to dress. For her, understanding the role of dress requires not only looking at the ways in which the body is represented in the discourses of the fashion system; one must also look at "how the body is *experienced* and lived and at the role dress plays in the presentation of the body/self" (Entwistle 2000: 55).

This is the road I want to go down with the current study. I want to hark back to Bastian's claim that we need to look closer at the experience of dress and what it means to experience clothes on one's body. What does it mean to say that we experience clothes on the body? What are the implications of such an experience? Because the link between dress and the body has been given little attention by anthropologists, not much notice has been given either to the way in which clothes affect the body and how they influence its physical structures. If we want to know whether we do indeed "experience clothing on one's body", as Bastian suggests, and whether clothes do indeed affect the body's physical structures, then we only have to think about what happens when we put on an outfit that is in some way new or out of the ordinary. In putting on an Elizabethan costume for example, to go to a fancy dress party or for a role in a play, the body becomes aware of its surroundings in a new way, and discovers a relationship with the space around it that it did not know before.[2] The corseted bodice keeps the body erect and rigid, the ruche around the neck and the full skirt immobilise the body and compel it to take distance from its surroundings, rising above them in true courtly fashion. It is not only the body's appearance, its physical disposition, that changes, for something changes inside the body as well; the mind too takes distance from its surroundings

[2] Cf. Jackson 1989: 131: "Most of us are familiar with the way decontraction of muscular 'sets' and the freeing of energies bound up in habitual deformations of posture or movement produce an altered sense of self, in particular a dissolution of those conceptual 'sets' such as role, gender, and status which customarily define our social identity."

and rises above them. The mental disposition appears to alter in accordance with the physical disposition.

Out-of-the-ordinary hats and shoes—a top hat or wooden clogs for example—are particularly forceful in the experience that they elicit. The body's response may be partially a learned response, but it may also be a physical necessity. Putting on a top hat prompts the body to stretch the muscles in the back of the neck and hold itself upright in order to carry the hat in a suitable manner. The top hat not only signals a 'toff', on the racecourse for instance, it also manages to produce him, holding his head high with his body slightly tilted backwards. Wooden clogs, on the other hand, plant the legs firmly in the soil, anchoring the body to the earth and hampering any form of agile or graceful movement. The characteristic stance of the Dutch farmer, standing in his clogs on the dike, hands in pockets and with his hunched back leaning into the wind, is probably learned by imitation and passed on from father to son. But its starting point is located in the physical limitations set on the body by the heavy and cumbersome clogs. These are extreme examples, but almost any garment sets it boundaries. Garments that stay close to the body may limit mobility, and constrain the stride or stance while loose, flowing or wrapped garments oblige the body to make some use of the fabric that covers it. Garments, footwear and headwear included, are never just neutral in their relationship with the body.

To talk about the experience of dress implies an event that touches both the body and the mind. Is it possible to show that the physical attitudes prompted by particular garments are indeed accompanied by shifts in mental attitude and in the way the wearer looks at the world? Evidence from the theatre, for example, suggests that this is so. Actors are aware of how useful it can be to learn to walk or sit or hold a cup of tea, or a mug of coffee, in the way their character would do these things. This learning-by-doing is a process that many actors use. Sir Alec Guinness told an interviewer that when he was practising for a new play he used to begin by finding the shoes that his character would wear, in order to discover more about his role. Once he had worn the appropriate shoes for a week or two then he would learn to walk in the appropriate way, and this gave him the opening for learning about his character. This kind of bodily learning process did not provide the key to the lock on the individual personality of the role, but Guinness found it a particularly

enlightening way of discovering more about the cultural background and the social circumstances of his character.

In the first chapter I presented three different ways of dressing and described how they influenced the bodies of the wearers, producing distinctive demeanours. I suggested that these dressed bodies in some way endorsed and supported three ways of life, and were attached to three ways of thinking, so that it is possible to see dress as a cultural tool, moulding and attuning the body to a certain way of life. The rest of this chapter focuses on trying to find perspectives that can offer information on the links that might be found to exist between dress practices, the body with its repertoire of gestures, and the capacity to know and understand in a particular way. Having failed to find this information in the recent literature on dress, and encouraged by Entwistle's search for enlightenment in the 'dressed body', it looks for relevant information in what anthropologists and others have written on the body and on its role as a social actor.

Mauss, body techniques and body language

In his much-quoted essay, *Techniques of the Body* (1935), the reworking of a lecture that was originally delivered to a group of psychology students, Mauss points to the culturally determined nature of the body's movements and abilities and suggests the extent to which cultural values are embodied. Seeing dress as a cultural tool, which, whether we are aware of it or not, prompts the body to behave in a particular way, is in line with this idea. There is no 'natural' way of walking, standing or holding the head; these things are culturally determined and allied to a set of cultural values. He describes the way in which culture is immanent in the body's movements. In one passage he describes how he is lying in a hospital bed in New York and becomes intrigued by the way in which the nurses are walking, for it was a walk he recognized. He realized that he recognized the walk from the films—it was the latest fashion in walks. On his return to Paris he noticed that 'the walk' had spread to France: this seems to have summed up for him the transfer of American culture to Europe.

With this approach, Mauss was one of the first anthropologists to understand the way in which the social relevance of the body was set to change in the course of the twentieth century. Within the social sciences, the body started the century as a biological fact, subject to certain laws of medical science, regulated by nature and the self, and of little interest, in itself, to the anthropologist other than as a site

of cultural expression. Van Gennep for example, in his *Rites of Passage* (1909), looks at the range of rituals that punctuate the life cycle and that take the individual person from one social group to another or from one stage of life to another. More often than not these rituals are prompted or accompanied by changes in the body: puberty and pregnancy, marriage, birth and death. Yet Van Gennep is so involved in the cultural and social aspects of the bodily progression he is describing that he at no stage looks at the nature of the body as a whole, nor as a focus of interest on its own. He is interested in the body as a set of characteristics yet he overlooks the character of the body itself.

Three centuries previously the intellectual and scientific explosion had more or less secularized the body and turned it into an object of study, relegating it to the sphere of medicine and nature. Rembrandt's painting *The Anatomy Lesson* portrays the triumph of the mind over the body, the body, in this case, a white, marbled, statue-like 'thing', laid out and lifeless under the curious and passionate gaze of the eminent physicians. Then, at the end of the nineteenth century, Freud and the science of psychology similarly objectified the mind; reminiscent of Rembrandt, he took the mind apart and laid it out for viewing, horizontal, on his couch. It no longer seemed so easy to think in terms of the rational mind and the irrational body; both were seen to have their unreasonablenesses, and neither could be said to take precedence over the other when it came to understanding the human will. In the course of the following 100 years social scientists adjusted their views on the relationship between the mind and the body and between the tangible and intangible aspects of human existence. The rationality of the mind no longer offered the grounded certainty that it had done, nor did the mind retain its monopoly, vis à vis the body, on knowledge and understanding.

Merleau Ponty was one of the first writers to articulate the orientating role of the body in the process of knowing and understanding and to bring this idea into the public domain. He found it impossible to conceive of the human person as an objective spectator of the world, because we are, first of all, active participators in the world. Our thoughts flow from our active and practical relationship with the world, so that before Descartes' 'I think' there is an 'I can'.[3] This idea was taken

[3] "The intellectualist analysis . . . is less false than abstract. It is true that the

up and carried into many disciplines in the social sciences and in linguistics (e.g. Foley [1997], Johnson [1987]). It challenged the sharp distinction that had previously been made between a subjective knower and an objective world, proposing that knowledge is embodied in the lived histories of people and in their cultural practices. By the end of the century, the body that had emerged from the writing of anthropologists such as Mauss, Bourdieu, Csordas and Jackson had the capacity to learn, understand and take part in social life in a manner that would have been unthinkable at the beginning of it.

In *Techniques of the Body*, Mauss also tells the story about soldiers belonging to the Worcestershire regiment who had successfully fought alongside the French infantry at the Battle of the Aisne. In order to commemorate and celebrate this event, they had adopted two French buglers. The result, however, was most unfortunate, as the Englishmen were quite unable to march to the Frenchmen's music; it was impossible to synchronise the British traditions in marching with the French traditions in military music. He goes on:

> Hence I have had this notion of the social nature of the 'habitus' for many years. . . . These 'habits' do not vary just with individuals and their imitations; they vary especially between societies, education, proprieties and fashions, prestiges. (Mauss 1979: 101)

In a series of similar examples, Mauss points out that there is no 'natural' way of walking, dancing, marching or even swimming; we are *taught* how to do these things in the way in which our culture always does them. In as far as we are not actually taught our movements, gestures, dispositions and demeanours by others, we fall back on our propensity to imitation and teach ourselves, using the people we see around us as models. In his 'General Conclusions' Mauss suggests that the purpose of teaching these physiological habits is in order to instil the correct, or approved, psychological attitudes, the mental dispositions that pertain to and support a particular form of social life. In other words, he asserts that there is a link between physical and mental dispositions. Mauss manages to capture in his various examples the social relevance of the characteristic gesture or the fashionable gait; bodily features can give away more information about a person's social situation than any number of words. He shows

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'symbolic function' or the 'representative function' underlies our movements, but it is not a final term for analysis. It too rests on a certain groundwork. Consciousness is in the first place not a matter of 'I think' but 'I can'." Merleau-Ponty (1962: 124, 137).

that people learn to become members of the social group by 'doing'; learning to carry out the body's techniques is an important aspect of social learning.

The ideas set out by Mauss in this essay represented one of the first attempts to formulate an anthropology of the body, but many others followed. The idea of the body as the ground of cultural meaning was taken up by the kinesics and proxemics school of anthropologists, represented mainly by Hall (e.g. 1959) and Birdwhistell (e.g. 1952). In their work, they investigate "the learnt and structural behaviour of the body in movement", and search for the key to bodily communication. They find their answer in culturally specific, language-like codes, in which messages of one sort or another are passed on by means of unambiguous corporeal signs, ordered into strict patterns. These patterns are seen as being structured and ordered into systems in the same way that language is, hence the title of the best known of their books, *The Silent Language* (1959). The linguistic basis of their work is set out in Birdwhistell's (1970: xi) claim that "body motion is a learned form of communication, which is patterned within a culture and which can be broken down into an ordered system of isolable elements". As pioneers in this field they were successful. They pointed to the significance of bodily control as a cultural tool and to the relevance of patterns of movement in establishing cultural identity. It was partly through their publications that the body came to be seen as an important source of communication. Reading through their work, one comes across ideas about rhythm, movement and dance (for example Hall 1976: 61–73), which have been rediscovered and made popular in the context of performative perspectives (e.g. Connerton 1989). However, despite all the interesting ideas and the well-documented examples about the use of space and gesture, Hall and Birdwhistell did not develop any convincing theoretical basis for their observations. They remained attached to the linguistic point of view but it gradually became clear that this kind of communication does not take place on the basis of the rigidly structured patterns that they had suggested (e.g. Beukenhorst 1992). The linguistic matrix into which Birdwhistell attempted to place his ideas[4] proved unhelpful, and this school of thought lost its credibility.

[4] For example: their main method of working was to watch sequences of film, played very slowly, and look out for physical patterns, movements of the eyelids for instance, or gestures. These patterns were then taken to encode a message more or less in the way a sentence would.

The body also played an important role in the work of Goffman (e.g. 1971, 1976). He explains how bodily interaction, culturally orchestrated, is a fundamental part of social life. He describes these everyday, corporeal encounters in minute detail and shows how, in order to be a competent social agent, the body is continually 'at work', being—and putting into practice—the social self. In *Gender Advertisements* (1976), for example, a collection of advertisements which use portrayals of male and female bodies, he not only demonstrates the communicative power of the body but also shows how much the body can tell the viewer about social relationships and cultural norms. Though Goffman's work does not really make an issue of the nature of the body—which he sees as being under the control of the 'self'—he does question the relationship of the public, performing 'body' to the individual self (e.g. 1971: 23). As such, his work is open to further interpretations. The body, in Goffman's perspective, is no longer simply an entity but, in its facial expressions, gestures and demeanour, provides the substratum of everyday communication. Goffman's work is so alive, and so focused on the *praxis* of communication, that it is surprising he does not call attention to the way in which garments affect the movements and gestures of the body. He does mention dress in his work, in fact he is one of the first authors to do so, but dress remains for him a strictly surface activity; it covers the body and is part of its representation, but not part of its moving, gesticulating 'work'.

All of these perspectives are lively and interesting, and go towards piecing together a picture of the social and cultural role of the body. Though the ideas of Hall and Birdwhistell have proved too mechanistic to be relevant today, all these authors were interpreting real situations and had real bodies in mind. The following three authors were important in the development of theories about the body but it is not always easy to discover flesh and blood bodies in the perspectives they develop. This makes it more difficult to bring their work into line with ideas about dress and the body.

Douglas, Foucault and Elias

Douglas is aware of the importance and relevance of the body to the study of social life, and explains this in particular in her book *Natural Symbols* (1970). In a chapter entitled *The two bodies*, she illustrates the necessary connection between the natural body and the social body

and notes that "the physical experience of the body, always modified by the social categories through which it is known, sustains a particular view of society" (1970: 67). She claims that there must always be consonance between the physical body and the political body; the values known to the one must harmonize with the structures of the other.

With this point of view, she is one of the first authors to suggest the experience of the body as a way of breaking down the barriers between the 'cultural' and the 'natural'. She demonstrates the interplay between bodily and social experience, and gives the body an important role in the construction of a meaningful world. In doing this, she contrasts the 'vertical' dimension of the body's experience with the 'horizontal' dimension of the mind's activity in structuralist thought. She is keen for her science, anthropology, to study the physical experience of the body, convinced that this will offer important new insights, but at the same time she is aware that this perspective still has to be developed:

> I advance the hypothesis that bodily control is an expression of social control . . . there is little prospect of successfully imposing bodily control without the corresponding social forms. And lastly, the same drive that seeks harmoniously to relate the experience of physical and social must affect ideology. This approach takes the vertical dimension of experience more seriously than the current trend in the structural analysis of symbolism, which requires meanings to be found horizontally . . . (idem 1970: 74–75).

At the end of the day, however, her study remains somewhat aloof from the physical experience of the body. Despite her claims, she unalterably takes the body to be a valuable and much-used metaphor—"the human body is always treated as an image of society" (idem 1970: 74)—but no more than that.

Foucault and Elias are generally taken to be the first authors to bring the body to the foreground of social theory. Both of them set out to trace the changes in attitudes surrounding the body that started in or around the seventeenth century. Deep-rooted changes in political authority around that time—the ascendancy of the state and the diminishing authority of the church—had important consequences for the way in which people viewed themselves and their physical, mental and emotional realities.

Foucault's work is a treasure trove of new ideas and new insights, and the body is a central focus. In the first volume of *History of*

Sexuality, he chronicles the insertion of the body into politics and takes a new look at the concept of power. The political transition from sovereign to state hinged on a new conception of the nature of the body and on a new form of authority over the body. The origins of power should not be looked for in large institutions, in government or in the law but rather in interpersonal relationships. With this idea in mind, Foucault goes on to analyse the mechanisms of power in the modern state and to ask how the state develops the necessary strategies to continue its rule. Foucault finds his answer in the 'discourses of knowledge' that are gradually developed within the state; the state, no longer privileged to be the 'taker' of life as the sovereign, the predecessor of the state, used to be, becomes the 'administrator' of life. The discourses which accompany this administration of life centre on the body, firstly on individual bodies and secondly on populations of bodies (1979: 140–141). The modern state survives, Foucault claims, by winding its long, discursive tentacles around these two types of bodies, producing on the way those 'docile', 'medicalized' and 'productive' bodies for which his work is known.

Foucault's views offer an explanatory background to the appearance of dualism, the body being 'enclosed', separated and turned into a machine through the forces of regulation and discipline. His work helped to stimulate other writers to look further into the issue of the body, and raised many pertinent questions.[5] However, Foucault largely ignores the idea of the body as social agent; the bodies he deals in are the bodies of individuals subjected to forces over which they have no control. He tends to understand the human body only as an object of knowledge and not as a knowing being or a thinking body. This makes the passive body, created by discourses, that emerges from Foucault's work strangely at odds with the notions of the body which have become known through the corpus of writing that his work, to some extent, inspired.

Elias is the other sociologist who is generally taken to have put the body 'on the map'. In *The Civilizing Process* (1978), Elias describes the pacification of medieval society through the development of individual, moral forms of restraint in codes such as table manners and etiquette. He describes how Western man became the 'civilized' being he is today, and in so doing he focuses on the body, as being the locus on and within which the process of civilization takes place. To

[5] E.g. Turner 1984, Martin 1989, Giddens, 1991, T. Turner 1994.

some extent echoing Douglas, he sees the increased ability of individuals to exercise bodily control and self-restraint as being the key to the new political structures that have developed in the West since the end of the Middle Ages. Taking some of his information from a series of books on manners and etiquette, beginning with Erasmus' (1530) treatise on how to bring up children, Elias describes the gradual pacification of medieval society. He links this process to the ability of the increasingly 'civilized' individual to control the body's natural functions. At the table, for instance, it became increasingly unacceptable to spit, to fart, to use the fingers for eating or to blow your nose. Elias takes this increasing individual restraint and self-control to be a necessary precursor to the social restraint needed for the formation of the modern state.

Although the body has a definite place in his perspective, Elias is most interested in the development of certain psychological aspects of the individual, and his work illustrates the interdependency between practices, expressions and feelings. He focuses in particular on the role played by the emotions, such as shame and embarrassment, in the civilizing process. As people become more and more dependent upon each other, so too the need for individual self-restraint increases. This increase in self-control is effected by the emotions, which Elias sees as playing a hinge-like role, between the physical and the psychic aspects of the person and, therefore, between the natural and the cultural aspects.

The understanding body: Foley and Johnson

The idea of a knowing and understanding body was also supported by approaches in linguistics. Foley (1997), an anthropological linguist, notes the challenge being made to current thinking on the relationship between language and knowing. He puts a question mark behind the view that we live in an unstructured but pre-given world which we apprehend by imposing upon it our own linguistic, that is mental, schemes. This view is misguided because it fails to take account of the role of the body in our apprehension of the world. The grounding of our cognition is embodied in the "lived histories of organisms, and their communicative, cultural and linguistic *practices*" (1997: 177). To support this view he cites Polanyi's (1963) distinction between tacit and articulate knowledge. Polanyi, himself a physical chemist, claims that in our desire to make knowledge increasingly

impersonal, objective and dispassionate, we can easily lose sight of a whole store of knowledge—personal knowledge—which is, in fact, essential to all forms of knowing. Articulate knowledge refers to the collection of facts and figures that we can talk and think about, and which is subject to rules of rationality and logic. Tacit knowledge, on the other hand, is by definition unaware of itself and a-critical, but nevertheless it is essential to our ability to know and to do things, drive a car or speak a language for instance. He illustrates the way in which articulate, conscious knowledge depends upon its silent partner, by differentiating between the focal and subsidiary awareness which a person uses when driving a nail into a piece of wood with a hammer. To quote Foley's account of Polanyi's description:

> . . . we experience the hammer's head hitting the nail but in fact what we are actually perceiving are the vibrations of the hammer's handle in our hands. Without being aware of it, we use the vibrations to guide our manipulation of the hammer, all the while attending to the impact of the hammer on the nail. Thus we are focally, explicitly aware of the action of driving the nail by being subsidiarily, tacitly, aware of the vibrations in the hand. Ultimately, all human knowledge depends on this form; we know something explicitly and focally within a much wider background of subsidiary and tacit knowledge. Our bodies are the central locus of this background (Foley 1997: 14).

A more technical treatment of the essential role of the body in human understanding is given in Johnson's *The Body in the Mind* (1987). In this book Johnson investigates the central position of metaphor in human understanding and points to the essential part played by embodied experience in our thought processes. He shows how our ideas about what is a logical line of thinking are body-based; in other words they derive their self-evidence from the way in which the body copes with the concrete world around it. He takes, for example, the meanings of the words *in* and *out*, *up* and *down*, and shows that we understand their meanings by a metaphoric process taken from body-based 'image schemas'. Johnson's book demonstrates in a detailed and technical way how thoroughly 'embodied' the subject is. The mind understands and interprets on the basis of the body's physical presence in the world, and that is the one and only way in which understanding can take place. Signs and symbols are necessary part of our understanding and they inevitably involve the body and its situation in the world.

These linguistic perspectives are important to the subject in hand

since they explain in detail that a 'point of view' is not only a metaphor, a way of speaking, but also a lived reality. The work opens perspectives for a better understanding of the link between the body, its demeanour and the way we perceive and interpret the world around us.

Bourdieu and the notion of habitus

About thirty years after Mauss delivered his lecture on techniques of the body, Bourdieu, a philosopher by training, more or less changed the face of sociology and anthropology with the new insights he offered into the nature of social behaviour. In his work on the theory of practice (e.g. 1977) he puts the body not only at the centre of human experience but also at the centre of social theory. Investigating the nature of social and cultural reproduction, Bourdieu set out to develop a theory that tempered the objective, structural approach which sociology had become used to. Like many other social scientists, Bourdieu wanted to find a way of bridging the gap between two opposing ways of looking at the world, oppositions that turned up in various forms: subjective versus objective, the individual versus society, process versus structure, existentialism versus structuralism, nature versus culture. Bourdieu realized that both points of view had something valuable to offer, but that it was clearly impossible for a science of society to be reduced to either 'social phenomenology' or 'social physics'. He felt it must be possible to move beyond the incompatibility that existed between the two views and find a perspective that could reconcile them.

Bourdieu admits that his own bias is towards the objective viewpoint. He feels that the introduction of the structural, relational mode of thought into the social sciences was a great step forward, opening up the mind to new possibilities and allowing people to think previously unthinkable thoughts. His early work, on the Kabyle, was carried out within a structuralist framework, and he writes with admiration of Levi-Strauss, his teacher in Paris. He remembers the respectful patience and attention to detail with which Lévi Strauss analysed North American myths. He feels that the approach that Lévi Strauss developed and used, finding meaning in the myths horizontally, from within the mythology itself, has had a great deal to offer, and that it has saved the texts from the dead-end of substantialist, or even from essentialist and eventually racist, interpretations.

Nevertheless Bourdieu has a problem with the objective perspective. For one thing, the objective viewpoint is easily taken in by its own constructs; regularities become rules, norms becomes models, and the scientist-observer slides all too easily from constructing a model of reality to presupposing the reality of his model. Once social 'laws' have been established and recognized they are easily endowed with a sort of fetishism, so that they themselves begin to structure the perceptions of the observer, who then tends to lose touch with the reality of what happens on the ground. History is reduced to a process without a subject, while the agent becomes an automaton, driven by dead laws. The mechanical and inflexible models of the actors that are produced in such a rigidly objective perspective are neither life-like nor helpful, since they can in no way explain the manner in which the actor is not only a product of history but also, himself, works on history. Nor do they offer any hope of understanding and getting behind the feeling of total familiarity that the actor has in his own surroundings. Bourdieu himself, for example, found that the 'rule' of cross-cousin marriage among the Kabyle could better be described as the basis of a cultural imperative or ambition along the lines of which the Kabyle developed their strategies of finding a marriage partner. Anthropologists, however, had tended to think of the ideal of this form of marriage as some kind of law.

Bourdieu feels that an added danger in the objective point of view is the supposed superiority of the distanced, theoretical observer. Ever since Plato, who described practice as "the inability to contemplate" (Bourdieu 1990: 27), the structuralists, in one form or another, have tended to have the big guns on their side of the divide. In order to counterbalance the objective stance, and to counteract the feelings of superiority of those who adhere to it, Bourdieu observes that it is time to produce a science of the practical mode of knowledge. He sets out to look, with the eye of the scientist, at the 'common sense' knowledge that actually guides people in their everyday lives. Bourdieu points to the unreal quality of native life from the point of view of the objective observer; everyday interactions, devoid of their common sense, appear as a series of symbolic exchanges, acted out for the benefit of the observer. From the vantage point of the objective observer, it is difficult to get in touch with the rooted and dynamically self-evident quality of mundane interaction, which lives off threads going deep into the social fabric and carries itself along.

At the same time, anticipating an increasing aversion towards strictly theoretical approaches in the social sciences, Bourdieu wants to guard against a collapse in the direction of unstructured, subjective participation. His reservations about the objectivist view are not meant as encouragement to an overly subjectivist, intuitivist mode of social research. He feels strongly that spurious primitive participation, and the ambition of some social scientists to get to know the cultural life of the people they study by simply participating, describing in minute detail all that goes on around him, is mere self-deception. He writes of the 'imaginary anthropology of subjectivism'. Any form of social science has to begin by making a definite break with immediate experience, otherwise the scientist has no platform to stand on. Because of his own upbringing in rural France—and despite his subsequent rise to the heights of the academic world—he feels he has a better and less abstract idea than most spectators about what it entails to be a participator, a rural peasant for example. He also feels he is better placed to understand the pointlessness of taking up the subjective position; to hope that this will yield any genuine insight into the workings of the culture so penetrated is to embrace a delusion. Bourdieu has a certain sympathy with the aims of the subjectivist, and with his desire to understand the experience of everyday action, the 'primary relationship of familiarity with the familiar environment' (1990: 25). But he feels that the only way to achieve these insights is to carry out a scientific investigation into the conditions that produce the experience of familiarity. Simply joining in the action, without looking beneath the surface, will lead nowhere, since it will not then be possible to go beyond a description of the world as a self-evident, taken-for-granted place:

> This is because it excludes the question of the conditions of possibility of this experience, namely the coincidence of the objective structures and the internalized structures which provides the illusion of immediate understanding, characteristic of practical experience of the familiar universe . . . (1990: 26).

The 'internalized structures' to which Bourdieu refers in this passage are the structures of the habitus, a notion that many authors have used, generally with the idea of escaping the rigidity of rule-based human behaviour but which in Bourdieu's work takes on a specific meaning that has become central to sociological thought.

Habitus and practical sense

Bourdieu aims to overcome the incompatibility between the two perspectives, the objective and the subjective, by the way in which he constitutes the subject. For him, the subject is above all a *doing* person, active in and interactive with the world around him, a person who thinks because he does, rather than the other way round. This idea is not new in itself; what is new about his subject is the way in which his activity is instructed and directed. His practical sense, which tells him what to do and when to do it, is informed not by a set of hard and fast rules but by a set of embodied *dispositions*, which together make up the habitus. Bourdieu refutes the idea that the people who are 'produced' by a specific set of social, historical conditions and structures are programmed to conform blindly with the conditions that produced them, as the objectivists would have it. They are, rather, people who, in childhood, have been so imbued with and conditioned by certain ways of acting out the behavioural patterns—customs, habits and manners—that belong within the circumstances of their upbringing that they are physically 'disposed' to act in accordance with those circumstances. They do this not because they *have* to, but because that is the 'obvious' and self-evident thing to do. Habitus, these incorporated structures, enable the people who belong to a particular class or group to do or say the appropriate thing at the anticipated moment—'appropriate' and 'anticipated' as far as that class or group is concerned and for the context or 'field' in which the action takes place.

The habitus—"embodied history, internalized as a second nature and forgotten as history" (1990: 56)—is the objective product of a specific history and a specific set of institutions. Being a generative principle, however, it also enables the subject to produce a subjective and individual response, a regulated improvization; he is limited to a set of apposite possibilities, but he is liberated from the necessity of 'sticking to the rules'. Within these limitations, the subject plans, sets targets and draws up strategies—a quite different process from that which takes place within the objectivist's determinism. The unconscious—or rather, subconscious, since conscious/unconscious is one of the dualities that Bourdieu aims to make redundant—boundaries to *these* plans and aims are set by the habitus, calculating in the possibilities open to him. This prompts people to do the 'obvious' thing, to make a virtue out of necessity, that is, "to refuse what is anyway

denied and to will the inevitable" (1990: 54). It matches our limited set of possibilities to our most deep-seated expectations. The habitus turns practice into 'common-sense', too obvious and self-evident to need further discussion. So the sociologist's statistics tally, yet at the same time the subject retains a free, if delimited, choice in the matter. Practice, the encounter between the habitus—incorporated history—and the objective structures which he finds in the world and which have been produced by that same history, becomes the 'magical process of socialization'. In this process, people act out their roles and become part of vast institutions as though this were the obvious thing to do. The king, the banker and the priest become part of "the hereditary monarchy, financial capitalism and the Church made flesh" (1990: 57).

One important aspect of Bourdieu's concept of habitus, the hidden chain that links the generations, is its situation, well out of reach of the rational, conscious, self. Habitus belongs in the body and to the body rather than to the mind. Practical sense, knowing what to do and when to do it by virtue of the presence of the habitus, is 'a state of the body', not a 'state of mind' (1990; 68). Bourdieu explains what he has in mind with the concept of habitus by comparing practical sense to having 'a feel for the game'. Players have an internalized knowledge of all the possibilities that the rules of a game offer the players but at the moment of play there is no opportunity to make conscious calculations. At the same time, a feel for the game suggests a natural ability to find your way within the possibilities of the game, using any one of a number of suitable strategies. Players have a whole range of possible moves and responses at their disposal, all of them variations elaborated from the need to adhere and respond to the rules. The tennis player who runs up to the net at the appropriate moment has not made a conscious calculation, but neither is such a move prompted by instinct. The player has internalized the rules of the game and his body tells him that this is the moment to strike.

Bourdieu's metaphor of the game also underlines the *physical* emphasis of the perspective he develops. Due to his modest origins, modest at least compared to the urban, sophisticated world he inhabited later, he had experienced first hand the way in which social class is engrained in the bodies of its members: in a way of standing, holding a glass or sitting at ease in a chair. He is well aware that the power and dominance of a certain class may be exercised to a large extent symbolically through the body and through these gestures.

Bourdieu also stresses the way in which class expresses itself in all the physical aspects of language, or rather of speaking, particularly in the way the mouth and tongue are organized to produce a certain accent and also in facial expressions and the set of the head. This made him realize that each social class has its own particular ways of moving and ordering the body, and that these physical systems are at the root of class identity. These physical identities are unconsciously acquired; children develop them as part of their upbringing by imitating more senior members of their social group. In general, they are not consciously learned or unlearned. For Bourdieu, it is above all the body's motor systems and muscle structures, programmed in the minutiae of the bodies movements, which function as the repository for the cultural beliefs—ideas, thoughts, attitudes and philosophies, in short the whole cosmology—that orientate an individual on the world:

> Bodily hexis is political mythology realized, em-bodied, turned into a permanent disposition, a durable way of standing, speaking, walking, and thereby of feeling and thinking (idem: 69/70).

Cultural values and cultural beliefs—or rather the cultural oppositions that underpin these values and beliefs—are stored in the physical make-up of the body, and they mark the body and leave their traces there. The set of gestures—ways of walking or standing, of holding the head or the arms, of talking or laughing, of eating and drinking, and all the other "deep-rooted muscular patterns of behaviour" (1990: 69)—that belong to a particular way of life, and to particular roles within a way of life, should not be seen as symptomatic of that life but rather as lying at the base of it. Cultural attitudes are instilled and maintained by drilling and organizing the *body*. It is in childhood upbringing that this 'drilling', the long process of familiarization, first starts. Bourdieu describes the way in which such insignificant instructions as 'sit up straight' or 'don't hold your knife in your left hand' inculcate into the body, beyond the reach of consciousness, the cultural values that the child is to learn. These distinctive bodily schemes are maintained and remembered (re-*member*-ed) in the everyday actions and forms of labour that belong within a culture. Bourdieu uses his fieldwork among the Kabyle to illustrate his ideas. He shows, for example, how the relevant distinctions between male and female—which opposition, he suggests, forms the "fundamental principle of division of the social and the symbolic world" (1990: 78)—are realized

in the ways of standing and walking, working and gesturing, that are considered proper for men and for women:

> The opposition between male and female is realized in posture, in the form of the opposition between the straight and the bent, between firmness, uprightness and directness . . . and restraint, reserve and flexibility (idem: 70).

This opposition is given further physical form in opposed ways of walking:

> The man of honour walks at a steady, determined pace. His walk. . . . expresses strength and resolution, ... as opposed to the hesitant gait . . . announcing indecision . . . and fear of commitments . . . He stands up straight and looks straight into the face of the person he approaches. . . . Conversely a well brought-up woman . . . is expected to walk with a slight stoop, avoiding every misplaced movement of her body, her head or her arms, looking down, keeping her eyes on the spot where she will next put her foot. She must avoid the excessive swing of the hips . . . the specifically feminine virtue *lah'ia* orients the whole body downwards, towards the ground (idem: 70).

These same oppositions are constantly rehearsed and lived in the gendered division of labour among the Kabyle, for example in olive picking, where the man reaches upwards to knock the olives off the tree with a stick, while the woman stoops downwards to pick the olives off the floor. In these examples Bourdieu illustrates how cultural beliefs are *enacted* rather than just thought. In fact Bourdieu compares the knowledge of the body with 'other' knowledge: "What is 'learned by body' is not something that one has, like knowledge that can be brandished, but something that one is" (idem: 73), and he gives priority to the body.[6]

Habitus and the power of dress

A lot of space has been given to Bourdieu's views, and to the concept of habitus that he develops; they are relevant to this study because he makes clear suggestions as to how the body's behaviour relates to cultural beliefs and cultural understanding. For the Kabyle, Bourdieu

[6] Enacted belief, instilled by the childhood learning that treats the body as a living memory pad, an automaton that leads the mind unconsciously along with it . . . (idem: 68).

(e.g. 1990: 145–283 *Practical logics*) has set down in great detail the objective conditions—cultural forms, schemes and practices—that produce the dispositions of the habitus and that effect its hidden persuasion. He mentions architecture and the Kabyle house in this connection but he does not mention dress. However, with his description of habitus, Bourdieu offers an explanation, though he does not articulate it, about the power of dress and its function as a cultural tool. Habitus, despite being a state of the body, and not a state of mind, is not itself a physical disposition in Bourdieu's work, as it is with Mauss. Rather, it is a generative principle that realizes itself and remembers itself in the range of the bodily schemes which it has at its disposal and which make up 'appropriate behaviour' in any given context or field. These bodily schemes, performed and understood by the members of a group, enact the cultural beliefs and values of the group.

In the case of the Kabyle for example, he describes the appropriate way of walking for men and women, a way of walking that enacts the oppositional values that characterize the male and female role. The 'man of honour':

> . . . walks at a steady determined pace. His walk, that of a man who knows where he is going and knows he will get there on time, whatever the obstacles, expresses strength and resolution as opposed to the hesitant gait . . . announcing indecision, half-hearted promises . . . the fear of commitments and inability to fulfil them (1990: 70).

In this description, we miss any reference to what the man is wearing. The body he is describing is surely a dressed body, but he does not ask in how far the attitudes taken on are induced or maintained by the influence of the clothes it is wearing. In his description of how a "well brought-up woman" should walk, Bourdieu gives a bit more help:

> Conversely, a well brought-up woman, who will do nothing indecorous . . . is expected to walk with a slight stoop, avoiding every misplaced movement of her body, looking down . . . She must avoid any excessive swing of the hips that comes from a heavy stride; she . . . must always be girdled with the *thimeh'remth*, a rectangular piece of cloth with yellow, red and black stripes worn over her dress, and take care that her headscarf does not come unknotted, uncovering her hair (idem: 70).

Even this scrap of information sets our minds thinking. Perhaps the wide band around the woman's hips is there to serve as a constant

(though subconscious) hint that she must 'avoid an excessive swing of the hips', for it will certainly make her aware of her gait. While the headscarf, which may come unknotted, limits her mobility, renders her cautious and hesitant. Whereas the "steady, determined pace" of the man, who neither "walks with great strides" nor "trails along", may well be geared to the thickness of the cotton of the garment he is wearing, the thick cotton contrasting with the more flimsy fabric of the woman's garment, and both fabrics representing the contrasting male and female values: straight and bent, stiff and supple. Bourdieu does not give these details but many North African garments do use this difference in fabric for men and women. Such a reading may not be correct, for the information is limited, but one way or another the dress will have an influence and make its mark.

Bourdieu is aware of the potential that such schooled positioning of the body can have:

> Every social order systematically takes advantage of the disposition of the body and language to function as depositories of deferred thoughts that can be triggered off at a distance in space and time by the simple effect of re-placing the body in an overall posture which recalls the associated thoughts and feelings, in one of the inductive states of the body which, *as actors know*, give rise to states of mind (idem: 69, italics added).

Yet nothing 're-places' and organizes the body to such on-going effect as dress. Worn next to the body, its 'social skin' as it has been called, dress is the body's most immediate instruction on how it should stand and sit, restrain itself or hang loose, enacting the oppositions on which cultural values rest. Cultural dispositions are integrated with physical dispositions, and access to this set of dispositions is through the body as much as through the mind—as he describes in the above quote. Bourdieu also makes this clear when he refers to the symbolic power that is attached to having control over other people's bodies, for example in the use of singing and dancing in the great collective ceremonies:

> Symbolic power works partly through the control of other people's bodies and belief that is given by the collectively recognized capacity to act in various ways on deep-rooted linguistic and muscular patterns of behaviour, either by neutralizing them or by reactivating them . . . (1990: 69).

One could point to a whole range of objects, furniture for example,[7] that function in this way to jog the memory of the body but clothes remain the most potent of the range because they are so closely and so persistently next to the body, its second skin.

It would seem that for Bourdieu, however, the most important prompt in the production of appropriately disposed bodies remains the dictates and disciplines of upbringing (e.g. 1990: 69, 2001: 27), though he would appear to be open to the idea that other factors, or objects, can fulfil a similar function. For example, he notes the way in which language dialects can produce opposing facial features: *la bouche* or *la gueule*. Both refer to the mouth, but *la bouche* belongs to the fastidiousness of the middle class, while *la gueule* is associated with the vulgarity of the lower class. In his book *Distinction* (1979), the upshot of fieldwork carried out in France, he also describes the way Kleenex tissues serve as the body's memory-joggers to prompt the appropriately delicate female sniff, as opposed to the big cotton handkerchief, which functions as the cue for the more masculine and robust blow. And in *Masculine Domination* he also makes one mention of the way in which women's clothes can serve to sustain the physical dispositions of the dominated (2001: 29). It is not a subject he returns to.

In general, however, when Bourdieu discusses dress he is thinking of its relationship to signs. He writes of the "sign-bearing, sign-wearing body" (1979: 192) and of the perceived body being constituted by signs (1979: 193); he therefore leaves no space open for the idea of the sign itself, a garment, being constituted by is functionality. For instance, he claims that people are predisposed to dress in a particular way: middle class people prefer quality materials, such as cashmere and silk, even though this means buying fewer garments. He does not go on to ask in how far wearing these kinds of quality materials is related to the physical dispositions of these same middle class people. Does the refusal of the *haute bourgeousie* to wear anything other than cashmere or silk next to the skin, for example, help to relax the body and prompt the air of easy authority that is their second nature? Do the male members of the dominant class have their shirts

[7] ". . . patterns of body use are ingrained through our interactions with objects, such as the way that working at a desk or with a machine imposes and reinforces postural set which we come to regard as belonging to sedentary white-collar workers and factory workers . . ." (Jackson 1989: 128).

made to measure so that the collar, which in hand-made shirts is generally half a centimetre wider than factory made shirts, elicits the upright stature and high chin of the 'natural' leader? Do they prefer the *image* of expensive shirts and remain unaware that the weight of the wide double cuffs at the end of the arms intensifies the drama of the hands' gesturing? These examples may or may not be relevant but it remains the case that the sign value of a garment is often based on its ability to nudge and niggle the body into a stance that is recognized and approved, sub-consciously, by the habitus. Thus Bourdieu writes about the significant distinction between tailored suits and boiler suits without relating these garments to the type of gait or demeanour which these garments prompt and give rise to or, on the other hand, obstruct and preclude.

The flexibility of dress

This proposed relation between dress and the bodily expressions of the habitus may seem to turn the subject of dress and dressing into an activity that is uncharacteristically static. Dress and fashion are generally related to processes of change and adaptation, while the habitus is, as Bourdieu repeatedly states, a durable property, an ongoing disposition, inculcated in childhood but lasting a lifetime, and not a property that comes and goes along with the fashions. To conclude that the habitus is in any way static, however, is both to misunderstand the nature of habitus and to underrate the inventive potential of the body. Habitus is a generative principle which, though durable, can be applied in any situation, through time and throughout society, with different though related results. So habitus can adapt itself to diverse fields of social activity as well as to diverse fashions and produce any number of responses, which are, nevertheless, limited by virtue of the habitus which produced them. Furthermore, habitus, though inculcated during childhood, in the process of upbringing, is a generative principle and continues its development throughout a person's life.[8]

A person can produce innumerable varieties of demeanours which will, nevertheless, belong to a certain class of demeanours, i.e. those

[8] ". . . the habitus, like every 'art of inventing', is what makes it possible to produce an infinite number of practices that are relatively unpredictable . . . but also limited in their diversity" (Bourdieu 1990: 55).

that underlie the style of a group or a class. Suggesting that there is a relationship between habitus and the formative function of dress does not imply that dress would then forfeit the quality which renders it the epitome of fashion and fashionable behaviour: its infinite capacity to change and adapt. Rather, dress helps the body to find its own version of the latest trends, an attitude that relates both to the fashion as well as to the habitus of a particular class. People do not follow the fashion to the extent that it overrules their own particular style. The latest fashion, whether it comes from the dress industry, a pop group or the street, is never more than a trend. It is interpreted in a thousand different ways by each group and class of society.

4. This study: Jackson and lighting a fire

At first glance, Jackson might appear to be one of those anthropologists to whom Bourdieu was objecting when he writes that spurious primitive participation and the ambition of some social scientists to get to know the cultural life of the people they study by simply participating is mere self-deception. During his fieldwork among the Karanko people of Sierra Leone, one of Jackson's preferred methods of research was to participate physically in the daily round of Karanko activities, copying in a precise and detailed manner the body routines they used to hoe the soil, to dance, to light a fire and to light the kerosene lamp. On closer inspection however it is clear that Jackson's method is neither primitive nor superficial but is in fact grounded in the writing of Bourdieu himself. For Jackson (1989: 120–136), culture should not be seen, as it often has been by anthropologists, as the collection of ideas, beliefs, laws, morals and customs, those "properties of mind and language", which separate humans from animals. This has led to an attitude whereby culture becomes a 'superorganic' entity, abstract, exclusive and excluding, with no place for the body or the biological. In aiming to retrieve a more tenable definition of culture, Jackson turns to the etymological roots of the word: to tend (the land), to nurture (the crops) and to look after (the animals). In his view, the culture of any particular group should be sought in the way in which that group carries out the daily round of its practical activities; it is in the body and its routines that the specificity of the group, also of its ideas, is to be found.

So Jackson's participation in the daily life of the Karanko is not a spontaneous or empty gesture, a naïve subjectivism, but is informed and premeditated. At the centre of this 'strategy' is his belief, founded on the work of authors such as Bourdieu and Merleau Ponty, that there is an intrinsic connection between the way people use their bodies and the way in which they make sense of their environment. Human experience and understanding is grounded in the body, in its physical dispositions and in its ways of moving and doing. This becomes particularly clear in pre-literate societies where practical knowledge and ethical knowledge are so closely related. The range of body movements and gestures that are appropriate to a group cannot necessarily be 'textualized' or said to 'mean' this or that, but they can be 'contextualized'; they can be shown to make sense within, and add sense to, the social environment they are performed in. It is not until worded knowledge becomes embodied that it becomes familiar and personal. This focus on embodied knowledge makes it possible for Jackson to speak in terms of 'kinaesthetic learning', the road that he chose to take. By learning to use his body in the way the Kuranko did, he gained insight into their lives and he learnt to make sense of their values and judgements. In particular, moral virtues and values are correlated with, and can be learned through, patterns of body use and physical dispositions. While studying female initiation rituals he realized the pointlessness of asking endless questions as to what this or that ritual movement 'stood for' or 'meant'. It was only once he became aware that these ritualized movements, borrowed as they were from various terrains and contexts, contained within them all the information that the Kuranko girls needed to become part of the grown-up Kuranko community, that he was able to make sense of them. The rituals served as a way of creating adults.[9]

In the description of my fieldwork that follows, I set out to do what Jackson sets out to do and "explore the interplay of habitual body sets, patterns of practical activity and (culturally conditioned) forms of consciousness" (Jackson 1989: 119–120) in the three small villages in Senegal that I mentioned in the previous chapter. I show how the villagers' bodies are attuned to village culture, using 'culture'

[9] "We can therefore postulate that initiation ritual maximizes the information available in the total environment in order to ensure the accomplishment of its vital task: creating adults and thereby recreating the social order" (Jackson 1989: 130).

both as Jackson used it—the way of looking after the land and exploiting the natural environment—as well as in its 'superorganic' interpretation. So I want to describe how bodies are attuned not only to the work that the villagers do in the rice fields and to the tools and other objects that they use, but also how those bodies are adapted to the beliefs, values and priorities that hold within the village. At the same time, I want to preface this chain of interdependency by looking in more detail at the role that dress plays in achieving the 'habitual body sets' that hold within each of the villages. To this end, I illustrate the way in which the different types of dress help to bring about or maintain distinct types of body and distinctive patterns of body use.

In how far did I follow Jackson's lead and learn to copy the body routines and rituals with which the Diola carry out the many practical tasks that make up their way of life? I worked alongside the Diola women, in the rice fields, in the kitchen and in the salt pans, for example. Though I mastered none of their tasks I did come to realize how the daily round of practical jobs and the way the body is used in doing them is interwoven with a person's understanding of the world and with her beliefs and knowledge about that world. Furthermore, there is no better context in which to ask all kinds of questions about life in the village and about relationships between villagers than when you are working side by side. I experienced first hand the difference between sitting on the ground or on a low stool and sitting on a chair, between wearing shoes and walking barefoot, eating with your hands and eating with a spoon, sleeping on the ground and sleeping on a bed.

I also learned how different it feels to wear wrapped clothes rather than fitted clothes, my own form of dress there being almost always a length of local cotton fabric wrapped around the waist under a loose T-shirt. However, I never mastered the more elaborate forms of dress, and, in particular, wearing the *grand boubou* proved to be beyond my capabilites: its foreign pressures on balance, posture and gait threw me off course and disoriented me. I was not quite myself in the disjointed body it left me with. Should I have persevered? I am, after all, suggesting that dress is a form of 'kinaesthetic learning' just as a ritual is and just as learning to light a fire in the correct manner is; actors discover aspects of the characters they are playing by wearing 'their' clothes. In seeking to justify my failure I came to several conclusions. In the first place, it was evidence of the

connectedness of body and mind. Jackson (1989: 123) points out that phrases of falling which are used to describe a state of mind—"we lose our footing, we are thrown, we collapse"—should not be taken as metaphorical, a mere manner of speaking. Rather, such phrases indicate a form of shock and disorientation that take place simultaneously in body and mind, an indication of the basic ontological structure of our being-in-the-world. The double disorientation that I experienced in my attempts to carry off this simple garment would appear to tally with this point of view. Secondly, there is a limit to the range of techniques that a body can acquire. Thirdly, the force of the feelings of alienation and disorientation that the *grand boubou* elicited, convinced me of the power of dress. Though in my case it served to alienate rather than instruct, it nevertheless indicated the effectiveness of dress as a cultural tool.

CHAPTER THREE

THE BASSE CASAMANCE IN CONTEXT

1. Introduction

The independent state of Senegal was founded in 1960. Prior to that date, Senegal had formed the centre of French West Africa, the vast colony which, from 1882 to the mid-twentieth century, covered a large part of West Africa. Dakar, the present-day capital of Senegal, was unrivalled in its position as the cultural and economic centre of this whole region. In 1939 the Dutch traveller and author, Paul Julien wrote:

> Overigens is Dakar, het zwaartepunt van het gehele onmetelijke West-Afrikaanse domein van Frankrijk, in feite nagenoeg Europees. Er zijn geheel Europese winkels; er zijn boekwinkels, waar de laatste romans en de laatste kranten te krijgen zijn; cafés die zo uit Marseille of Toulon konden zijn overgeplant, waar vedettes, zoëven uit de Metropole gearriveerd, haar chansons zingen voor een publiek dat men evengoed in Cannes of Bordeaux zou kunnen verwachten. (Julien 1949: 14).[1]

He goes on to contrast the elegance and sophistication he found in Dakar with the heavy and humid, 'jungle' environment that he came across later in Conakry, the capital of Guinea Conakry, also part of French West Africa and a mere two days to the south by boat. Although Dakar is no longer so thoroughly European in character, one could nevertheless say that the contrasts which struck Julien so forcefully at that time are the basis of the problems that are still facing the people of the Basse Casamance, fifty years later. The area forms a buffer between two contrasting regions, a cultural fault line between the dry scrubland of northern Senegal and the humid forests of Guinea. Looking at the map of present day Senegal, the first thing

[1] Tr.: "Dakar, the centre of the vast French West African region, is in fact more of less European. There are European shops; bookshops where you can find the latest novels and today's newspapers; cafés which could have been transplanted straight from Marseilles or Toulon and where well-known stars, fresh from the Metropole, sing to an audience which you might expect to find in Cannes or Bordeaux."

you notice is the way in which the long and crooked finger of The Gambia separates the main part of the country from its south western territory, the Casamance, which is squeezed in between The Gambia and Guinea Bissau. This separation is not a coincidence nor without consequences, for the two parts of the country differ in climate, in culture and in history.

Senegal today has a population of about six million people, inhabiting a territory of 120,000 square kilometres, roughly a third of the area of France. The north of the country is open savannah, with sparse vegetation and few rivers. The south-west, by contrast, is thickly wooded and cut through by the mangrove-lined, tidal arms of the Casamance River. The rainfall in the Basse Casamance, an average of 1,500 mm, is the highest in Senegal, which helps to make it the most fertile part of the country. The abundant rainfall and the lie of the land make it possible for the farmers in this part of Senegal to produce their prolific harvests of rice. In this, as in other cultural aspects, the area is more like the regions south of the Casamance—Guinea Bissau, and Sierra Leone—where high rainfall also makes it possible to grow rice, and less like the rest of the Senegal where farmers, in general, practice the bush-fallow cultivation of millet, sorghum and groundnuts. It is not then surprising to discover that the population of the Basse Casamance can also be said to be in an outsider's position vis à vis the rest of the country when it comes to their ethnic background and their cultural heritage. The Diola make up the great majority of the inhabitants of this region but account for a mere six percent of the total Senegalese population.[2] Furthermore, the Basse Casamance is perhaps the only area of Senegal where the Christian religion can be said to have a major influence.

The inhabitants of the Basse Casamance

The Basse Casamance is an area of approximately 8,000 square kilometres and it is dominated by the Casamance river delta. The main town of the area, Ziguinchor, was founded as a trading post by the Portuguese in the fifteenth century. It is situated on the river about fifty kilometres from the open sea and marks the boundary between

[2] Exact figures are not easy to come by; I have followed Linares (1992) and Villanon (1995).

the delta area, the Basse Casamance, and the region to the east, the Mid-Casamance. The main stream of the river cuts through the Basse Casamance from east to west, dividing it in two. The area north of the river is divided into two districts: Boulouf to the west and Fogny/Kalunay to the east. The area south of the river is called the Casa district.

It would be wrong to give the impression that the Diola have ever been an entirely like-minded, culturally uniform group of people, and their diversity will be discussed below. One of the things they do traditionally have in common however is a deep attachment to their land, though this too may be slowly changing as religious conversion in the region gradually recasts the Diola worldview. Irrigated rice cultivation is an arduous and demanding task and the expansive mosaic of rice paddies that surround the Diola villages represents an enormous investment of energy and expertise on the part of the farmers. Ensuring that the rice plants have the appropriate amount of water at all times requires a complicated and well-maintained system of dikes and ditches, to bring the water in, to keep the water in, or to take the water out again. Unlike many peasant farmers in Africa, and in Senegal, the people in this region do not cultivate various plots of land on a rotation basis. Rather, the same rice fields are used year after year, and large amounts of natural fertilizers are applied annually in order that the land does not become exhausted. It seems likely, as various authors, such as de Jong (2001: 37) and Linares (1981: 568), suggest, that this method of land use helps to account for the political organization of the Diola settlements:

> . . . permanent forms of cultivation obviously require a great deal of sedentism, of staying in the same locality. The time and effort spent improving and building up the paddies result in highly individualized rights in land (Linares 1981: 568).

It also accounts for the strong links that the Diola have with their land. The rice fields have an extraordinary beauty and their intricate re-formation of the natural environment represents the lives and the labour of former generations. Rice fields are passed on within families, through the male line, so that the fields gives material form to the links of lineage that bind the individual to his or her past.

Anthropologists have sometimes suggested that the Diola tendency to live in dispersed and small-scale, self-sufficient villages has led to their living in isolation from the rest of the world. More recently,

however, historical records have been used to show that the Diola have not been so isolated at all, but, rather, have been involved in trading relations with Europeans and other Africans for many centuries. On the other hand, the Diola have indeed been particularly successful in evading incorporation into large-scale political communities of any kind. Partly because of the impenetrable character of the natural environment in the Basse Casamance and also because of the independent disposition of the Diola people—made possible because of the economic independence of the villages—the contact which the Diola have had with the outside world tended to be on their own terms. They managed to remain aloof from the waves of Islamic *jihads* that gradually brought the rest of Senegal into the Islamic world from the fifteenth century onwards. And to a large extent they managed to defend themselves from conquest during the Islamic wars of the nineteenth century, when Mandinko marabouts, Islamic religious leaders, attempted again to convert the Casamance to Islam. The French colonial authorities also struggled against the Diola's fierce and independent disposition when they established colonial rule in French West Africa at the end of the nineteenth century. In the hope of prising open the Diola community, the authorities instigated a head tax and promoted the cultivation of groundnuts. But people in the Basse Casamance declined the offers of free groundnut seed and refused to pay the taxes. Eventually, in 1920, the French were forced to send down a permanent armed force in order to establish their supremacy and they administered the area for the next forty years. Since Independence, in 1960, the area has been ruled over by the state of Senegal, by and large still taken to be a model of democracy and good government, certainly in the West African context.

The religions of the Basse Casamance

Since the 1920s, the Diola have gradually been incorporated into wider cultural communities. In the course of the twentieth century, Islam and Christianity have made deep inroads into the traditional *Awasena* or Animist religion. The world religions have introduced their converts into a cultural commonwealth that is far more extensive than they had ever known previously. Much has been written (e.g. Baum 1990) about this process of conversion, and whether conversion should be seen more as an 'exchange' or rather as an 'accumulation' of values. In other words, whether the converted have really discarded their

traditional attitudes and beliefs or whether they have simply added the new beliefs to the old ones. In either case, wide-spread conversion has meant the acceptance, to a greater or lesser extent, of ideas and values that reach further than the Casamance, into Europe and Arabic North Africa and the Middle East. At the present time all three religions, Animism, Islam and Christianity, play a significant role in the area and all three can be said to have a considerable following. Thomas, who wrote a detailed ethnography of the Diola (1959/60), describes the Basse Casamance as an excellent observation post for studying and comparing the three religions and the way in which they compete.

In the area north of the Casamance river, the Fogny/Kalunay and Boulouf districts, which reach from the coast eastwards to the Soungrougrou river, conversions began to take place early on in the twentieth century, with the arrival of the French. In the course of the colonial period, Islam became the dominant religion in this area and the inhabitants have, gradually and increasingly, adopted the Muslim way of life. Until Independence in 1960, Christianity—which in the context of the Casamance usually means Roman Catholicism—also attracted a considerable following, but since Independence Catholicism north of the river has largely given way to Islam. As for the traditional religion, the practitioners of the Animist rituals in the Boulouf and Fogny/Kalunay areas have gradually died out and they have taken their spirit shrines with them.

Religious affiliation on the south bank of the Casamance River, the Casa, has followed a quite different pattern. Thomas (1959/60) writes with particular affection of the Casa Diola. He refers to them as the *Diolas purs*, implying that they had retained more of the 'original' Diola culture than those who live north of the river. Although it is clear from historical records, written and oral, that the people who now live in the Casa were once themselves outsiders, it is difficult not to agree with him. He describes the Diola, in general, as:

> . . . un paysan habile, soucieux de son bien-être physique, mais également éloigné de tout raffinement, demeurant très près de la nature et dont les procédés, pour être empiriques, n'en sont pas moins la source d'une utilisation intelligente de la nature (Thomas 1959: 92).[3]

[3] Tr.: "An able peasant, concerned with his physical well-being and without any form of refinements. He lives close to nature and makes good use of its resources in a practical though intelligent way."

Judged on these criteria one could argue that the present-day south bank Diola are indeed more essentially Diola, being more 'down to earth' than their north-bank neighbours and living closer to their natural environment. This is mainly due to the absence of a dominant Islamic influence in this area. The Muslim traditions rest on an intellectual and scholarly heritage and there is disdain for physical labour and farming in these traditions. Nevertheless, one of the most important characteristics of the south bank area is the significant presence of all three religions; there are Catholic communities, Islamic communities and communities that practice the Animist rituals.

Diola social structure: a basic model

A hundred years ago, prior to the wave of conversions that took place in the first half of the twentieth century, there was more similarity between the Diola villages than there is today; Diola social structure was based on shared Animist rituals and customs. Today, among the Diola who have converted to Islam or Christianity, various aspects of this structure have adapted to new views and new beliefs. The following sketch of the main features of Diola social life and social idiom is nevertheless clearly recognizable in Diola villages today.

Diola society is oriented towards the group rather than towards the individual. In many situations, a Diola identifies himself with the age group with which he or she played together as a child, worked together as a youth and married together as a young man or woman. The principles along which groups are formed, the basis of social arrangements, are those of kinship, gender and age. In everyday life, it is along these lines that the population is grouped and it is in these terms that individuals construct their identity. The description given below is to some extent an ideal one, but it gives an idea of the main features of Diola society.

Kinship

Among the Diola, each individual is a member, by birth, of the lineage of his or her father. The lineage of the mother is also important to the individual, and the mother's brother plays an important economic role, particularly in the life of a boy. Nevertheless it is the father's lineage which can make the most claims on an individual and which provides the individual with her or his primary identity. Diola society is patrilocal, that is to say, sons remain in the villages

of their fathers while daughters go to live in the villages of their husbands. The lineage is not just an abstract group; it also has a material presence in the form of the family compounds, which are inhabited by an elder and his married sons with their families. The idiom for membership of a compound is based on kinship, and the compounds are connected with one particular family. In reality, however, the ties that join a person to a compound are sometimes based on social rather than on blood relationships. The smallest recognizable segment of the lineage, in both political and economic terms, is the family unit: a married son with wife and young children who lives in his own house within the compound of his father. On the death of the father, the brothers may move on and form compounds of their own, or they may remain living in the same compound. At this level, it is the senior men who are charged with authority over the members of the compound and who have responsibility for it.

The largest segment of the village is the *quartier* or district, made up of a number of compounds, either of one or of several families. At this level, the senior members of the various family compounds form themselves into a council of elders, responsible for that district's affairs—economic, religious and political. Among the Diola, each village section forms, to a certain extent, an independent political unit. Though the councils from the various districts meet together and discuss village affairs, it appears that loyalty to the district may often be stronger than loyalty to the entire village, and inter-district quarrelling is difficult to avoid. In cases where the village has an *oeyi* or rain priest, the ritual leader of the village who also has an important political role, then this is the figurehead who embodies the unity of the village. The *oeyi*, usually referred to locally as *roi* or king, has authority to settle disputes throughout the village and to take other measures, economic for example, to ensure the village's solidarity and integrity. In cases where there is no rain priest, the village sections are held together in as far as is possible by the pan-village council of elders, made up of all the older men from all the districts.

Gender

One of the main features of Diola society is its segregation into two separate and complementary worlds—the men's world and the women's world. The key to this segregation lies in the body of secret knowledge that is so central to Diola social structure. Some of this knowledge is appropriate only for the women to possess, some of it only

for the men. This leads to a situation in which some activities and spheres of influence are female, and some are masculine. In general, women's knowledge concerns matters of sexuality and fertility, while men's knowledge bears on Diola society and how it should be run, and on the nature of the cosmos. This division renders the men the political leaders in Diola society.

Another important feature of Diola society—or at least of Diola society prior to conversion—is the relative equality of status between men and women, which is endorsed by and maintained in the religious system. A man and his wife function as an independent economic unit and work side by side in the rice fields. Men do all the heavy work involving the use of the *kadyendo*, the impressive, oar-like shovel which they use to carry out their work in the rice fields: digging the earth, mending the dikes and making new irrigation channels. The men also collect palm wine from the forests that surround the village. The women are responsible for the rice seed and for sowing the rice, for transplanting it and for harvesting it. It is also their job to collect the wood for cooking and for preparing the food, as well as for looking after the children.

Age

One of the most important things a Diola child has to learn when growing up is to show respect to older people. Among the Diola, it is the natural ageing process that is used as the basis for allocating authority. Here again, it is the body of secret knowledge which plays a central role. For both males and females, this knowledge is imparted in stages as they grow up and get older. For the men, by far the most important transition is from boyhood to manhood, a transition marked by the *bukut* ceremony, which is carried out on a village-wide basis once every generation, that is to say, about once every thirty years. During the *bukut*, all the uninitiated males of the village, children and young men, disappear into the sacred wood, the *bois sacré*, which is the ritual centre of every Diola village. In the wood, the elders instruct the boys in Diola traditions and lore and test the youngsters' courage and mettle. Once they have been initiated, the men are considered qualified to marry, inherit land and establish their own households. Once a man is married he joins the group of young farmers, fending for himself in economic and household matters but still under the authority of the elder generation in political matters. Once his own children have been initiated, he is

generally considered to be old enough to join the council of elders, whose task it is to regulate all the political issues of the village.

For women, menstruation marks the first step to adulthood. At this time, a girl receives her initial instruction in women's affairs and in Diola customs relating to sexuality and fertility. Marriage is the most important transitional step, though it is not until a woman has borne a child, or at least carried a child for several months of pregnancy, that she is entitled to partake in the women's ceremonies and be initiated fully into the women's world. The inability to bear children is therefore a source of deep shame and embarrassment for the whole family. To be fully initiated and join the group of senior women, it is necessary to be past childbearing age. These senior women make up the most authoritative and respected group of women in Diola society, and it is to this group that the midwives or *madrones*—those who officiate at childbirth—belong.

So one could say that a Diola community falls into six main social groups: young men and young women, married men and married women, and senior men and senior women. One aspect of the first four groups is that they also function as work associations. The unmarried youth and the married women, in particular, often hire themselves out as a work team to those who need extra help on the land. More importantly, individual social identity is oriented around these six groups, and every individual will see herself or himself as a member of one of these groups. Each group has its own code of behaviour, its own tasks and its own resources, material and spiritual.

The main features of Diola religion

A hundred years ago virtually all of the Diola communities were Animists, and it is the Animist religion which offers the beliefs and concepts that sanction and make sense of the social structures described above. The supreme being, Emitai, created the world and still controls it through the spirit world. Economic success, both of the individual and of the society, depends on maintaining a harmonious relationship with this spirit world, and it is the spirits on whom political authority ultimately depends. It is therefore towards the spirit beings that religious practice is mainly directed. Help is requested and appeasement is sought at one of the altars, or spirit shrines, that are instituted at all levels of social integration: the household, the compound, the village district and the village itself. Each of these

altars is looked after by its own *chef de fétiche*, a man or woman who holds the special ritual knowledge about that particular altar.

The ritual, economic and political leader of the village is the rain priest, or *roi*. He is chosen from one of a limited number of families and, although he may be a young man, he must be an individual who is held in high regard by all the members of the village. Although the rain priest is held in the greatest esteem—most of all for his supernatural gifts, particularly his ability to make rain—his life is not an enviable one, for a great many restrictions are put on his freedom. For instance, he has to spend his days in the sacred wood and he is not allowed to travel. He is not allowed to wear shoes, nor is he allowed to eat or drink in public. During the colonial period, this last injunction cost the rain priest of Oussouye his life. Taken into prison during a period of civil unrest, the French authorities refused to allow him to eat on his own, so he refused to eat at all and starved to death.

The Animist religion puts severe constraints on the Diola economic system by appropriating the two most important economic assets—rice and cattle—and placing them in the ritual circuit. It is forbidden to sell rice and it is forbidden to slaughter and eat cattle other than for a ritual occasion. The rice crop is not seen as an economic commodity but, rather, as a gift from the supernatural world, and as such it cannot be sold for money. It can, however, be bartered in order to attain two other significant ritual commodities, cattle and cloth wraps.

2. Historical background: 1500–1800

Archaeological evidence suggests that as long as a thousand years ago the people who lived in the area now known as the Basse Casamance may already have been cultivating rice using irrigation techniques and iron implements. They were certainly doing so five hundred years ago, when the first known records about the region were written. At the beginning of the sixteenth century (1510) the Portuguese Valentim Fernandes travelled through the area and he has left a detailed description of the people living there at the time. He writes that the region was then part of a vast empire ruled over by a Manding king, the Kasa Mansa, from whom the river gets its name. He describes the extensive rice fields and the importance of cattle

to the local economy. He mentions that the region already carried on a substantial trade with the Portuguese and describes the presence at the Kasa Mansa court of Portuguese Christian merchants. Fernandes describes the two main groups: the Falupos, who lived in the coastal strip around the mouth of the Casamance river, the western part of the Basse Casamance, and the Bagnun, traders who inhabited a much larger area and were spread throughout the rest of the Basse Casamance. His descriptions of the Falupos are brief, and he is clearly wary of them:

> The Falupos are great warriors and are very much feared by all of their neighbours. They possess very large *pirogues*, (wooden canoes) made entirely of one piece of wood, so large that 50 to 60 people can row in them (quoted in Mark 1985: 12).

Fernandes seems to have been more taken with the Bagnun (who are also referred to in written sources as the Bainouk, among other names). He describes them as "very friendly" and with a talent for trade. He is impressed by their large markets which were held every six days (the older people in Samatite still use a six-day week) and which "attracted thousands of people from as far as fifteen leagues away" (idem). Apart from their markets, the Bagnun also acted as intermediaries in the Portuguese trading network. Fernandes also describes Bagnun religious practices, which in several key features are similar to contemporary Diola ritual: the centrality of the sacrificial shrine and the use of the forked stick from which they hang garlands of herbs. Furthermore, Fernandes' description of Bagnun words and phrases suggests that they were also linguistically related to the present day Diola. In fact historians, for example Baum (1999) and Mark (1985), generally agree that the Diola are descended from the Falupos, with their expert rice farming, their fierce self-sufficiency and their keen territoriality, but that over the centuries many features of Bagnun and other cultures have been assimilated into present-day Diola culture as well.

Later sixteenth century sources, notably Almada, another Portuguese, suggest the presence of a trade route, established well before the advent of the Europeans, which ran north-south along the Sougrougrou river. It ran from the Gambia river in the north to the Cacheu river in the south, the latter forming the present-day border with Guinea Bissau. Along this route the Bagnun traded "items including cloth, kola nuts, indigo, malaguetta pepper and other foodstuffs such as

grain and dried fish" (Linares 1992: 88). It appears from these reports that the Bagnun and the Falupos coexisted peacefully. Their habits and their means of subsistence complemented each other, the more self-contained Falupos focusing on their rice fields, the more outgoing Bagnun on their trade and their markets. It was not only Fernandes who commented on the belligerent nature of the Falupos; the Falupos were often described by visitors to the region, then and later, as bellicose and 'uncivilized', because of their disinterest in trade and because of their refusal to join in any form of commercial activity, which irritated their trade-hungry visitors.

In the course of the seventeenth century the Portuguese managed to extend this important north—south trade route, building, in all probability, on the trading talents of the Bagnun. Trading posts were established at Ziguinchor and further south at Sao Domingo, where wax, ivory and slaves were exchanged for cotton, which the local people wove into cloth, and iron. Iron was a particularly important commodity for the Falupos rice farmers, who hammered it on to the blade of their *kadyendo*, the long spade which they used, and still use, to work the ground. Iron was also useful for making more effective weapons. Lauer (1969) suggests that access to large amounts of iron played a crucial role in the gradual expansion of the agricultural Falupos people at the expense of the Bagnun traders. Improving agricultural techniques led to an increase in population and, therefore, to greater competition for land, while improved weaponry made inter-group warfare a possible way of acquiring that land. Seventeenth century accounts report on the deterioration of the previously amicable relations between the two groups. The Falupos, with their improved agricultural techniques, were constantly in need of more land to cultivate and, with their superior weapons, were increasingly encroaching on the land of the Bagnun.

By the mid-seventeenth century, the transatlantic slave route had rendered the slave an important commodity, and the slave trade was almost certainly another factor in the deteriorating relationship between the two groups, the Falupos and the Bagnun. Inter-village, or inter-group, fighting provided the victors with both land and captives. While some of these captives were sold as slaves for export, others were taken and adopted into the village lineages to become 'domestic slaves', a practice which, according to Mark (1985), entailed few enduring social handicaps for the captives, as long as they were willing to work hard. So while the slave trade generated iron and the

possibility of territorial expansion, domestic slavery provided a way of cultivating the land so gained. De Jong (2001) offers an alternative explanation for the gradual expansion of the Falupos at the expense of the Bagnun. In his view the change in ethnic balance between the two groups can be traced back to their differing modes of production. The wet rice cultivation practised by the Falupos triggered social formations that were small-scale, egalitarian and sedentary and that could absorb all the extra labour available. The Bagnun, on the other hand, grew millet on a rotation basis and were organized into a hierarchical system of clans, with the more powerful clans owning the land. In de Jong's view, these contrasting political systems led the two groups to react quite differently to the slave trade. While the Falupos kept their captives to help work extra land, the Bagnun rulers, who did not need any extra labour, carried out raids on their own people and sold them to the transatlantic slave traders, thereby hollowing out their own power base and forcing them to decrease their territorial possessions (de Jong 2001: 36–40).

A further factor in the gradual ascendancy of the Falupos was the slow demise, during the eighteenth century, of the Portuguese, the Bagnun's trading partners. Up until the middle of the eighteenth century it had been the Portuguese who were the main actors along the Sougrougrou trade route. As Roche describes in his history of the Casamance region (Roche 1985: 67–71), it was not unusual at that time for Portuguese traders to marry local women, establishing Luso-African 'dynasties'. These dynasties, such as the Caravalho Alvarangas family at Ziguinchor, tended to take charge of Portuguese interests in the area and represent the Portuguese authorities. During the eighteenth century, however, the English and the French started to challenge the Portuguese monopoly. They too established trading posts in the area, along the Gambia River at Fort James, and at Albreda, and they too were keen to exchange the most important local natural resource, wax, in return for iron. Further north again, at Saint Louis and at Gorée, the French had been well-established for many years, Gorée having been the centre of the slave trade for the whole of the West African region. However, at that time the French had no foothold in the Basse Casamance at all. When local people wished to do business with the French they were obliged to come to their ships and negotiate there. The French were waiting in the wings, however, biding their time to take over the profitable local trade from the Portuguese.

By the end of the eighteenth century the Portuguese dominance in the area was waning, both in Europe and in Africa. Increasingly, the French were sending their ships up the Casamance River and increasingly the Portuguese had neither the will nor the resources to rebuff them. In 1778 an official of the French Government, M. le Brasseur, drew up a report calling the attention of his government to the ample opportunities for commercial expansion along the Casamance river, and pointing out that the establishment of a French trade base would not be breaking any formal treaties. He suggested that a suitable situation for such a base would be 'a small uninhabited island just upstream from the mouth of the river'. (Roche 1985: 73) No action was taken immediately—the French had more important business to attend to at home at that time—but about fifty years later, under a new regime, an exploratory mission was sent to the area to investigate. Having confirmed that the Portuguese presence at Ziguinchor had little resistance to offer, the French delegation went ahead and established a small post at Brin, about twelve kilometres west of Ziguinchor. The two representatives who were left in charge of the post were soon murdered; ignoring orders to the contrary, they had repeatedly accepted invitations from *les notables* of Ziguinchor, and on one such outing they had been poisoned (idem: 75). The writing was on the wall, however, and in 1836 a representative of the French Government purchased a long lease on the island of Carabane, the 'small uninhabited island' mentioned above, from the headman of Kanute, the village which claimed ownership of the island, for an annual rent of 196 francs.

3. The nineteenth century and the origins of Diola identity

In the course of the nineteenth century, the French gradually strengthened their hold on the Basse Casamance, while Portuguese influence in the region more or less disappeared. The French expanded their trading capacity with the Basse Casamance region by settling on the island of Carabane and setting up a trading post there. In order to improve their trading network with the mainland, in particular to make it safer to travel, they also attempted to put an end to the continuing slave raiding. In 1860 a military convoy was sent into the Basse Casamance, to the Boulouf, and several Diola were killed

in skirmishes at Thionk Essil. Although the French did not retain a military presence in the area, they had let it be known that they were willing to use force to open the way for trade. France's political influence in the region was enhanced and confirmed by the signing of the Treaty of Berlin in 1882, which gave them authority over a large part of West Africa, including the Basse Casamance region. Nevertheless, the various factors mentioned above—the region's relative inaccessibility due to its ubiquitous river arms and mangrove swamps, and the belligerent attitude of its inhabitants—hindered the colonial regime in its intention to take charge. It was not until the following century that the French could consider themselves to be in control of the Basse Casamance.

Prior to the nineteenth century, the various surviving written sources, Portuguese, French and English, mention the presence in the Basse Casamance of various socio-cultural groups and use several different names for referring to them. It was only at the beginning of the nineteenth century that the label 'Diola' or 'Joola', a Wolof term, was used to refer collectively to the rice-growing, politically small-scale groups of people who lived there. Though evidently descendants of both the Falupos and the Bagnun, there may have been other ethnic groups who had become assimilated into the area as well. The domestic slavery that Mark mentions offers a practical explanation of the way in which the separate cultures of the various groups were gradually assimilated and merged. At the same time, there was considerable cultural diversity among the people of this area, and to some extent there still is. The pattern of living, in small, independent and self-sufficient entities, which the physical environment appears to encourage, means that groups quickly grow apart, to some degree at least, developing their own cultural and linguistic forms. Even today, for example, the Diola language takes different forms and is not mutually comprehensible throughout the Basse Casamance.[4]

In fact it may well have been the advent of colonialism which cemented the use of the term 'Diola' as a general term covering all the people of the region. On the one hand, it was important for the French to classify the people they ruled, but the system of classification

[4] For example, the bishop of Ziguinchor, a Diola, generally preaches in French when travelling through his diocese, not as a mark of respect to the colonial past but simply so as to be sure that his congregation will understand him.

would have become unworkable if too many fine distinctions had been maintained. In the many French reports that were written in the course of the nineteenth century about the Basse Casamance. The French usually referred to its inhabitants as Diola, taking their lead from the Wolof sailors who accompanied them. On the other hand, it may well have been the European presence in the area, and its gradual transition to colonialism, that encouraged the people of the area to think of themselves as a single social group, thereby distancing themselves from their European masters. A great deal has been written in the past few years about the way in which ethnic identities are constructed. Social historians have pointed out that ethnic identity comes into existence in a particular historical and political context; ethnic identity is only as 'real' as the political or historical context enables it to become:

> Ethnic identity is socially constructed and it may be conceptualized as the product of a dialectical discourse between the members of a group as defined by themselves and the outside society (Mark 1997: 2).

As de Jong (e.g. 1997) points out, the comparatively recent origins of the Diola identity is interesting, in view of the central role played by Diola identity in present-day troubles in the Basse Casamance, which are described below.

Trade with the Basse Casamance

Carabane, the island leased by the French from the 'headman' of Kanute in 1836 in order to launch the trade war against the Portuguese, is situated in the mouth of the Casamance river, about an hour's voyage in motorized pirogue from Elinkine. The island lies in easy reach of the people living in the Casa area, and soon Diola from both banks of the river were coming to Carabane to trade rice, salt, wax and cattle hides with European and Wolof traders in return for guns, textiles, iron, copper and, according to Mark, cattle. The immediate success of Carabane as a trading centre put an effective end to Portuguese commerce in the Casamance. One of the first governors of Carabane was the Frenchman Bertrand Bocandé. Forced to leave France in disgrace when he was still a young man, he took himself off to West Africa, and arrived in the Basse Casamance in about 1837. According to Roche (1985: 82) he had a passionate interest in insects and spent the first ten years of his time in Africa building up a collection of 40,000 insects, which he later donated to his old univer-

sity at Nantes. After that, he put his considerable energy into developing Carabane. The description of the island which the French lieutenant Vallon sent back to his headquarters soon after the arrival of the French delegation on the island was anything but positive:

> L'île n'est qu'un banc de sable qui est couvert de végetation [where] un vaste marais exhale ses miasmes fiévreux pendant toute l'année. (Roche 1985: 77).[5]

The construction of the trading post must indeed have been an uphill struggle. There was very little fresh water available and no wild life to shoot and eat. Nevertheless it was strategically situated at the mouth of the river and Bertrand Bocandé was an ambitious man. He took up his post in 1849, raised money for his project by selling off plots of land all along the edge of the island, mainly to traders and brokers from the island of Gorée, and set about making Carabane into an efficient port. He constructed a solid wooden quai, with a rail track to facilitate loading, and began drumming up business. He was clearly successful, for by 1852 Carabane was being described as a flourishing village with 1000 inhabitants—as compared to 200 thirty years previously—and at least fifty dwellings. By 1853 Bertrand Bocandé is writing to his superior on Gorée:

> Cette année, les navires de France ont été expédiés directement pour notre île et sont chargés directement pour la France (idem: 83).[6]

Roche's history contains a photograph of the trade depot on Carabane dated 1885; the photograph exudes all the pomp and glory of the colonial period, when the brisk discipline and self-confidence of the European continent well and truly ruled the waves.

Carabane flourished as a trading centre and by the last quarter of the century was responding to demand from the European industrial market for rubber and palm oil. Rubber was used in all kinds of tubing and tyres, while palm oil was widely needed as a machine lubricant and for candles and soap. Rubber trees grew wild on the north bank of the Casamance and rubber became a significant trade commodity. Palm oil was less remunerative than rubber but was more plentiful, growing in the forests throughout the Basse Casamance.

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[5] Tr.: "The island is just a sandbank covered in vegetation where a vast marsh exhales its unhealthy mists all year round."

[6] Tr.: "This year French boats have been arriving at our island direct from France and have been freighted directly back to France."

The French at Carabane were not the only possible trading partners for the Diola however. The English trading houses in The Gambia were just as keen as the French to accept the Diola rubber and their palm products, and by the end of the century many Diola were travelling to Bathurst, the capital of The Gambia, to sell their rubber there. The English at Bathurst paid a better price for rubber than the French did, and furthermore they paid cash, while the French tended to insist on the Diola taking French products in exchange. The Diola would leave their villages after the rice harvest and remain in The Gambia for several months, collecting palm kernels, pressing them to extract the palm oil and then selling the oil at Bathurst. During these months they would stay in the houses of Muslim Mandinko hosts, to whom they gave part of the revenue they earned. Historians generally agree that, in spite of the dangers of travelling, due to the continuing slave raiding throughout the Casamance during the nineteenth century, there were nevertheless plenty of young men who were willing to face these risks and travel regularly to The Gambia in order to trade. Dry season travel was an established pattern which the Diola were unwilling to abandon.

Christianity in the Basse Casamance

During the nineteenth century, French influence in the Basse Casamance spread. This was due not only to the success of the trading post at Carabane but also to the French priests, the Holy Ghost Fathers, who set up a mission on the island in 1880. Christianity was not entirely new to the area. The Portuguese settlers and their descendants, who had been in the region for hundreds of years by that time, had been Roman Catholic and living in Africa had not been a reason for them to abandon their religion. Rather, little pools of Catholicism had grown up around them; there was for example a Roman Catholic community at Ziguinchor. The village of Pointe St Georges also had a small Afro-Portuguese community, though the missionaries complained that Christianity, for this group, meant no more than wearing a medal of Saint Anthony or a crucifix around the neck and holding wild and drunken feasts on November 2nd, All Souls day. Furthermore, the Holy Ghost Fathers had been working in the more northern parts of Senegal for many years and some of the Wolof traders who had been attracted to the island of Carabane were Catholic, apart from the French traders themselves.

The work of the Mission is well documented in the Order's archives, on which Baum based much of his essay (1990) about the spread of Christianity in the Basse Casamance. The missionaries' first task was to make contact with the local people; no easy undertaking in an area that was known for its extreme political localism and its refusal to accept the colonial authorities. They began by establishing a school and a medical post. At the school, pupils were taught to read and write in Wolof, and within a few years there were thirty-five students, who came from the island population or from the community of migrants working on the island (Baum 1990: 379). The medical post was even more successful, attracting a good number of Diola, who often combined their medical treatment with accepting preparatory instruction for baptism. The *Awasena* leaders are also known as healers, so the link between the medical and the spiritual was in no way new or alien for the local people. Trust between the priests and the Diola appeared to grow, and the archives describe how they brought their rice seeds to be blessed by the priests before planting, and how the local people asked the priests to pray for rain and a good harvest. Together, the school and the pharmacy forged an effective bridge into the local community and the archives mention several children who were adopted by the mission and who went on to become the mission's first catechists.[7]

In 1891 a second mission was set up, this time on the mainland at the village of Elinkine, on land belonging to the village of Samatite. The priests were well received in the area and they travelled to the various villages tending the sick, saying mass, praying for rain and distributing gifts, shirts for the young boys, tobacco for the men and material for the women. In the first decade of the missionaries' work there seems to have been little friction between themselves and the *Awasena* elders. Father Wintz, whose name is still remembered in the local villages, was genuinely interested in the Diola religion, attending traditional rituals and finding out about the various village shrines. Moreover he learned to speak Diola and began to say mass and sing hymns in the language, which put him in touch with the local people. He was tolerant in his attitude towards the native religion and he saw

[7] The catechist is an important figure in the Diola Christian community. He is a layman who is particularly well instructed in the Catholic religion and he plays a leading role. Among other things, he is responsible for instructing would-be converts in the theology of their new religion.

little reason to withhold baptism from anyone who wished to become Christian, even in cases where the person concerned had received little religious instruction. As soon as a person could recite the 'Our Father' and 'Hail Mary' prayers, he or she was given the option of being baptized. The Diola have a long tradition of assimilating new religious practices. As mentioned above, many features of the present-day spirit shrine religion were taken from the Bagnun, so for the Diola conversion and the acceptance of a new source of religious authority, was not so much a question of exchanging traditions as of adopting new ones. In this initial, 'honeymoon' stage of Christian evangelization, the missionaries' *Bulletins* mention that the only village not to produce any Christians at all was Samatite.

However, Father Wintz's policy of accepting into the Church anyone who wished to be baptized, soon ran into trouble. Despite the apparent enthusiasm for their new religion, particularly for the mass and for the Christian festivities, the Diola converts saw no reason to give up their *Awasena* rituals or abandon their shrines. The Fathers' reports home, which had been so enthusiastic in the beginning, and so full of hope, became increasingly frustrated:

> Once they are baptized, the great work that we were burdened with was to train them in Christian practice. Very happy to assist at the mass, . . . they excuse themselves at the slightest pretext, the smallest desire of their parents. . . . The fetish is nevertheless well frequented because of the accompaniment of palm wine . . . even though we have palavered against this abuse (Archives of the Pères du Saint-Esprit quoted in Baum 1990: 382).

Gradually it was becoming clear that there was a limit to the extent to which Catholicism could be practised alongside the traditional religion. There were indeed aspects of the two religions that were similar: the concept of a single all-powerful God, *Emitai* in Diola, who had created and still maintains the world, the involvement of both religions with the natural world, and the centrality of sacrifice. The priests found it unacceptable, however, when their 'converts' continued to worship at the spirit shrines, and were soon mentioning the 'diabolical fetishism' of the Diola people in their reports home. For their part, the *Awasena* elders were gradually realizing that the priests had not simply come to add the Christian expertise and knowledge of the supernatural to their own, but were intending to draw the community away from their *Awasena* rituals. The elders started to hear shocking reports from the young people who were attending cate-

chism classes. In recounting the Bible stories about the life of Jesus, about his miraculous birth and resurrection, the priests were going too far. In the *Awasena* religion, information about birth and death can only be given to young people once they are initiated, and it is forbidden to speak on these subjects to uninitiated boys or unmarried girls. The elders also heard that the priests were encouraging the young people to leave the spirit shrines altogether.

Tensions were increasing and in the village of Kajinol, where there were many converts, the elders began making sacrifices at one of the most potent shrines in order to prevent their people becoming involved with the Europeans. In another incident, a group of Christians were attacked with clubs. And even the converts themselves, though interested in Christianity as "a powerful supplemental force that promised a degree of success in the European-dominated sectors of life" (idem: 383) were unwilling to relinquish their old ways. As Baum puts it:

> The Diola were ready to welcome the missionary as a provider of services in schooling and medicine and as a source of additional ritual expertise. When missionaries attempted to obstruct *Awasena* religious practice, however, the majority abandoned the mission path and opposed missionary teachings (1990: 382).

When the First World War came most of the missionaries were called up to serve as army chaplains; those who remained were often too old to travel about visiting the villages, and most of the Christians, left to themselves, returned to their old ways. The outbreak of war is remembered now as the time when the priests 'went home'. It is also remembered as the time when forced military recruitment into the French army made the colonial rule even more unpopular than it already was, and Christian/French influence gradually diminished.

Islamic influence in the Basse Casamance

The demise of the Portuguese, and the decreasing importance of Ziguinchor as a trading centre, also undermined the position of their long-standing trading partners, the Bagnun, already weakened by their territorial losses. This gave new trading opportunities to the Mandinko, who then became the main trading partners of the French. The Mandinko are the Diola's neighbours to the north, in The Gambia, where they outnumber all other ethnic groups, and to the east, in Middle Casamance, where they have also lived for many centuries. Mandinko social structure differs markedly from that of

the Diola. Mandinko society is marked by hierarchy, whereas among the Diola social mechanisms tend to be geared towards retaining a certain balance and equality. Moreover, among the Mandinko, the men look down on physical labour and leave the women to work the land, whereas among the Diola, the ability to do hard physical labour is a source of great pride.

Shortly after the island of Carabane was established as a trading post, the French established another post at Sedhiou, in the Mid-Casamance. From here they promoted and encouraged the cultivation of groundnuts, issuing free seed to local Mandinko marabouts, and constructing depots from where the nuts could be stored and sold. This partnership proved extremely successful; from about 1860 onwards, the cultivation of groundnuts as a cash crop expanded rapidly and groundnuts soon became the most important export commodity from the Casamance region. For the Diola, the consequences of this partnership between the French and the Mandinko were far-reaching. For one thing, the flourishing groundnut trade renewed the demand for domestic slaves, who made up most of the labour force for groundnut cultivation. By the end of the nineteenth century, the export of slaves from Senegal had stopped, but slaves nevertheless continued to be a lucrative commodity for internal use, as Mark explains:

> Far from quelling the Casamance slave trade, abolition and the rise of 'legitimate commerce' [groundnuts] caused an increase in slave raids and trade (Mark 1985: 55).

In order to supply this demand for slaves, the Mandinko turned largely to the west and to the Diola, and life on both banks of the lower Casamance became increasingly dangerous. The main actors in this trade with the Mandinko were the Djougoutes Diola, who lived in the islands north of the river, not far from the coast, and who had a fearsome reputation as pirates and raiders on both shores. Furthermore, during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Mandinko marabouts launched a series of *jihads*, or religious wars, against the Diola. Fired perhaps as much by the desire for slaves as by religious zeal, Fodé Kaba, and later Fodé Sylla, two celebrated marabouts, launched several attacks. The Diola villages, sometimes—and uncharacteristically—acting in concert, managed to drive them back on each occasion. The Mandinko won no great victories, nor were they able to make many conversions:

> . . . the *jihads* had the opposite effect from conversion. They brought heretofore competing Jola villages into alliances and they strengthened the tie between the population and their leaders and shrines (Linares 1986: 7).

Another consequence of the flourishing groundnut trade, a consequence that was to become more important in the twentieth century, was the relationship that was thereby built up between the French and the Mandinko. The French found the Mandinko easy to deal with and considered them trustworthy trading partners, unlike the Diola, whom they found to be "savage barbarians, people who obeyed no greater power than their devils and their fetisheurs" (Linares 1986: 12). The French therefore started using the Mandinko as intermediaries in their strategy for taking control of the Basse Casamance:

> . . . the Manding had played a key role in the initial French strategy of bringing the Jola under political control. Soon after the Portuguese turned over Ziguinchor to the French in the treaty of 1886, the latter found themselves incapable of dealing directly with the Jola, who were considered 'anarchical' and 'rebellious'. Thus, they came upon the idea of putting Manding *marabouts* in charge of administering the Basse Casamance (Linares 1986: 12).

So by the end of the nineteenth century the Diola were interacting with their Muslim Mandinko neighbours in various contexts and in various ways. In each case, however, it was the Mandinko who took the dominant role in the relationship. In The Gambia, young Diola were staying in the households of Mandinko hosts when they went to collect palm products there. Mandinko were extracting Diola slaves from the Basse Casamance to work in their groundnut fields, and Mandinko *marabouts* were being used by the French in their attempt to take political control of the region. Despite their dominance, the Mandinko failed to make any large-scale conversions to Islam during that century. However, the Mandinko had shown their power, and it would be under their influence that many north-bank Diola would convert to Islam early in the twentieth century.

4. The twentieth century

4a. *Political developments*

Colonization had a great impact on the Basse Casamance. It opened up the area, and allowed for the penetration of ideological and

economic changes on a larger scale than had taken place before. The necessary foundation of this transformation process was the ability of the French authorities to bring peace to the region, which they achieved by introducing a military presence to the area. The military presence not only inhibited the Diola's inclination to forceful protest, it also put an end to the Mandinko slave raiding. The new peace expanded the possibilities for trade, and the increase in trade in turn established new forms of relationships, both inside and outside the villages. Under the protection of the French peace-keeping forces, the *pax Franca*, traffic between the Basse Casamance and the rest of Senegal increased. The *pax Franca* prompted the further development of Diola identity by breaking down village boundaries to some extent and encouraging inter-village traffic, while at the same time migration and urbanization advanced the development of a regional Diola identity. The shape of ethnic identity tends to be given sharper definition when members of one group start to mix with the members of another group, for example in the city; this interaction between 'members' and 'non-members' makes people aware of the characteristics that bind them together. Diola identity was consolidated at this time as the young people from villages all over the region recognized their similarities in the face of the urban population.

In the course of the colonial period, the French instituted a new system of administration in the Basse Casamance, which cut across the traditional political relationships and undermined them, without, however, abolishing them altogether. Traditional Diola villages are run by a council of elders, made up of the senior members of each extended family. It was impossible for the French to instigate new measures or levy taxes through such a body, and they set about creating a new 'counterpart' position in each village, in the form of a *chef de village* or village headman. This was to be someone who had experience of the world outside the village, someone for instance who spoke Wolof or French, and who knew how to use money. So, more often than not, the French chose for this position a Mandinko or, in a few cases, a Diola who had been instructed at the mission in Carabane. Working through the headmen, the French gradually came to grips with the villages. In these reformed circumstances various aspects of Diola life started to change. Dry season migration to towns in the north of Senegal intensified, and at the same time outsiders began to settle in the area, mostly as merchants and tradesmen.

Since Independence, in 1960, the area has been ruled over by the state of Senegal. One of the aims of the state has been to enable Senegal to become self-sufficient in rice, and within this policy the Basse Casamance was earmarked as the country's granary. The area was already producing enough rice to feed the resident population but, with its high rainfall and fertile delta soil, the government felt that if agricultural methods were modernized, rice production could be greatly increased. In 1964 a Land Reform Act was passed which entitled the Senegalese government to appropriate unused land, making it possible for them to bring in European development agencies. With the help of such agencies, the government felt it would be possible to reorganize local agricultural practices and encourage farmers to grow enough rice to feed not only themselves but also the rest of the Senegalese population. In developing this policy, the Senegalese government miscalculated disastrously. The Diola felt they were being incorporated into the political economy of a Senegal with which they failed to identify. Furthermore, the agricultural projects that were initiated around that time, for example in Diatock and Oussouye, were often badly thought out.[8] There was a great deal of opposition to the plans and, again, it was pressure from outside that mobilized Diola resistance.

In their attempts to modernize the country's economy, the Senegalese government also wanted to promote tourism in the Basse Casamance. Acting under the terms of the Land Reform Act, they made plans to sell off unused land to European hotel chains, a step which angered the Diola, making them feel increasingly alienated from the centre of power in Dakar. In 1974, the government sold a large area of sea-locked land belonging to the village of Diakene to the French company Club Med. Since the elders of Diakene had been neither informed of nor involved in the sale of the land, the village responded angrily as soon as they realized what was going on. While the hotel was still under construction, a group of young men from Diakene arrived at the site and burnt down as much as they could of the buildings. For the people of Diakene, this gesture of protest was entirely justified but, again, the government's response was insensitive and uncompromising. The whole of the male population of Diakene was imprisoned for a week, a signal to the Diola people

[8] See for example, Trincaz 1984.

that their conservative attitudes were not to be tolerated or even listened to.

The anger and indignation of the Diola people mounted and, eventually, they reacted. In 1982 the MDFC—Mouvement Democratique des Forces Casamançais—was set up with the intention of striking out for Casamance independence from the state of Senegal. According to the leader of the movement, a Roman Catholic priest, the area had an established right to independence. He based this claim on the special relationship between the Casamance and the state of Senegal which had been established by the state's first president, Leopold Senghor (de Jong 1998: 8). The movement's first manifestation was on December 28, 1982, when a huge number of people took to the streets of Ziguinchor to demonstrate the power of their feelings to the Senegalese authorities. At that time the demonstrators were armed with bows and arrows, and they must have appeared to pose little long-term threat to the Senegalese authorities and their relatively modern army. As time went by, however, it became apparent that the movement was not to be suppressed so easily; demonstrations and riots escalated and many people were killed. The MDFC forces adapted their tactics and went underground, making good use of their cultural and natural advantages; the rebels withdrew into the forests and a veil of secrecy and mystery enveloped the movement. In 2003, MDFC rebels were still in place in the forest area on the frontier with Guinea Bissau, in the southern part of the Casa, and the problem of Casamance independence is still unresolved.

4b. *Economic developments*

In economic terms, the twentieth century in the Basse Casamance, particularly in the Diola villages, was a period of resistance and slow development. Nevertheless, there were changes, as dry season migration increased and, little by little, the Diola villages were drawn into the money economy. As described above, the economic transformations that the French and the Senegalese managed to bring about were less significant than they had hoped for. Apart from the increase in groundnut production in the north of the Casamance, patterns of agriculture in the rest of the area changed hardly at all. Agriculture stayed small in scale, and forms of production remained unsuitable for any form of structural entry into the world markets. The eco-

nomic life of the inhabitants of the Basse Casamance has changed surprisingly little. The Diola still farm their own land, for their own account, and are largely self-sufficient as far as their daily needs go. There are two contexts, however, in which paid employment forms an important part of village life.

On the one hand there is the dry-season migration. These days, the young, unmarried people from the Casamance leave their villages for at least nine months of the year in order to find paid employment in the one of the larger cities in the north of Senegal, or in The Gambia. The girls generally work as maids, cooks or housekeeper, the boys as mechanics, chauffeurs or, sometimes, as bookkeepers or clerks. The money earned in this way, which flows back into the village economy by way of the obligatory 'presents' with which they return, helps to provide the villagers with the kitchen necessities, oil, petroleum and sugar, and other basics such as soap, as well as pens and paper for the school children. More importantly, the young people use the money earned during dry season migration to prepare themselves for marriage. The girls use the money to buy themselves the cloth, the clothes, the pots and the pans, which they will need to start their married lives in the village. On the whole, it is easier for the girls to find jobs these days than it is for the boys. So the girls do not expect to be helped to collect these necessities. If the boys are lucky enough to find a job, however, they will be expected to make a contribution to the bride price needed to acquire a wife, when the time comes.

The other category of people who have an important impact on the economic life of the village is the group of *intellectuels* and their families. These are people who were particularly successful at school, finishing six years of secondary schooling and passing the *baccalaureat* at the end of it, and who now live permanently in the town, working very often as teachers or sports instructors, or sometimes as civil servants. This group, along with their offspring, now form a quite large minority of the village population. Though they may visit their village only spasmodically—even their contribution to the rice harvest may be more symbolic than anything else—they play an important role, economically and socially. On the one hand they can be relied on to take in children from the village who go to school in the town. And on the other hand, it is largely the contributions made by the *intellectuels* which safeguard the continued celebration

of the *bukut*, the initiation festivals which continue to be a central feature of Diola social life. While many commentators on Diola life, in particular Thomas (1959/60), thought that they had seen the last of these spectacles, in fact the celebrations not only continue but continue to become more elaborate as well.

On the whole, economic development in the Basse Casamance has been slow and production methods and relations have seen little change, certainly as far as the Diola themselves are concerned. In the area to the north of the river, under the influence of the Mandinko, the ox and plough are used in some areas to prepare the land, but in the Casa you never see a plough. A great many projects have been initiated in the villages to encourage women and young men to grow fruit and vegetables, raise chickens and pigs and even to start making rudimentary furniture from the ample supply of various types of hardwood. Daily markets have been set up in various centres in the Casa, in Oussouye and Elinkine for example, where these products can be sold. However, the income generated from these peripheral forms of production has amounted to little more than pocket money for the people involved, a little extra that can be used to pay school fees, medicines and clothes. Attempts to initiate on a larger scale have tended to falter for lack of infrastructure. Farmers who have tried to grow fresh fruit on a larger scale for the national market have usually been thwarted for lack of transport. It is too expensive for them to organize the transport themselves and when they have tried to work together with outsiders—in general with the *nordistes*, Wolof from the more northern parts of Senegal who control the transport industry—the transport owners have demanded such high prices that the profits have been minimal.

In as far as there is any commercial activity in the Basse Casamance, the Diola seem to be excluded from it. The transport industry was mentioned above. Traffic between the north and the Casamance has increased enormously in the course of the twentieth century and this is now an area of great economic potential. Hundreds of *taxis brousses* leave the *gare routier* in Ziguinchor each day, going north, south, east and west. The owners and the drivers of these taxis are almost exclusively northerners however, often Wolof, and it is quite rare to find a Diola driver, let alone a Diola who owns a taxi. Though passenger fares are regulated by the state, the commercial transport of goods is not regulated and, as in the case of the fruit farmers, transport entrepreneurs can ask what they want. In other words, these

entrepreneurs have a stranglehold on commercial activity in the Casamance. This same pattern of Diola exclusion applies when it comes to the many shops and boutiques that you see in the larger villages. Apart from the state-run chain of stores selling groceries and household goods, all the larger villages have small shops, which sell dry goods, food, seeds and drink, also alcoholic drinks. These are seldom run by Diola.

4c. *Religious developments*

Despite the resistance with which the political integration of the Basse Casamance into the structures of the state of Senegal has been met, and despite the slow pace of economic advance of the area, the religious changes which took place among the Diola in the course of the twentieth century were far reaching and fundamental. The patterns of religious conversion that began at the end of the nineteenth century continued into the twentieth and produced the distribution of religious adherence that was described at the beginning of this chapter.

A great deal has been written about conversion to the world religions in the context of twentieth century Africa. It has been suggested by Horton (1971, 1975) for example, that traditional belief systems, which he sees as geared towards the explanation, prediction and control of local events, tend to disintegrate when confronted with the breakdown of the small, protected world of the traditional community. As people move into wider spheres of social interaction, their ritual and spiritual concerns self-evidently shift from a microcosmic focus on lesser spirits to a macrocosmic focus on a supreme being. Although this shift may take place within the framework of traditional religion, more often than not a sudden and traumatic shift provokes a move towards one of the world religions, Islam or Christianity, which are seen as offering a more effective way of coping with the social changes and expansions of scale that inevitably take place in the course of globalization. Fisher (1973) also sees conversion as part of a universal, historical progression, but he sees it more as a genuine move towards a new system of beliefs which is prompted by the human condition rather than by practical considerations.

Linares (e.g. 1992), who has written extensively about the Basse Casamance, is somewhat sceptical about what she calls 'this curiously abstract discussion'. While not denying the value and the validity of the arguments, she feels that these authors tend to de-politicize and de-contextualize what are highly variable and complex processes

of change. Intellectualist theories about conversion have to be set against the particular set of circumstances—social, economic and above all political—in which conversion takes place. She stresses that in any given situation there are likely to be a great many, often contradictory, forces that are working towards, or against, conversion, and that:

> . . . the microcosm does not simply dissolve under the impact of trade and modern social change . . . On the contrary, peoples' world-view and social institutions are sometimes strengthened by external threats (Linares 86: 5).

Linares is right to balk at the tendency to intellectualize conversion to a new belief, and to rationalize it simply in terms of the benefits or drawbacks that a new religion might bring with it. One of the most important factors in conversion is whether or not the infrastructure of ideas, conceptions and values are available to carry the new religion, and, in turn, whether the material symbolism that supports and endorses these new ideas is sufficiently accessible and appealing to be understood and accepted. In the case of the Diola, the contrasting patterns of conversion that emerged on the north and south banks have to be traced back to the presence of the missionaries in the south and the Mandinko in the north. In particular, it has been the ability of these newcomers to stamp out the old religious symbols and replace them with new ones that has been at the heart of religious conversion. The missionaries brought 'education' and all that this implied; new attitudes to the natural environment and new possibilities of employment, access to the European world. The Mandinko brought groundnuts, access to cash crops and beautiful clothes, and they opened the way to the Islamic world. The Mandinko and the missionaries were successful in their conversion attempts in as far as they were able to undermine and devalue the old *Awasena* symbols and offer viable alternatives.

Conversion to Islam on the north bank

For the Diola who lived on the north bank of the Casamance, it was above all the proximity of the Mandinko and the groundnut trade that played a role in their conversion. As mentioned above, the Mandinko, a militantly Muslim people, offered possibilities for trade which were very inviting to the Diola. Mark (1985) observes that nearly all of the first Diola converts to Islam were young men who

travelled to The Gambia to work and to trade and who became Muslims while away from their home communities. Not only did the Diola converts become part of a geographical network of traders, they were also offered an ideology and a moral framework that facilitated and supported trading relationships. For their part, the French authorities were also keen to promote the introduction of groundnut cultivation in the Boulouf, having as their goal the economic self-sufficiency of the Casamance area. They used similar tactics to those that had been employed further east fifty years earlier: issuing free seed, offering storage space for the groundnuts and improving the road networks in order to make transport less problematic.

At the same time, there were certain political benefits to be gained from converting to Islam. Though it may not have been their official policy, the French tended to give positions of responsibility in the colonial administration to people who had travelled and traded, and who had seen a bit more of the world than simply the Basse Casamance, and these people were often converts. It was not only because of the practical advantages these people offered—that they could speak French and Wolof for example, and were used to dealing with numbers and money. More importantly, people who had experienced the hierarchical nature of Manding social organization were used to accepting and exercising authority, unlike Diola who had remained in the village. Social organization in Diola villages places authority in the group rather than in the individual. An individual who pushed himself forward as a *chef* would have alienated himself from the community, whereas an outsider, a convert for example, could more easily fulfil such a position. The French increasingly appointed Muslim Diola to be *chefs de village* and *chefs de canton.* Gradually, by the time the 1930s came, a core group of charismatic Muslim leaders had emerged. They were seen as successful and they had been handed genuine political power by the French authorities.

Thirdly, there were the symbolic aspects of conversion to Islam. The Mandinko marabouts, who, as mentioned above, had been given increasing political stature by the French, were successful in stamping out the trade in palm wine, one of the most potent symbols of the *Awasena* religion; up to that time palm wine had been an important source of income for the Diola migrants, and groundnuts offered a viable alternative. They also offered the would-be converts a new appearance. Thomas clearly states that the itinerant marabouts

commanded respect because of the "majestic" manner in which they were dressed.[9] Gradually, the Diola farmers were eased into a set of relationships that no longer squared with the traditional, *Awasena*, beliefs.

Conversion to Christianity on the south bank

On the south bank of the Casamance River a very different pattern of conversion emerged. The most important factor in this context was the sustained presence of the missionaries. They had started their work in the Casa prior to Pacification and they had, to some extent, blocked the access of the Mandinko. When the colonial authorities took hold of this area, after the First World War and somewhat later than on the north bank, they were able to appoint as *chefs de village* and *chefs de canton* Diola men who had been educated at the mission and who were therefore suitable counterparts for the French authorities. The relative absence of Mandinko from positions of authority on the south bank had a two-fold effect. First of all it meant that Mandinko did not function as role models, as they had in the north, and secondly there were no Mandinko merchants to introduce the Diola in the Casa to the cultivation of groundnuts as a cash crop. The physical and cultural landscape of the south bank might well have looked very different if this had been the case.

After the war, the elderly Father Wintz returned to Carabane, and a certain Father Joffroy, from the same order of the Holy Ghost Fathers, was sent to Oussouye, a village twenty kilometres further inland. He set up a small mission there in 1928, the missionary post in Elinkine having been disbanded. Father Joffroy arrived to find a situation in which many, or even most, of the converts in the area had reconverted to their traditional religion after the missionaries had 'gone home' at the outbreak of the war. Father Joffroy, who is still remembered by the Casa people with a mixture of fear and respect, took a very different attitude towards prospective converts from that taken by Father Wintz. The lax attitude of Father Wintz had run into big problems; it had become clear that trying to combine the practice of the two religions was impossible, and Father

[9] Cf. "The itinerant marabout, even though he is a stranger, is often welcomed with respect by the local people because of his clothes. The majesty of the khaftan or *grand boubou* is sufficient to overcome their proverbial suspicion" (Thomas 1959/60: 357, my translation).

Joffroy decided to take another line. It would no longer be so simple to be baptized, and people would have to attend three years of preparatory classes, and to pass an examination on Church doctrine. His more rigorous attitude ushered in a period of extreme alienation between the Christian and *Awasena* communities and to some extent this split the villages into two camps.

Antoine Badiane, whose father was among the first converts to Christianity, remembers growing up in Oussouye during this period. His family was ostracized by the rest of the village, and he tells that the old men tried to poison the young Christians by offering them spiked palm wine. Furthermore, Père Joffroy refused to allow the young Christians of Antoine's generation to take part in the Diola initiation ritual. This has meant that Antoine remains an outsider in his own village; he is not allowed in the sacred wood and he is not involved in ritual matters, which makes him an outcast. He has several sons, all of whom have been initiated.

In the period following the Second World War, and since Independence, Christian activity in the Casa has been revitalized and increased. The French missionary priests left the area, but their departure was compensated by the arrival of a Spanish order of priests and an order of French sisters. They run various secondary schools, both in Ziguinchor and in the larger villages in the Casa, they have set up medical clinics, and they are involved in various agricultural development projects. Partly as a result of their active participation in the community, the number of people being baptized, both babies and adults, continues to grow. Furthermore, the Spanish priests take a different attitude towards the Diola's cultural practices than the French did. Supported by the conclusions of the Second Vatican Council, they go out of their way to endorse local traditions. Although baptism is hardly an indicator of religious adherence, since in the rural areas it is very common for Animist villagers to have their babies baptized, almost as a formality or to please the priests and sisters, nevertheless there are various signs that the Christian presence in the Casa is at least holding its own. The Casa produces an increasing number of Catholic priests and nuns each year, the church in Oussouye was rebuilt and enlarged in the 1990s and the churches are filled each Sunday with people of all ages.

5. This study: Diola identity today

In the above pages, I have tried to give an account of the 'cultural fault line' that makes up the Basse Casamance. About two hundred years ago, the Diola people began to emerge out of a disparate collection of ethnic groups, under pressure of infiltration from outside by Europeans. Colonialism furthered the development of the Diola identity, and pressure from the state of Senegal consolidated it. It has probably been the relatively recent appearance of the Diola people, as well as their continued resistance to the state, that has made the case of Diola identity a particularly interesting one to anthropologists and historians. The Diola are seen to have achieved the social construction of their ethnic identity by the 'invention' of some of their traditions, recontextualizing strongly symbolic events in order to raise the awareness of a common cultural heritage which serves to galvanize Diola solidarity (see e.g. de Jong 1995). The most important of these events is the *bukut*, the expansive initiation ceremony that is held in all of the Diola villages, once in a generation, for all of the boys and young men of the village who have not yet been initiated. The *bukut* which have been held in recent years, for example in Thionk Essil, have indeed been enormous affairs. They have functioned as powerful symbols of Diola unity and have served as forceful expressions of 'authentic' Diola culture.

The *bukut* has successfully crossed the religious divide. Prior to the arrival of the world religions, these initiation ceremonies, which take place in the sacred wood, formed the heart of the *Awasena* religion. During the six or eight weeks that the initiates were isolated in the sacred wood, the elders instructed them in the lore of the *Awasena* path and taught them all they needed to know about Diola tradition. Initially, Islamic clerics and Christian missionaries attempted to discontinue these initiation ceremonies, aware that forbidding them would take the heart out of the Animist religion. As de Jong suggests, it was in fact censure from outside that consolidated Diola support for the ceremony:

> Jola on both shores of the Casamance River were united by the common disapproval of an important ritual which they had in common. The *bukut* has been turned into the central symbol of the cultural package that today symbolizes the Jola's 'authenticity' (de Jong 1995: 142).

In the event, the *bukut* and the world religions have learned to live side by side and in the Islamic communities the *bukut* has been turned

into a more or less secular, though vitally important, celebration of Diola identity. Pigs are no longer sacrificed and Fanta has taken the place of palm wine, in accordance with Islamic rules, but the festivities are greater and more extravagant than ever.

Although de Jong takes the Diola-dominated separatist movement and pan-Diola performance of the initiation ceremony as a sign that "the Jola identity has been firmly established by now" (idem: 144), Diola solidarity is nothing like complete. Cracks were found to have appeared in the MDFC, as de Jong admits: "differences in religious orientation now appear to be an important reason for the recent discord within the separatist movement" (idem: 144). It is not only within the separatist movement that this discord is found. In the three Diola villages that I looked at, the Muslim villagers make it quite clear that they would not allow their sons or daughters to marry a boy or girl from Samatite, the Animist village. They look down on the primitive and pagan ways of the Animists and they fear the powerful symbols, '*les choses anciennes*', of their religion: their shrines and their palm wine. The attitude of Muslim Diola towards pigs, the most common sacrificial animal for the Animists, is not so much one of disapproval as of hatred, and in villages with a mixed population it is not unusual for pigs to be poisoned. For their part, the Animist villagers dismiss the Muslim disinclination for physical labour: "*ils ne travaillent pas*"[10] sums up the Animist contempt for the Muslims and their puny rice harvests. As for the Christians, they deplore most of all the situation of the woman in Islam. They shudder at the idea of being the second or third wife of a Muslim 'autocrat' and at the idea that their granddaughter would have to undergo the ordeal of female circumcision. Although female circumcision was made illegal in Senegal in 1994, many Diola Muslims, those who have turned to Islam under the influence of the Mandinko, still carry it out.

In other words, the villagers in these three communities live in different worlds one from the other. They hold different sets of values, and this leads them to relate to their physical, supernatural and social environments in contrasting ways. Each of the three villages possesses its own distinct traditions of knowledge about the world, so that, although their material resources are broadly similar, their way of life is not the same. By looking at the role of the body, this study looks at one aspect of the way in which the villagers maintain

[10] Tr.: "They don't do any work."

their distinct cultures and construct an identity within them. Important rituals such as the *bukut* play an important role in building an ethnic identity and they are significant in galvanizing a collective Diola spirit. An equally important locus of identity construction however is the everyday arena and the ordinary, commonplace activities that go on there: dressing for example. Ethnic identity is not something one receives at birth, a commodity that is handed out down the generations to the members of the group. It is a force that comes into existence only gradually, in interaction with members of the same group, and in interaction with members of outside groups. Identity is fluid and flexible, and never entirely possessed or finished, always remaining open to negotiation. It has to be constantly nurtured and defined, not only in the big festivals and the important rituals, but also and particularly in the spaces between the big festivals and rituals—i.e. in everyday practices and in everyday interaction. The following three chapters discuss the way in which, in Samatite, Santiaba and M'lomp, dress and outward appearance shape and mould the villagers' identity by shaping and moulding the body. They show how the body's appearance, its way of moving and working, contribute to the knowledge on which the villagers' culture is built and help to enact and put into practice the set of relationships that make up the village's identity. At the same time they show how dress functions to support and stimulate the body's role in its enactment of village identity.

CHAPTER FOUR

SAMATITE: BALANCE, CONTINUITY AND THE WORKING BODY

1. Introduction

The first thing you notice about Samatite is the splendour of the trees and the way in which the trees dominate and order the village. The forty or so houses—Samatite is one of the smallest villages in the area—nestle in small groups beneath the trees without either challenging their dominance or disturbing the natural lie of the land. Nor does the haphazard network of narrow sand paths, which lead through the village and join up the groups of houses, in any way impose itself on the terrain. Rather, the paths follow the contours that the terrain provides and meander, like a stream might do, never taking the quickest route from A to B. For the newcomer from the West, this lack of straight lines and right angles is disorientating. It is easy to loose your way in Samatite, small as it is; even within the village boundaries, the newcomer may experience, and feel quite threatened by, the sensation of chaos that untempered nature can generate. It is only once you have learned to recognize individual trees, and have learned to identify them as your signposts, that you really get to know your way about the village.

Thomas describes the authentic Diola as a peasant who lives 'very close to nature', and his description finds material form in the appearance of the village of Samatite. The houses are one example of the balance that exists in Samatite between culture and nature. Near to many of the houses you find a small crater where the sandy earth has been dug out and used to construct their baked-mud walls. The traditional manner of constructing a house in the Basse Casamance is to build up the thick mud walls in layers, about two feet at a time, using large balls of moistened earth. Nowadays, houses are sometimes constructed from large mud bricks. These are made in moulds and dried in the sun, and then cemented together to make the walls. Either way, the houses in this area turn out to be a beautiful colour—from sandy yellow, through apricot to terracotta red, depending on the

colour of the earth—and they blend in naturally with their surroundings. Most of the houses are thatched with a layer of grass, which is collected from the land that lies between Samatite and the neighbouring village of Kanute. The proximity of nature and culture is underlined by the fact that when the last inhabitant of a house dies, usually a widow, whose children have built their own houses next door, the house is not destroyed or removed. The roof is taken off and the house is allowed to die a 'natural' death, sinking back into the earth again, which happens very quickly once the rainy season arrives. For the villagers themselves, these 'drowning' houses are a form of commemoration to the people who once lived there. For the observer they emphasize the feeling that time in Samatite is cyclical rather than linear. For a few years the goats will play on the sandy hillock that the drowning house provides and after that a newly-married grandchild may recycle the earth for his own house.

Samatite is made up of twenty nine households, divided among two *quartiers*, or village sections, Tagheunde and Diayene. In total, about 350 people belong in Samatite although only about half of that number live there permanently. At the centre of the village, in both the literal and the figurative sense, is the sacred wood, where the boys' initiation, the *bukut*, is held. Once in each generation—the last *bukut* was held in 1962—all the uninitiated boys of the village retreat into the forest for several weeks and are instructed in Diola lore and traditions. The wood, which is located next to the cemetery, is a tangle of large, wild trees. Women and uninitiated men are forbidden from entering the wood and the footpaths all skirt around it. This is where the last king, or rain priest, who died in 1996, spent his days, and where the men dance each year to commemorate the day of his death. The new rain priest is yet to be appointed, and when he is chosen he too will spend his time there, his high red hat permanently on his head to protect his supernatural powers.

Samatite is known as a very conservative village. In fact, it has probably remained more faithful to the old ways and to the Animist religion than any of the other villages in the Basse Casamance. If you mention to a resident of Ziguinchor that you are going to visit Samatite, he or she will almost certainly respond with some remark about the power of the spirit shrines in the village. You will be reassured that you have no need to fear the rebels or thieves in Samatite for, they say, such people would never dare to go near a village that had such 'mean' spirit shrines protecting them. Apart from the trees,

the most striking feature of the village is the large number of small shrines that are situated at various places around the village and within the family compounds. Some of these shrines, or altars, are built like small houses, with thatched roofs and small, barred windows, while others are no more than a collection of bones, or a forked branch planted in the ground with bones hanging from it. One of the most important altars is the women's shrine, *Ehounia*, which it is forbidden to approach. It is impossible to guess at *Ehounia's* significance however, consisting as it does of three large rusty oil drums, placed in a semi-circle. The Diola term for spirit shrine, *bukin*, refers both to the spirit and to its material residence; there is no way in Diola of referring to the *bukin* as two separate entities.

The extreme conservatism of the village is not so easy to explain however, for it is not as if it were an out-of-the-way, overlooked and unvisited hamlet. Samatite is no more than a few kilometres from Elinkine, and Elinkine is one of the nearest landing places to the island of Carabane. So not surprisingly, Samatite was one of the first places to have been visited by the missionaries when they arrived on the island at the end of the nineteenth century and was always within easy reach of the trading post that was established there. But somehow, perhaps because of its wealth of rice fields and its continued success at producing large rice harvests, Samatite seems to have been able to turn in on itself and resist the advances of outside influences. On the surface, the villagers of Samatite seem to have become impervious to change. Beneath the surface however the pressures of the outside world bear down on the village and there is a tension and strain in many village relationships. These days many members of the Samatite population live and work in the city. They belong in Samatite and they have their rice fields here, but their attitudes and ideas are partially formed by their lives in the city; this is causing increasing antagonism in the village.

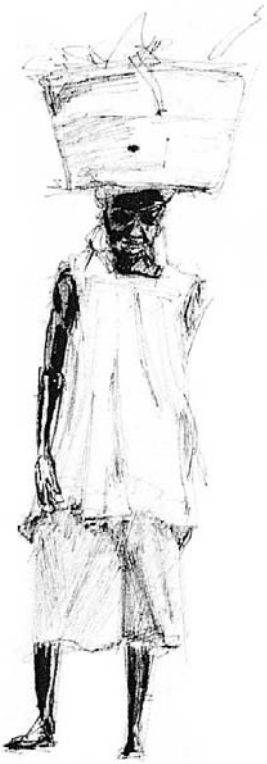
The villagers: Belle and Mundung

Mundung Assine is the acting *chef de village* of Samatite. His uncle, Eugene Assine, was appointed to the position in 1988, but he became ill ten years later and he now lives in Ziguinchor with his son. Mundung is forty-seven and he lives with his wife, Belle Babene; he is the senior member of the Eloukassine concession, in the Tagheunde village section. His house lies on the edge of the village, quite close to the road to Elinkine. Mundung was a

champion wrestler when he was younger. In his final season, before he married, he won all of his contests in the inter-village matches and Belle says that this was the reason she agreed to marry him. Belle—who also comes from Samatite—was the village beauty, and has large wide-set eyes and a Greek profile. Although her parents had consented to her marriage with Mundung when they were both children, she could nevertheless have refused him once she was old enough to make up her own mind.

They now have four sons and one daughter and they also have an adopted daughter. Having produced four sons, Belle was keen that her next child would be a girl. She therefore 'adopted' the daughter of her sister, having been advised by the *féticheur* (the spirit shrine priest) that this would make her family more welcoming for a girl next time she was pregnant—which it did. Their house is somewhat ramshackle but it is always full of life. From the moment Belle gets up in the morning at five, up until the time the family goes to bed at about nine at night, the house is full: of children, chickens, goats and friends. Unlike the houses in many Diola villages, Belle and Mundung's house does not have any form of fencing around it, so that people and animals are free to come and go as they please. Belle draws the line at letting her pigs into the house however.

I was already aware, when I arrived in Samatite, of the Diola's passion for clothes, so I was surprised by the apparent disregard for dress that I found in the village, within the village limits at least. In the normal course of events, there seems to be a certain indifference towards appearances and among the men even a sort of disdain. Within the yard, Belle just wears a cloth wrap round her waist, adding some kind of upper garment when leaving the concession and for working in the fields. There is a strict rule, for married women, that the area from waist to knee is covered, but for the rest she pays little attention to her garments in the everyday context. A length of fabric, neither washed nor ironed, around her waist and nothing, or a simple *chemise* or an old and torn football shirt on top; that is quite sufficient. Mundung too, usually wears old and worn out clothes, sometimes so torn and shredded that it is surprising they stay on his body at all. There can even be said to be an element of mockery in the clothes he wears.



There is a second-hand clothes market[1] in Elinkine and he sometimes picks up bargains there, but he, and the other men of the village, seem to try and find garments that have an odd or absurd element to them. A friend of Mundung's arrived one day in a bright orange shell suit which he had bought at the Elinkine market and he was clearly delighted by the faintly ridiculous sight he

[1] There are many of these in Senegal and they are generally referred to as 'the dead man's market' as people presume that the clothes sold there used to belong to people who have died.

made. These garments are then worn to the thread, until they almost literally disappear.

Mundung's house is situated on the edge of the family concession, a somewhat amorphous terrain that includes five houses, spread out at some distance from each other. Belle's mother-in-law, Awa Diatta, who is now a widow, lives in one of these houses and she spends a large part of her day with Belle. Though she is over seventy, she is always busy and despite her age, she is lean and upright. She always finds something to do to help: cleaning the rice for the evening meal,[2] preparing *enoc*[3] or some other fruit, or opening nuts. In the afternoons, you can usually find her sitting on the veranda floor, her upright back supported by the wall of the house, her legs stretched straight in front of her and her hands busy making baskets, from the split leaves of the *ronier* tree. She hates to be without a task, and sometimes attacks the high grass around the house with a small sickle, just to keep herself occupied. Awa dresses *comme les anciennes*—like her ancestors: her head is shaved and she wears several silver rings in the lobes of her ears. Apart from the length of fabric around her waist she wears only a short cotton bodice that she made by hand. She learnt to sew when she was young. She says that the missionaries from Carabane came to the village and told the women to cover their breasts; they gave the women fabric and taught them to sew. Awa never wears shoes. She was brought up at a time when dry season migration did not entail going to the city to earn money with which to buy clothes and she never has worn shoes. By now, it would be impossible for her to wear them even if she wanted to, for her feet have spread and her toes have curled and the soles of her feet have developed a thick layer of leathery skin as protection from the sun-baked sand and the thorns.

[2] This is a long and tedious process; you put the rice in a large flat basket, throwing it up in the air and catching it to remove the remaining husks and picking out all the little bits of dirt.

[3] The yellow powdery bean that grows in a pod on a tree. Taken out of the pod and allowed to dry in the sun, it makes a very filling drink that is used in the rainy season, when the women are too busy in the rice fields to cook regularly.

2. Worldview in Samatite

The people of Samatite identify the supreme being, Emitai, with nature and they see him as having instigated the laws of nature. Their own role is to comply with these rules and to weave their own activities into the natural order in such a way as to ensure the continuity of the natural order. One of the reasons that the Muslim people of Santiaba, a neighbouring village, tend to look down on the people of Samatite is that, in the Animist religion, there is no particular day set aside for the expression of religious beliefs. The villagers of Santiaba feel that this lack of a special day—a Friday for them, a Sunday for the Christians—is a sign of an underdeveloped religion. It is true that in Samatite there is no one day that is set aside for religion. The villagers live by the traditional Diola six-day week and the sixth day, the *huyaye*, is a day of rest but not particularly a religious day. However, this does not at all imply a lack of religious activity or awareness, but rather the opposite. In Samatite, interaction with the supernatural, spiritual world permeates all activities: economic, social and political. The daily round is full of small rituals and other signs of recognition of the enchanted world in which the villagers live. As Mark observes:

> The vision of a universe in which physical and spiritual forces interact and where there is often no clear distinction between these realms is central to Diola cosmology. The sense of oneness of the visible and invisible world permeates Diola religion and ritual (Mark 1976: 86).

There is a seamlessness about the various spheres of activity in Samatite which makes it impossible to give an account of the economy of the village, or to describe social and political relationships within the village without touching on various aspects of the villagers' religion. In any community, modern or traditional, these three sets of structures—economic, socio-political and economic—go hand in hand and work together, each one supporting and reinforcing the others. But in a village like Samatite they are so closely intertwined that there is insufficient space between them to analyse them separately. In Samatite, the spirit-shrine religion provides the ideas and ideals that make sense of social patterns and economic activities, and it also provides the rituals that make it possible to put those patterns and activities into practice. More importantly, it is the Animist religion that legitimizes and anchors the political system in Samatite, endorsing the structures of control and spreading out the balance of power.

2a. *The relationship with the supernatural world*

Emitai: harmony and continuity

Emitai, the supreme being in the Animist religion, is seen as the creator of the world: "Emitai made everything, even the little ants" is a proverb that Thomas quotes. The word Emitai is closely linked to the word *emit*, which is used to mean 'rain', 'sky' and 'year' and each of these three labels can be seen to indicate one of Emitai's central characteristics. As rain, he is providence, the supplier of human needs, for the Diola see rain as the key to their welfare, being the basis of a good harvest and large stores of rice. As sky, Emitai is seen as ever-present and all-encompassing, for the sky symbolizes transcendence, power and changelessness. As year, Emitai stands for the ordered structures of the agricultural seasonal cycle, which he both controls and forms part of. When the first heavy downpour of rain finally arrives at the end of June, after a period of intense and increasing heat, people run out happily into the downpour and dance around, getting wetter and wetter and calling out 'Emitai, Emitai', expressing their feelings of joy and thanks. Emitai is not only creator of the world, he is also present as an impersonal force in every part of it; in the seasons, the weather and in all of nature. Emitai is not a capricious God, but it is not possible to reach him or influence him either. Thomas describes Emitai in this way:

> Il practique plus la justice que la bonté; il recherche davantage la bonne harmonie des forces que le bonheur d'un chacun. En aucun cas il ne déroge aux lois de la nature, car il agit surtout par des voies generales qu'il s'est invariablement fixées (Thomas 1959/60: 589).[4]

The world and everything in it, including human beings, were created as part of a specific order; as such, Emitai is, as Baum stresses, the source of the moral order as well:

> Emitai was seen as the source of human knowledge of cultivation, of fire and iron-working, and of healing. Emitai also established certain ways in which these activities were to be carried out: a set of positive duties and a set of interdictions (Baum 1999: 39).

[4] Tr.: "He is more concerned with justice than with charity and he seeks to harmonize forces rather than to ensure people's happiness. He never swerves from the natural order nor from the laws which he has immutably fixed."

Although Baum uses the word 'moral', there is nevertheless a difference in the words 'good' and 'bad' as they are used among the *Awasena* Diola and as they are used among Christian or Muslim Diola. 'Moral' suggests a theology, a body of knowledge from which one can take distance and which is to some extent separate from the rest of life. But Emitai is the whole earth, and his laws affect everything a man does; there is a sacred dimension to all human activity, from cooking and building a house, to rice farming and wrestling. Misfortune, disease, infertility or disaster result from the disturbance of this natural order, perhaps due to some form of witchcraft, perhaps because a person failed to conform with the customs (*makanaye*) which Emitai established.

The pagne noir, *symbol of continuity*

Apart from the set of religious customs that Emitai has given to the Diola people, there is also a set of sacred symbols, material objects that play an important role in giving material form to the *Awasena* way of life and to the ideas that support it. These symbols serve to cement the villagers' relationships with the supernatural and pin down their knowledge about the supernatural. One of the most important of these symbols—along with rice, cattle, palm wine and pigs—is the hand-woven cloth wrap, or *pagne noir*,[5] the form of dress par excellence for the authentic Diola as Thomas describes it (1959/60: 364). There are various types of traditional *pagne noir*, or *pagne lourd* as they are also called, the most valued being the *kabil*, the soft blue-black *pagne* that everyone in Samatite owns and treasures, and in which their bodies will be wrapped when they are buried. Another form of traditional *pagne* is the *kabul*. These may be dyed or they may be undyed, in which case they remain their natural light beige colour with a few black checks or stripes running through them. Among the *Awasena* Diola, these light coloured *pagnes* are not usually worn, only given as gifts to the family of someone who has died; the *pagne* is then buried along with the corpse.

The third form of *pagne* that is recognized in Samatite is the *balis*, also a blue black *pagne*, but slightly narrower than the *kabil* or the *kahul* and made from slightly thinner threads. The *balis* has

[5] *Pagne* means 'length of cloth' and can also refer to Western, factory-made cloth.

a long and decorative fringe at both ends, so it is more like a scarf. This is the *pagne* that is used in the harvest-home ceremony, *Kamagnen*, which takes place in February. This is the occasion when the young men and women of the village get officially engaged to be married. The rainy season, from July to September or October, when all the young people return to the village to help with the cultivation of the rice fields, is also the season for dances and parties and the young initiated men have opportunities enough to choose a bride. During the *Kamagnen*, the bridegroom-to-be lays the *balis* at the feet of his bride and dances for her, giving their engagement the official stamp of recognition.[6]

Mundung is a member of the council of elders, who run the village and make all of the important decisions on the part of the villagers. Consisting as it does of the senior members of the family concessions, it includes the priests of the most important spirit shrines, and also Khouyagueu Bassene, the village's rain priest *in spe*. On many evenings, Mundung wanders down to the main square of the village, to sit and discuss village issues with the rest of the council. At other times they meet near to his house, at the spirit shrine of the former rain priest which, until a new rain priest is officially appointed, remains the most powerful spirit shrine of the village. On these occasions the men often organize themselves a pail of palm wine[7] and sit and talk deep into the night resolving problems that have arisen within the village. You can tell if Mundung is going to the spirit shrine by looking to see whether or not he has his *pagne* with him. Members of the council always have their *pagne noir* with them when attending the shrine, either wearing it wrapped round the waist, or simply thrown over the shoulder. Elders, those considered old enough to sit on the council, are also distinguished by their hats—the knitted woolen hats shaped like tea-cosies that one sees all over the Casamance but

[6] I make no systematic attempt in this study to describe the forms of dress worn to the important life-cycle occasions: baptism, initiation, marriage etc. The information I was given varied, and often turned out to be unreliable. The forms of dress dealt with here are those which are worn everyday and which therefore influence the way the body holds itself. The only occasions dealt with in detail are funerals, of which I attended many.

[7] The sap of the palm-oil palm tree, which becomes alcoholic spontaneously once it has been tapped.

which in Samatite are only worn by members of the council. These are the only people for whom it is appropriate to wear such a hat, but they do not always do so. Here again, the symbolic significance of these hats is underlined by the manner in which they are 'worn'. Alassane Diatta for example, one of the oldest men in the village, has a hat that is so worn out that it is no longer possible to pull it on to his head. So he simply places it, or what remains of it, on top of his head. I never saw him at the shrine without it however.

While the rough simplicity of the *pagne* brings to mind the Diola's attachment to the natural world, its ritual use as funeral wrap

represents the continuity that exists between the living and the deceased members of the Diola community. Part garment, part commodity, these cloth wraps are made up of five narrow (20 cm) hand-woven strips of cotton and are about two metres long. I was told that before the arrival of the French, people in the Casa region grew their own cotton and took it to one of the Bainuk villages to the north-west of Ziguinchor to be made into *pagnes*, paying for this work with rice. The Bainuk, who in fact still grow, spin and weave *pagnes* for their own use, would then make up the unprocessed cotton. The Bainuk say that this reciprocal trade ended when, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the French arrived and started to regulate the import of factory-made yarn. In fact, however, cotton yarn has been imported to the Basse Casamance for centuries by the Portuguese and it seems unlikely that the arrival of the French made much difference to the trade. Apart from the very restricted trade in *pagnes noirs* from the Bainuk villages, the commercial exchange of *pagnes noirs* is in the hands of Manjaque merchants from Guinea Bissau, as it probably has been for two centuries.

The value of these cloth wraps lies first and foremost in their ritual and symbolic use. When a person in Samatite dies, *pagnes* are given to the family of the deceased to wrap the body, in order to bury it in the correct way. The ritual function of the *pagne* comes into play not only at the end of life, however, but also at the beginning. The *pagne* is the present that is usually given to a newly delivered mother, to wrap her baby on to her back. The *pagne noir* is believed to have supernatural properties and it protects the baby from malevolent forces. In fact, the symbolic function of the *pagne* cannot be overestimated and for the people of Samatite *pagnes* are loaded with significance and emotion. More than any other object, the *pagne* represents the important bond that exists in an *Awasena* Diola community between the living and their ancestors, and between the present and future generations. Being the gift that is given at marriage, *pagnes* represent the ties that are formed between families, and since *pagnes* are passed down through several generations, they represent the ties that are formed through time within the family as well. They represent a family's genealogy. Mundung's *pagne*, for example, came from his mother's family and was a gift to Mundung from Awa Diatta's brother, who, in turn, had been given it by his mother's brother. Furthermore,

like any hand-woven fabric, the *pagne* symbolizes the weaving together of nature and culture, the coarse threads barely masking their organic origins, the finished product exemplifying man's ingenuity and his capacity to transform.

The *pagne* is important as a commodity, but it always belongs on or around the body; it is also a form of dress. The *pagne* that Mundung wears to the spirit shrine is unusual in that it is checked black and yellow, rather than black and white. It is a beautiful piece of fabric and a valuable family heirloom for Mundung. His mother keeps the *pagne* for him and he has to fetch it from her house when he needs it. He either wraps the *pagne* round his waist, tucking the fabric in on itself to keep it fastened, or he simply throws it over his shoulder. He wears the *pagne* 'unaccompanied', that is to say with a bare torso and bare feet, though if he has the *pagne* over his shoulder he wears shorts or trousers of some kind. Like most of the Diola men in Samatite, Mundung is lean and muscular, with broad straight shoulders, and he stands completely upright. It is forbidden to wear shoes at the spirit shrine, though Mundung hardly ever wears shoes in the village in any case. The only other piece of clothing Mundung has, apart from his threadbare working clothes, is his *zabador*, a flat-cut garment resembling a khaftan and worn mainly by Muslims, which he keeps for attending local Muslim feasts—baptisms or funerals—at Muslim Diola villages. He seldom wears this garment however, as he seldom goes to such occasions.

Belle also wears a *pagne noir* when she goes to sacrifice at the *ehounia* spirit shrine or at any other spirit shrine. Unlike the men, women usually wear these *pagnes noirs* accompanied by a more modern form of dress: either a white T-shirt or the short, smock-like *doket* that is described below. A hundred years ago, before the arrival of the missionaries, the women wore the *pagnes noirs* with nothing on the upper part of the body, the way the men do. The missionaries, however, found this uncivilized and primitive. They insisted that the women wear a second *pagne* under the arms, covering their breasts. This second *pagne* is gradually giving way to a 'new tradition' of a white T-shirt being worn above the *pagne noir*. So nowadays, the 'traditional' Diola way of dressing is pagne noir, white T-shirt, and many strings of beads around the neck and the hips and, in Samatite, a straw hat. This is the outfit worn to

> important *Awasena* occasions and ceremonies, such as a funeral of someone who has played a significant religious role in the community, or the ceremonies that mark the beginning and the end of the season of rice cultivation in the village. It is also the outfit that the Diola people are expected to wear when a prominent politician comes to tour the Basse Casamance region, or a foreign ambassador. This is the form of dress that defines the Diola as an ethnic group, joining them together above the level of the village. During the time that I spent in Samatite, however, no such occasions occurred.[8]

The spirit shrines: attitudes to disease and death

Except at moments of crisis, such as drought or war, prayers and sacrifices are not made to Emitai but to the various spirits who inhabit the many shrines in the village, and whose task it is to intervene and mediate between Emitai and human beings. All of the identifiable spirits in Samatite belong to a shrine, which is 'owned' and maintained by one of the village elders, the shrine priest, who can be either a man or a woman. Just as the spirit mediates between the community and Emitai, so the shrine priest mediates between the spirit and the community. He propitiates on behalf of the people who come to the shrine to make a sacrifice and ask for protection, and he interprets the 'diagnosis' of the spirit when there are problems. This position, as intermediary between the visible and the invisible worlds, is the source of the priest's ritual and political power. In a community like Samatite where the physical and the spiritual are thoroughly engaged, the logic of cause and effect is not necessarily thought of in material terms. Behind the Diola's attitudes to their spirit shrines is a desire to understand and to some extent control the unpredictable world that they experience around them. In a farming community, like Samatite, misfortunes such as disease and infertility, whether this is in the crops, the animals or in the family, are matters of crucial importance, and there is a deeply felt need to understand and interpret them. A person may suffer misfortune from various sources: a jealous neighbour may be using witchcraft against him because of his good fortune or because of the wealth he is

[8] Since the start of the troubles in the Casamance no politicians have ventured down there.

believed to possess. Or the problem may stem from the sufferer's own inappropriate behaviour in the past. The spirit shrines give the community not only a location, but also a body of knowledge within which such matters can be discussed and, to some extent, dealt with.

The body and the invisible world: disease and diagnosis

Philomene Babene, a cousin of Belle's who had been born in Samatite and had married at Kanute, three kilometres away, became increasingly ill. She was only thirty-six and neither the doctor nor the traditional healer could find out what was wrong with her. When she died, her death was seen as a great tragedy for the family. Nevertheless, there was a sort of relief when it was discovered, at the funeral, that the reason for her death stemmed from an incident that had taken place many years previously. Philomene's uncle, in his youth, had been lent a piece of land by his cousin. Later, when the cousin had asked for the piece of land to be returned, the uncle had refused. These facts had emerged during the funeral, when Philomene's relatives interrogated the body.[9] Such breaches of convention are taken seriously in Samatite because the collective care of the valuable land depends on the land-use system remaining flexible. It is to the advantage of all the parties concerned that land can be borrowed and lent with ease, but the lender and his family must be sure that they will be able to get the land back again when they need it. This transgression against the moral code of the community had happened many years previously but it had never been put right, and in the end the wrong expressed itself in physical terms in the death of Philomene.

In Samatite, people do not think of death being caused by disease or by some coincidence or accident. Even where the immediate reason for the death seems clear, people generally go on to ask why that particular disease or accident befell that particular person. Was it witchcraft? Or was there some contravention of the Diola code involved, as in the case of Philomene? The "sense

[9] The climax of the *Awasena* funeral ceremony is *l'interrogation du cadavre*, the interrogation of the body. The body, placed on a wooden stretcher, which is carried on the shoulders of four relatives, is questioned about the causes of death. The deceased is in the other world and has therefore understood why his or her death took place. The body answers the questions put to it by members of the family by causing the stretcher to move forward or backward, and to the right or left. Once the body has answered satisfactorily, it is taken away to be buried.

of oneness of the visible and the invisible world" that Mark mentions above are made explicit in these attitudes towards disease and death. Good and evil spirits, the spirits of deceased members of the community and other supernatural forces have real power in the visible world. They can bring about disease and they can cause accidents and infertility. The body is the site on which the visible and the invisible worlds come together; the visible and the invisible worlds resolve their contradictions in physical, bodily symptoms. The importance of funerals among the *Awasena* Diola can be understood in this light. As in the case of Philomene, it was during the funeral and the interrogation of the body that the cause of her death became explicit, and this cleared up the festering wound of the family's land problem.

2b. *The relationship with the natural environment*

The sustainable economy: delimited technology and work as vocation

The people of Samatite are dependent for their economic welfare on the immediate natural environment. The land, the *marigots*—the inlets from the river delta—the forests and, last but not least, the weather with its high annual rainfall provide the villages with almost all of the resources they need. Their staple diet is rice from the paddies and fish from the *marigots*, supplemented by various kinds of fruits and nuts from the surrounding forests, as well as oysters, which live in their thousands on the roots of the mangrove and the occasional wild animal which they manage to kill. Their houses are made from earth and roofed with grass, while their boats and tools are made from the wood of the various species of trees, particularly the *fromagier*, or kapok tree, and the *ronier*, a form of palm. The villagers also keep various animals for eating—chickens, goats, pigs and cattle—although on the whole meat is only eaten on special ritual occasions and the Animist Diola do not kill their animals, with the possible exception of chickens, for home consumption.

The villagers manage to make use of the natural surroundings without destroying them, and to take what they need from nature's resources without wholly transforming them. There is a balance between the demands that man makes on the environment and the amount that the environment is able to produce, and this is the root of the arch conservatism of the Animist Diola. In Samatite, you could speak of a ritual economy, in which the key factors have been encapsulated and turned into religious symbols; a self-evident ceiling is put

on the extent to which the natural environment may be exploited and on the way it may be used. One of the ways in which this is brought about is in the special position given to rice and cattle in the *Awasena* economy. Rice is seen as part of a special relationship between Emitai and his people:

> Emitai was thought to have given rice to their first ancestors and to have shown them how to farm it . . . part of a covenant based on the Diola's hard work in cultivating the crop and Emitai's responsibility to send them rain to nourish it (Baum 1999: 29).

So rice, which in principle cannot be sold[10] but only exchanged for cattle or for *pagnes*, is part of the supernatural order; it has a special context in Diola cosmology and cannot be simply snatched from it and used at the discretion of the individual. The household granary, where rice is stored, is the centre of that household's existence as an economic unit and a household that has no rice is seen to have sunk to depths of such abject poverty that it has almost ceased to exist.

Cattle have a similarly central and significant role in the *Awasena* economy. They are the most important status symbol for the Diola, and the man who has his own herd of cattle is seen to have succeeded in life and to have achieved all that can be expected of him. The nickname *Bouhalibey*, or 'covered in cow hairs', is given to an elder who is supposed to have been particularly successful and wealthy. It always remains a question of speculation as to just how large a man's herd is, since the Diola are notoriously secretive about their cattle. The men in Samatite give their cattle to be looked after by local Peul herdsmen, often splitting their herds into two or even three groups so that no-one can be certain how many they have. It is only at a man's funeral that the village finally gets to know the truth. In Western terms, however, cattle are an economic dead end. Like rice, cattle are not a commodity that can be bought and sold. Formerly they were only acquired, likes *pagnes noirs*, in exchange for rice, though these days they are often paid for with money. But even now they may not be used for 'economic' ends, that is to say, as a source of food or of labour-saving technology—i.e. put before the plough as they are among the Mandinko. They may only be used for ritual purposes, in particular as sacrifices at important ceremonies.

[10] If needs be, rice may be sold for cash these days, but it could not be grown as a cash crop.

Their main 'use' remains their function as a symbol of success. In fact, the whole of the agricultural cycle in Samatite is embedded in the *Awasena* perspective. Every area of economic activity is entrusted to a particular spirit shrine, which regulates the way that activity or resource is used.

The limitation of technology

The position of the village blacksmith is an example of the way in which traditional methods of working are sanctioned and protected by the spirit shrines. Iron has played a significant role in the history of the Casamance as the previous chapter showed. It seems probable that the ability of the Floup Diola to get their hands on the plentiful supplies of metal helped them to achieve and maintain their dominance in the region, in supplying them both with weapons and with more efficient farming tools. The blacksmith, who controls the distribution of iron, has always been an influential figure in the Casa region. He is important as the producer of tools—the metal tip for the *kadyendo* (the *holopuc*), knives, axes and various types of hatchet—and also as the owner of the blacksmith's shrine. This shrine concerns itself not only with the production of tools but also with the punishment of theft and with curing leprosy (Baum 1999: 33). While many people are in a position to acquire the technical information needed to set up a forge, the ritual knowledge needed to be a smith is a closely guarded secret which accompanies ownership of the shrine. From the point of view of the traditional Diola, it would be pointless to try and make tools and instruments without having the necessary ritual knowledge to hand, as the tools would not be effective. There is a sacred dimension to technical expertise, and this puts a limitation on its capacity to change, adapt or modernize.

This reluctance to improve on traditional technology was exemplified by the village ladder, a pathetic construction, which had been in use for several years. The rungs were attached at varying distances, they were not parallel to each other, and they were anchored at the sides with a single nail, which had to be hammered back in from time to time. Despite its state of extreme dilapidation, it was the only ladder in Samatite and was passed around from household to household whenever needed. Yet nobody comments on the state of the ladder or suggests making a new, sturdier and safer one. Despite the presence in the village of plenty of wood and many skilled workmen the ladder is considered perfectly adequate and it will continue to serve the vil-

lage until it finally breaks in two. This 'make-do' attitude typifies the disinclination of the traditional Diola to impose on the natural environment or to include the Western concept of efficiency in their list of priorities.

Work as vocation

On the other hand, it is the emphasis on hard physical work in Samatite which ensures that the natural environment is not over-exploited. Men and women are kept busy all day with the round of tasks that safeguard their livelihood. The women fetch wood, take water from the well and carry it back to the house in large twenty-litre basins on their heads, work in their gardens, and collect, prepare and cook the food. In the rainy season the men work in the rice fields, in the dry season they mend their tools, patch up their houses, collect palm wine and fish. Training the young people for this busy life is an important part of upbringing. Children begin to help with small chores when they are still little and girls as young as two practise carrying baskets, or a small piece of wood, on their heads. At seven or eight they will be helping their mothers on a regular basis to husk rice, collect fruits, light the fire and fetch water from the well. Boys of four and five help to herd their father's cattle and at seven or eight may be given responsibility for the herd, finding them grass and water for the day. At fourteen boys receive their own, small, version of the *kadyendo*, which they will be taught to use in the correct manner, letting the leverage gained from the long handle do the hardest part of the work. The Diola are proud of their strong straight bodies and their broad shoulders, which they take to be the result of using the *kadyendo* over many generations. Most villages in the area have a husking machine for the rice, but the machine they had in Samatite has broken down, and they cannot afford to get it mended. Furthermore, no-one wants to take the initiative in attempting to find a new rice machine, for example by asking the local bank for a loan as other villages have done. People are afraid that taking such an initiative would be seen as a sign of laziness or physical weakness. The absence of a rice-husking machine means that the rice has to be pounded and husked by hand, using a tall-sided wooden mortar and a heavy wooden pestle. Although grown women do this job on their own, girls usually work in pairs, heaving the mortar and hammering the rice in a quick rhythm.

This early training is not given in vain, for once the young people

have grown up and have households of their own, they will be obliged to work extremely hard for seven months of every year, preparing, planting and harvesting their allotted rice fields. The busiest part of the year is the period soon after the first rain has fallen. As soon as the earth becomes soft enough to work, the men begin preparing the fields, removing the weeds by slicing off and turning the top layer of earth and building up the ridges on which the rice will be planted. The men work long hours at this heavy work and remain in their rice fields for the whole day, so that the work can be done as quickly as possible and the rice can be planted as early as possible. Meanwhile, the women are also contributing to the rush to plant by spending their days transporting heavy baskets of fertilizers, a mixture of animal dung and ash, from the village to the rice fields. Yet this is also the time of year that Samatite people look forward to and describe with pride to the outsider.

In Samatite, the capacity to work hard and carry out heavy labour is considered to be a talent and a skill which one is proud to possess. Working hard and harvesting plenty of rice is an effective way of acquiring status, both for men and for women, because it is the lynch pin of the traditional Diola system. In fact, there is always plenty to be done in Samatite and old age is never taken to be an excuse for slowing down. Even the most frail and wizened old women continue to help their daughters or their daughters-in-law[11] with cleaning the rice or preparing the meal. If there is nothing else to do of an afternoon, they may sit together in groups and spend hours weaving baskets and mats from *ronier* fibre, sitting on the veranda at the front of the house, their crooked fingers still deftly mastering their task. The same is true of the old men. They continue to work the land and help with even the heaviest of jobs, also after their rice fields have officially been handed over to their sons. The father of our neighbour Blaise was old and nearly blind but he always did what he could, spending hours at a time sitting on a log, plaiting metres of string from *ronier* fibre which would be used to bundle and attach the grass mats for the thatched roof. Furthermore, when there was collective work to be done, such as mending the communally-owned outer dike, the old men were always present. Bourdieu says of the Kabyle that "Activity is as much a duty of communal life as an economic neces-

[11] In Samatite many women marry within the village, so many women remain close to their daughters' households.

sity" (1977: 175). That is certainly true in Samatite; working hard is not so much a matter of survival as a matter of self-esteem.

That is why the *kadyendo* has such symbolic significance for the Diola of Samatite. A lazy, work-shy person will never be respected. On special occasions, for instance at funerals, the newly-arrived visitor to Samatite may be surprised to see an old Diola woman, dressed up for the occasion, walking about with a bundle of large and heavy branches on her head. As there is no obvious use for the wood at that moment, you may wonder what she might be doing. For the Diola of Samatite, however, this is a well-understood gesture. The woman is showing that she is still strong and that she can still work; in other words it is a way in which the woman affirms her status as a revered member of society.

The pivotal role of the body

In Samatite, the focus on the body expresses itself in various ways; for example in the extent to which people's bodies and their manner of doing things are seen to be part of their personal identity. It is the custom at an *Awasena* funeral ceremony to act out the life of the deceased, to commemorate particular incidents that happened to him or her or to impersonate their idiosyncrasies. This often includes mimicking the deceased's manner of working, and particularly, if it is a man, the way in which he used the *kadyendo*; there would be a buzz of approval and amusement as people recognized the specific mannerisms of the dead person. Whereas in the West we tend to use only the face to identify a person, in Samatite the whole of the body seems to fulfil this function, and people were able to recognize and identify people in photographs from bodies or even just parts of bodies. Looking through the photographs that I took became a favourite pastime in the village and I was always surprised how easily the people in the photos were recognized, even where their faces were not shown and sometimes when only a small part of a shoulder or leg were shown. Particularly where the photos showed someone working in the field, whether the photo was taken from behind of from a distance, it seemed to cost the viewer no difficulty at all to identify the figure.

The focus on the body, and in particular on the working body, is relevant to the Animist worldview. The working body forms the link that connects the human to the natural world and it carries within it the characteristics that Thomas mentions above: a closeness to nature and an absence of refinement. In the case of the Diola of Samatite, it is the *kadyendo* and the regularities of hard physical work, rather than dress, which shape bodily habitus. The erect figure, the strong body and the firm tread are the result of their hard work and of *not* being in the habit of wearing clothes or shoes. Most of all, it is the absence of shoes that characterizes the habitus of the *Awasena* Diola; bare feet set the body in a grounded stance that is instantly recognizable. At the same time, to walk bare feet is to connect the body to the natural environment. Wearing shoes is a form of separation from nature.

For these Diola, being 'close to nature' is not just a figure of speech but a fact of life as well. In Samatite, people's bodies are moulded and shaped by remaining 'close to nature' in all kinds

of small ways. It is no coincidence, for instance, that the *Awasena* Diola tend to remain—and not just metaphorically but also factually—close to the ground. Especially when you compare the people of Samatite to the Diola of Santiaba or M'lomp, as we shall see in the following chapters, you notice that they do stay close to the ground, with the bare feet on the ground. Mundung and Belle do not like to sit on chairs, for example. One of Mundung's favourite pastimes, when not working in the fields or the forest, is to make and decorate the small waisted stools that the inhabitants of Samatite like to sit on. They are small and low, made of a single piece of wood and easy to carry around. When Mundung came to visit in the evening he inevitably brought his stool with him and neither he nor Belle would accept the chairs we offered them—as Christian and Muslim Diola generally did. Although the younger people in Samatite sometimes sleep on beds, this is considered to be a strange, modern habit by most of the inhabitants, who still sleep on cowhides on the bare floor. Certainly, there is an economic dimension to this behaviour. Stools and cowhides are less expensive than chairs, tables and beds, but this is not the reason that the villagers of Samatite prefer them. They simply belong to the Animist way of life, and they help to attune the body to that life. This is just the point that Bourdieu makes about the habitus, those physical dispositions inculcated into the body in the course of growing up. Habitus gears the body, and therefore the mind as well, to what it has and to what it knows; it leads people "to refuse what is anyway denied and to will the inevitable" (Bourdieu 1990: 56).

Death, funerals and the experience of time and place in Samatite

> To many Diola, history, like time itself, was cyclical (Baum 1999: 58)

Although Baum uses the past tense in this sentence, people in Samatite still tend to experience time in terms of the daily cycle of the sun, the monthly cycle of the moon and the annual cycle of the seasons. Like many farming people perhaps, they focus on the time that comes round again and not on the time that comes and then leaves for good. Certainly when compared to Western conceptions of time, people in Samatite seem to be able to see time as something that takes place in nature, and which they can tune into, and not something that people produce, along with watches, calendars and electronic

diaries.[12] In Samatite people tend to see the past only as it relates to the present. It is relevant, for example, that the Diola have never instituted the position of the *griots*, the oral historians who play an important role in Mandinko society. Thus Baum was able to find individuals who could give him information about the shrines and how they arrived in the Casa, but finding out about migrations and settlements and incidents in time was more difficult for him (1999: 12). In Animist society, even life itself is recycled. In Samatite, beliefs about reincarnation are not clear cut, and tend to vary according to who it is you ask. There is a general feeling, however, that people do eventually come back to earth and that death is not the end.[13]

When an older person dies, a person who has had children, then this is taken to be a natural event and the funeral is not an unhappy occasion. Rather, it is taken to be the appropriate moment to celebrate the life of the deceased, and to praise him or her for their achievements. While the close relatives of the dead person are naturally sad, funerals also celebrate the renewal of life. Baum sums up the Diola attitude to death as follows:

> It was said that long ago, the people of Samatit performed rituals at their shrine of Enac, so that there would be no more death. For nine years, no one died, but no one was born either. Then they lifted the prohibition on death. As Terence Sambo suggested ". . . they found that when one person died, another will have a child". Death was recognized as an integral part of the cycle of life (Baum 1999: 58).

Just as the Animist's sense of time is centred in the present, so his sense of place is attached to the local. Although the people of Samatite have always travelled in the dry season, their shrines bind them to the locality. The shrines of Samatite do not travel; the *Awasena* religion is not something you carry around with you but something that ties you to one spot.[14]

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[12] While I was in Samatite I did not see anyone wearing a watch. People tell the time by looking at the sun. Calendars are not used, nor are they useful, since most people use the six day week.

[13] Baum, for example, claims that: "Many Diola conceived of life as a cyclical process that began at birth, continued through childhood and adulthood and, at death, passed into an afterlife, which ended with reincarnation" (1999: 55).

[14] Some Animists attend the shrines of the Lebou when they are in Dakar. Many of the villagers prefer to go to the Catholic church when they are there.

"La terre est remplie de pagnes"

In many ways, funerals are the high point of Diola social and sacred life and have the function of a Christian Sunday or an Islamic Friday. It seems fitting for this secretive and determinedly egalitarian society that, after the once-in-a-generation initiation ceremony, the funeral is the most important *rite de passage* for the traditional Diola. The wealthy and successful man is duly honoured—but only once he is dead. Funerals bring together many of the important aspects of Diola life. To start with, they are collective occasions; even at the busiest times of the year, when people are in the middle of transplanting or harvesting the rice, everyone is obliged to attend the funerals that take place in their own or in neighbouring villages. Funerals also underline the secrecy that is so fundamental to Diola life, since it is the first time that the village gets to know how much rice a man has collected in his granary and there is always great excitement when this information is revealed. Furthermore, funerals serve to re-establish the identity of the family of the deceased and to place it in its Diola context. The chief mourners, the men and women of the person's concession, singing about the family's illustrious past, about their brave deeds in war and about their wealth, the number of slaves they used to command, the number of cattle they own.

In material terms, the funeral is a sumptuous feast, and not only because everyone attending gets to eat well. A funeral is also a feast for the eye, and brings together all the Diola symbols of wealth. The bundles of rice, the product of the rice fields and the deceased's hard work, are brought out from the granary for everyone to see and enjoy. If the deceased was important enough, a number of cattle will be sacrificed to feed those attending the occasion, and the oxen, washed for the occasion and with their horns decorated with *pagnes noirs*, wait placidly to be killed. The stretcher carrying the body is ornamented with cattle horns and bundles of rice and is laden with *pagnes*, given by family members or the members of in-married families. After the interrogation of the body, the high-point of the funeral described above, the corpse, still wrapped in and accompanied by the *pagnes noirs*, is lowered into the grave. The grave is dug in such a way that the body comes to rest in a small chamber at the side of the deep shaft and is not covered by earth. In Samatite they tell you that "La

terre est remplie de pagnes",[15] an image which, for the Diola, helps to impose meaning on their way of life and reconfirms the link between the natural, the social and the supernatural spheres of life. In the funeral, the *pagne noir* comes into its own, not only binding families together, in the form of gifts, but also binding the living to the dead.

2c. *Social relations in Samatite: a system of checks and balances*

As appears from the previous chapter, the Diola are an independent-minded people who have tended to resist political domination, and this will to self-determination is reflected inside Samatite in the social and political relations which operate in the village and which hold the inhabitants together. As described at the beginning of the chapter, the village is divided into two *quartiers* or village sections, Tagheune and Diayene; the village households, twenty-nine in all, are grouped together in family concessions, six in Tagheune and seven in Diayene. In principle, all these family concessions are independent units and no one individual, concession or *quartier* has the prerogative to dominate the others. The social, political and ritual customs are geared towards keeping a balance between the various groups that make up the village. In Samatite, as in all Diola villages, age is the most important criterion through which authority is exercised. Within the village, authority is in the hands of the council of elders, which is made up of the senior members of the thirteen family concessions; this means that it is not one individual person who exercises authority but a group of people. While the economic structure of the village appears to encourage independent and individualist attitudes (see below), the political structures emphasize the group. In various contexts individual identity exists in membership of social groups—age groups, work associations or family groups—rather than in personal achievements.

Cyclical supremacy: age, inheritance and polygamy

To a certain extent, the institution of the council of elders appears to have a tight and even stifling grip on village affairs, but in fact the authority of the individual members of the council is limited in various ways. As in the case of the rain priest, positions of influence tend to be offset and contained. Age is the principle on which membership

[15] Tr.: "The earth is filled with *pagnes*."

of the council is based and, as such, membership is neither continuous nor hereditary. It is impossible to compare authority that is based on the criterion of age to that which is based on lineage, for example, or wealth. These two criteria offer possibilities for the permanent accumulation of power and influence that is unattainable in Samatite. Age provides a criterion for leadership that is widely representative, since any man who lives long enough may join the council. This, in turn, promotes continuity, not only of the leadership principle but also of the political structures, since it lessens the likelihood of political factions building up and erupting in struggles for power. In Samatite, it is more enlightening to look at the various ways in which individual power is checked and balanced than to look at how it is acquired.

Social arrangements in Samatite encourage balanced and equal relations not only between individuals but also between families. Take, for example, the rules on inheritance. The prominent positions in the village, that of the blacksmith and the rain-priest, are not, in principle, inherited in a straightforward line from father to son. Although such positions often remain within a single family concession, they tend to go, zigzag fashion, to the former incumbent's brother or to his brother's real or classificatory son. It is in fact forbidden for the position of rain-priest to be inherited by his son. Though there are certain prominent families in Samatite, these inheritance rules make it impossible for 'dynasties' to form within the village. A similar check on the accumulation of power is offered by customs of marriage; although polygamy is said to be possible for the traditionalist Diola, in Samatite, as in all the *Awasena* villages, virtually all marriages are monogamous. This has various consequences for the community, and one of them is to exclude the possibility of wealth that polygamy can bring with it. A few elders had two wives in the past, but nowadays this is unusual. Certainly during the time I was in Samatite I never heard of anyone having two wives. In fact, customary monogamy is another example of the general distrust with which people regard the accumulation of wealth and privileges, although people in Samatite might not explain it in quite this way. Women bring wealth because many wives can bring many sons, thus producing a private labour force and a great deal of rice.

Jealousy and rivalry in Samatite

In Samatite, there is indeed little sign of rank, precedence or hierarchy. There is, however, a darker side to this egalitarian situation and

things are not always quite as they seem. As suggested above, there is, in Diola culture, a structural tension between the society's values. On the one hand, hard work is admired and encouraged and the highest respect goes to the successful farmer. Nevertheless, people in Samatite tend to view prosperous individuals with suspicion and distrust and are quick to accuse them of witchcraft or supernatural manipulation. The prescribed equality in Samatite and the inclination to act as the member of a group rather than as an individual can be seen as an attempt to solve this structural friction, but it is only partially effective.

In Samatite, relationships between the villagers, even within families, are loaded with competition and rivalry. The rivalry takes many forms. Among the Diola, a man gains social status by amassing large quantities of rice, and with that rice he may also acquire cattle. Rice is stored, in the granary, in or close to the house, as it is taken out of the field at harvest time: still on the stalk, and in bundles that are of a size which can be held in the hand. These bundles represent and celebrate the Diola's way of life, his hard work and his relationship to his land. In the towns and larger villages these bundles of rice are often on show, for instance in the tourist hotels and *campements*, where they function as the symbol par excellence of the Diola culture. In the villages, however, these bundles simply disappear, after the harvest, into the granaries.

The villagers fear their neighbours finding out how much rice they have; if they have a great deal, they will fear their neighbour's jealousy and if they have only a little, they will fear their neighbour's contempt. The granaries are kept under lock and key and if the rice has to be moved for some reason, perhaps in connection with making repairs to the house, this will always be done at night so that no-one can see how much rice there is in store.[16] Wealthy and successful people tend to be in constant fear, either of being accused of gaining their wealth from some form of witchcraft or, worse, of

[16] Our neighbours Rose and Pierre, the kindest of people who always seemed to attract the worst luck, had to re-house their 'store' of rice. The roof had blown off their house with the first rain storm and the following night they hurried to bring their rice to safety. Since we were outsiders Nene did not mind us seeing her pitifully small reserve; but she told the villagers the next morning that she had been 'up all night' moving the rice, whereas in fact it could not have taken her more than ten minutes.

attracting or provoking witchcraft. Linares notes this tendency in the Animist Diola village where she carried out fieldwork:

> Beneath the apparent amiability of Sambujat social life there is a great deal of suspicion that witchcraft is being directed by envious persons at those individuals who are rich in resources, be these rice fields, cattle, palm groves, crops or children (Linares 1992: 36).

A successful farmer never accepts palm wine from strangers for fear that it is poisoned, and as mentioned above people tend to keep some of their cattle with a herdsman in a neighbouring village for fear that he is thought to be 'too' wealthy. One of the results of this underlying envy and this secretive attitude towards wealth is that property is never flaunted; and this in turn means that possessions cannot be used for acquiring status or still more wealth. In fact, the first time the community really gets to know how much rice a man has amassed is when he is dead. The more rice, and cattle, the man left behind, the greater will be the funeral celebrations, the more cattle will be sacrificed and eaten, and the less there will be left for the sons to inherit.

"They're not used to dressing"

Another reason that the people of Santiaba look down on the villagers of Samatite is because in Samatite, the villagers do not dress. They do, of course, dress up for special occasions, funerals, marriages and ceremonies at the spirit shrine for example, but, for the women of Santiaba, that does not count: "Ils n'ont pas l'habitude de s'habiller"[17] is how they put it, because they do not dress up every day, as people do in their own village, nor even on one special day of the week, a 'Sunday', or a 'Friday'. Their everyday dress is sparse, as explained above. For working in the fields they wear very little and they are not in the habit, as they are in Santiaba of washing and getting dressed up after their work. This absence of dress in Samatite can be interpreted in various ways. It can, for instance, be related to the absence of social or political hierarchy in Samatite. Weiner and Schneider observe that:

> . . . the relationship between a greater degree of permanence in cloth and a greater elaboration of political hierarchy is not coincidental.

[17] Tr.: "They're not used to dressing."

> The two go together because a hierarchy depends in part upon sumptuary paraphernalia to objectify rank and to constitute a physical bond between the past and the present (Weiner and Schneider 1989: 5).

From this point of view, one might say that in a community like Samatite, where rank and hierarchy are allowed little emphasis, dress becomes 'unnecessary' or even disagreeable. Put another way, in a village in which jealousies and rivalries are ever-present, it is understandable that people are unwilling to display their wealth in the clothes they wear. One could even take this to explain the ambivalent, 'joking' relationship that the people of Samatite have with their clothes as an exaggerated way of letting other people know that you are making no claims to status or rank through your clothes.

The women themselves generally offer economic arguments, and contend that dress is not part of everyday life in Samatite because they cannot afford to buy clothes. 'Afford' is a relative concept and in reality often no more than a manifestation of priorities, and such a statement can hardly be taken at face value. On the one hand, Samatite farmers are proud of their rich harvests and abundant cattle and on the other hand the women themselves have opportunities to earn money. Into the bargain, I gradually came to realize that the women of Samatite do have clothes, but that they keep them out of sight most of the time. When I asked Belle about her wardrobe, and about the clothes she had purchased in Dakar, she was, initially, somewhat unforthcoming, as were the other women in the village. After I had seen her dressed up a time or two, for example when she took her pregnant niece Monique for a check-up to the clinic in M'lomp and when she went to a funeral, she 'came clean' and showed me her clothes. She has a pile of *pagnes noirs*, and she has eight *dokets*, all the *dokets* have matching lengths of material which are wrapped round the waist and function as a skirt. The *doket* is more like the Western idea of a dress than a *grand boubou* is, since it has a square bodice with a characteristic gabled neckline. The rest of the garment, wide sleeves and skirt, are pleated on to the loose fitting bodice, like a smock. All the pieces of material used to make the *doket* are straight, or at least they can be, and it is possible to make the *doket* from strip cloth. The *doket* can be worn at various lengths, and it finishes with a flounce around the bottom of the garment. The women of Samatite wear the *doket* as a short, smock-like gar-

ment, over a cloth wrap. The *doket* can be an elegant and impressive garment when worn long, but it is less demanding to wear than the *grand boubou*, being more fitted. Since Belle is an elegant and self-confident person I was surprised at first that she did not wear the *grand boubou*. She said that she had had a *grand boubou* when she returned from Dakar, but when it had worn out she had not replaced it. "Things change" she said, rather wistfully.

It is in fact striking that before they are married all of the young girls from the Casa region, Animist, Muslim and Christian, dress more or less identically while they are working in Dakar. The style and size of their wardrobes depends more on the kind of job they have and on their income level than on their religion. Once they marry, however, and return to the village of their husband, their way of dressing gradually adapts to the village, or rather to the husband, of their choice. In the case of the women of Samatite, adapting to village custom meant largely giving up dressing, or at least giving up dressing well, and this was not always easy for them to accept. As I mention below, the women never lost an opportunity to dress up when they left the village for one reason or another.

Belle keeps her wardrobe up to date, and every year she has one, or sometimes two, outfits made for her. In Samatite, there are various opportunities for earning money: the women can sell the produce from their vegetable gardens in the nearby market in Elinkine, they can make and sell baskets and they can collect fruits and nuts from the surrounding forest and sell them in the town, Ziguinchor, for good prices. Further, all the Samatite women belong to a work team, referred to as an *association*. These are part work-group part social group and the *associations* hire themselves out, either within the village or in neighbouring villages, to a person who needs extra help for any reason. Many women effectively supplement their incomes in this way. In Samatite, the standard times for having a new outfit made are the Christian festivals, Christmas and Easter, as well as the significant moments in the Diola calendar. In September, for example, when all the young people return to Dakar after helping with the rice harvest during the rainy season, a big farewell party is given to send them off, called *l'orchestre*. Though at Christmas or Easter a woman may sometimes have an outfit made up for herself individually, women often have their clothes made as a group, and have what is known

> as an assobi outfit made for themselves collectively. They get together to buy the fabric and they have their dresses made up in an identical style. This makes the outfits cheaper, and it also underlines the identity of the group.

Politics and ritual: the rain priest

In Samatite, it is the council of elders that takes political leadership in village affairs. The elders exercise their authority on the strength of their control over the most important spirit shrines in the village. In a small village like Samatite all of the older, initiated men become priests at one of the spirit shrines. In this capacity, they are responsible for the spiritual health of the village; it is the responsibility of the elders, in their role as spirit shrine priests, to diagnose and cure illness, to prevent death, to procure the welfare of the villagers and to ensure the fertility of the fields. The political authority of the elders is sanctioned by their ritual authority: in cases of 'civil disobedience' they can refuse to go to the spirit shrine and intervene on behalf of a villager or a group of villagers. This is their trump card, and although they do not often use it, the knowledge that they can use it if necessary forms the basis of much of their power.

There is also the role of *chef de village* in Samatite—at the moment Mundung is acting *chef de village*—but he has little influence within the village itself. The role of *chef de village* was instigated by the French in the 1930s as explained in the previous chapter, and his role nowadays is simply to act as a channel of communication with the outside world and with Senegalese authorities. It is the task of the *chef de village* to collect taxes from the villagers, for example, and he is responsible for filling in the national censorship papers for Samatite. He might also be asked to represent the village if money was to be given to the village for some special project, but in these cases he would have to be careful that he did no more than act as mouthpiece for the council.

The council of elders is not the only form of leadership in the village, however. There is also a ritual leader: the rain priest or *oeyi*. The rain priest is chosen by the elders for his wisdom and insight, and he must already be a reputable spirit shrine priest before he is elected to this position. The rain priest has more influence than any other individual in the community, embodying as he does, in a single person, the spiritual unity of village. Despite the influence he carries and the respect in which he is held however, the position of the

rain priest is hardly an enviable one, and his situation characterizes the ambiguous position of leadership in Animist Diola society. Although the village always chooses from its best men for this position, the worldly life of the chosen person really comes to an end once he accepts it. The *oeyi* is not allowed to leave the village, for example, nor is he allowed to work and earn money, so 'his wife will never have nice clothes'—as Belle commented. Furthermore, he is not allowed to wear shoes of any kind, nor is he allowed to eat or drink in public, as explained above. The power that belongs to the role of the rain priest is balanced by the sacrifices he has to make in fulfilling it; he is simultaneously king of and slave to his community. In practice, many men do indeed refuse to take on the role and there are many stories of people fleeing the village to escape this destiny.[18] In Samatite there is no rain priest at the moment. Khoyagueu Bassene, an old man of about eighty, is considered to be the rain priest elect.

Dress and the rain priest

At the moment, there are two rain priests in the Samatite area, one in neighbouring Kanute and one in M'lomp. As spiritual leader, the rain priest occupies a unique position in the community, and his dress reflects this. The rain priest is always dressed in red, and this is the reason no-one else may wear clothes this colour. The *roi* of Kanute, Egnami Diatta, was still quite a young man when he was inaugurated, about five years ago. He spends his days in the village, near to the sacred wood, which is also near to the road. It is therefore not unusual to come across him in the village and yet, because of his way of dressing, people tend to remain in awe of him. Egnami has two outfits, both of them red; in the village, he wears a short red tunic, which comes down to the knee. When he makes an official appearance, at a wrestling match or a funeral, or at the Independence Day celebrations, he wears a thick, red, cotton khaftan, so long that it trails along the ground, hiding his bare feet. On his head he wears a high red felt hat. It is not surprising that both his outfit, and the dignity that the robe and hat bring to his manner of moving around,

[18] The previous *roi* of Oussouye left the village as soon as he heard he was to be approached for the position. Later, however, he was forced to return as the spirits refused to leave him alone, and killed several of his children.

make him stand out as an important person. The power of the *roi* is said to house in the back part of the head, and for this reason his head has to remain covered. Thomas writes as follows about the awe that the khaftan inspires among the Animist Diola:

> le marabout itinerant, bien qu'étranger, est souvent reçu avec respect parce qu'il est bien habillé. La majesté du khaftan ou du grand boubou suffit pour expliquer la suppression d'une méfiance pourtant proverbiale (Thomas 1959/60: 357).[19]

The rain priest is doubly respected; not only because of his position, but also because of his clothes. In the previous section, I suggested that the Animist's demeanour is shaped not by the way of dressing, since he does not dress, but rather by the work that he does. The *roi* is an exception to this, and on two counts: on the one hand, he is not allowed to work, and on the other hand he does dress, and no doubt his demeanour is at least partly shaped by the khaftan that he is required to wear. Nevertheless his bare feet and his long, trailing robe, represent better than anything else does his status as simultaneously leader and captive. This ambiguity is often found in the role of chief in African societies and it may often be demonstrated in the appropriate demeanour of the person holding the office:

> Een negerhoofdman werd eens gevraagd of hij geen last had, bij het lopen, van de zwaren ringen om zijn enkels. Hij antwoordde, dat zulks nodig was om waardig te kunnen lopen, zoals het past voor een opperhoofd (van der Laan 1964: 8).[20]

Relations between men and women: two separate worlds

Women of Samatite have an economic and ritual independence in village life. A woman is never entirely dependent on her husband's decisions or totally subject to his authority. For a start, she has her own supply of rice. Women do not own rice fields but they do have access to rice fields and to rice. When a man and a woman marry, the man allots a certain number of rice fields to his wife. These are

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[19] Tr.: "The itinerant marabout, even though he is a stranger, is often welcomed with respect by the local people because of his clothes. The majesty of the khaftan or *grand boubou* is sufficient to overcome their proverbial suspicion."

[20] Tr.: "An African chief was asked whether it wasn't rather difficult to walk with the heavy chains around his ankles. He replied that the chains were indispensable to his being able to walk in an appropriate manner, as befits a chief."

the fields that are to provide the daily meals for the family and so they tend to be the most productive ones; the rice from these fields is entirely at the wife's disposal. Men and women each have their separate granary, and if women find they have more than enough rice to feed the family, then they are even allowed to sell it. As explained, women have various possible sources of income in fact: they sell the produce from their vegetable gardens if they wish, and they may make baskets, or collect fruits, or honey, from the forests. The most profitable source of income, though, are the work associations, groups of eight or nine women who band together and hire themselves out as paid labour to help someone, usually in a neighbouring village, who has a particularly large amount of work on hand. It may be a person who is building a house and needs people to carry water or wood or it may be someone who has a lot of fields and is temporarily short of labour.

Furthermore, the women can not only 'pay', they can also 'pray', as Linares puts it. Among the *Awasena* Diola, women may occupy key ritual positions and Linares claims that even the position of rain priest may be held by a woman. In fact, the female shrines, which are exclusively for women so that men do not have the right to sacrifice there or to interfere in any way, play an important role in the economic life of the community. When the first rains arrive, in early July, the village is all keyed up to begin working the fields and sowing the rice in the nurseries. Work may not begin, however, until the women carry out a certain ritual at the *ehounia* shrine where they offer a small amount of rice seed and ask for an abundant yield. Similarly, the harvest may not start before the women have done their first-fruit offering at the same shrine (Linares 1992: 49). At times, the women may use this ceremony as a political tool if they are dissatisfied with the way the men are exercising their authority. Soon after I arrived in Samatite there was a village-wide dispute because the men and the women had gone to the spirit shrine on the same day, and this is forbidden. The dispute was 'solved' by day-long dancing at the shrine and a great deal of talking One women explained to me, however, that the outcome was never in doubt: it was May and the women would always be able to call the men to order by refusing to carry out the blessing of the seed when the rains arrived the following month.

This attitude of equality is fully endorsed in Diola philosophy by the myth that is handed down in *Awasena* tradition concerning the

first men and women. At first the man and the woman only fight, but Emitai tells the woman: ". . . next time the man comes for a quarrel, remove your cloth . . . the man sees the genitals and he will be beaten". And Baum goes on:

> Man has a certain physical power, but woman has a sexual power that she can use to control power. Thus Emitai established a balance between the strengths of men and women, beginning with the first couple (Baum 1999: 58).

It is still considered harmful for a man to see a woman naked. When the first MFDC demonstrations took place at the beginning of the eighties, some of the old women took to the streets completely naked in the belief that the men who saw them would be made impotent.

In Samatite, it is indeed the men who run the village, yet it is clear from the way the women behave towards the men that they do not feel obliged to accept inappropriate behaviour from them. They have their own resources, ritual and economic, and they feel confident about their position in the community. It undoubtedly makes a difference in this context that most of the wives in the village, approximately ninety percent in fact, were born either in Samatite itself of in nearby Kanute. Where disputes arise, either between husband and wife, or between a wife and her in-laws, then the woman is able to count on the support of her own family, who does not live too far away.

Dressing for occasions and occasions for dressing

Belle makes a distinction between her clothes, that is her *dokets* which she refers to as '*habilles*', and her *pagnes*, by which term she refers to the *pagnes noirs* or *pagnes traditionels* and not the lengths of factory-made cloth that go with her *dokets*. She wears the *pagnes* to attend occasions that are significant to her Animist religion, mostly ceremonial occasions at the spirit shrine within the village. There are also religious occasions outside the village. For example, when an important shrine priestess—often referred to as *reine* or queen—died in M'lomp, the funeral was an important occasion and was attended by all of the women from the surrounding area. Only women were allowed to attend the funeral, which lasted the whole day, and all those present danced tirelessly to celebrate the life of the dead priestess. The body was laid out to be viewed wearing two *pagnes noirs*, one around the top of her

body, the other around the waist. All the women who attended, including Belle, wore the 'traditional' Diola dress described above: a *pagne traditionnel* worn with a white T-shirt and many strings of beads, worn diagonally over both shoulders and crossing each other across the torso. Some of the women, as many as owned them, wore their *pagnes de danse*: short, handwoven *pagnes* heavily and beautifully decorated with white mother-of-pearl buttons or small shells and little rounds of red felt. In cases where the dead person has been an important shrine priest, Belle may wear anything up to three pagnes noirs, one on top of the other. On these occasions she also wears a straw hat, perched on the top of her head.

Belle and her friends distinguish *pagnes noirs* from other forms of dress because of the symbolic role they play within the Animist religion. Belle keeps her *habilles*, which are associated with the world outside the village, for occasions that are predominantly social occasions, including those occasions that are connected with the other religions, Christianity and Islam. Only the funerals of people who have held important positions in the *Awasena* hierarchy are categorized as ceremonial, or ritual occasions, however; most funerals are thought of as social occasions and the women dress in *habilles* rather than in *pagnes*. It is also possible to wear *pagnes traditionels* together with a *doket* if the occasion demands; for example people wore this hybrid outfit for the funeral of an old Animist woman who was not, however, a *reine*. Villagers try to attend all funerals that take place in the surrounding villages, and this means leaving the village to attend a funeral about once every two weeks. For these occasions Belle wears a *doket* accompanied by a cloth wrap. There are various other social occasions that punctuate Belle's social diary throughout the year. There is the State-sponsored *Quintaine des Femmes* (Fortnight for Women), a political manifestation aimed to promote women's interests, which the women of Samatite also attend. There is a Christian pilgrimage that takes place in Elinkine each year which most of the women attend. At occasions such as these, Belle wears a *doket* accompanied by a cloth wrap made of matching fabric and a foulard, like all the other women there. These are secular, social and modern occasions. In other words, Belle can differentiate her outfit to reflect the nature of the occasion.

Nevertheless, these occasions do not take place frequently enough for Belle and her friends to get into the habit of dressing, as the women of Santiaba say. When you get the chance to compare the manner of dressing of the Samatite women to that of the women of Santiaba, then you notice a great difference in style and finesse. There was a big celebration in Santiaba to mark the death, the previous year, of a well-known marabout. It was an enormous occasion and people came from far and wide to attend it; large groups of people, mostly women, came from the surrounding Animist villages as well. The women of Samatite were conspicuous; in their short, tight smock-like *dokets* and inexpertly tied foulards, they lacked the elegance and refinement of their Muslim neighbours. With their slim, upright and almost boyish

figures, there was something naive and childlike about their appearance. Their movements as well—the quick, workmanlike 'trot' that so characterizes their gait—contrasted strongly with the graceful paces of the Santiaba people.

One July Belle's work team, which is made up of seven women, decided that they would have an *assobi* outfit made for themselves for *l'orchestre*, the big party that is organized by Djigolobo, the Samatite *Association des Jeunes*, in September each year, just before the young people return to Dakar. The head of the work association is Atome Babene, a cousin of Belle. Atome and Belle went to Ziguinchor to choose the fabric, a printed cotton which, at CFA 400 (about €0.60) a metre, is about the cheapest fabric you can get. You need six metres for an outfit, so buying collectively gave Belle and Atome a fair bit of bargaining power. They chose a print that had a lot of purple and yellow in it, and they also bought a hundred metres of black *broderie*, a cotton trimming used for decorating the bodice and sleeves. Up until a few years ago this *broderie* was always white; then the market started selling it in colours, and recently black has come into fashion. In Samatite, black *broderie* is still considered quite daring, however, and there was some controversy about it among the members of the association. The style was quickly chosen: a knee length *doket* with square neck and large sleeves. Belle then took the fabric to Prudence, the dressmaker in Kanute, and here again, she could keep the costs down by asking for eight more or less identical[21] outfits. *L'orchestre* lasted for three days; it was held on the *place publique*, the open sandy space next to the village spirit shrine. Djigolobo had hired in musicians—two saxophones and a drummer—and all the young danced from late afternoon till early dawn. It was only on the third evening that Belle and her group made a dramatic appearance in their new outfits, dancing in a line, one behind the other, into the *place publique*. The audience clapped; the new outfits had received village approval and the group identity of the *association* had been renewed and endorsed.

An *assobi* outfit may be made and worn by any definable group of women or girls. At *l'orchestre*, for example, the girls who work

[21] There is always room, in an *assobi* outfit, for a little individuality or personal preference.

in Dakar formed themselves into two *assobi* groups, one from each of the two *quartiers*. In other contexts the in-married women of a concession, or a *quartier*, may form an *assobi* group, or the 'sisters' of a concession may form such a group, that is, the women who were born in the same concession and now live elsewhere. Dressing in *assobi* focuses on the collective existence of the group and underlines their solidarity: Belle explained the system of the *assobi* outfits to me in this way, but judging by her own situation I gathered that in Samatite *assobi* outfits are more often worn by work groups rather than by family groups.

To some extent, *habilles* have to be seen as a marker of the pressure for social change that is bearing down on Samatite from out-side and that is being resisted by the village elders. Belle, for example, only puts on her *habilles* and her *pagnes* in the village when there is a special occasion; however, she never loses an opportunity to dress up when she leaves the village. A visit to the clinic, or the occasional trip to Ziguinchor, even a visit to the dressmaker in nearby Kanute is reason enough for her to put on a *doket* and matching *pagne* and to look much smarter than you ever see her looking inside the village boundaries. This is not true for Mundung however, who makes no effort to dress 'up' when he goes to Elinkine. In fact he seems to take pride in his rough looks and bare feet when he goes there; since all the land around Elinkine is owned by Samatite—though on loan to them for a hundred years already—he thinks of the people of Elinkine as his tenants.

During the time I spent in Samatite, it gradually became clear that there is no link, in Samatite, between dress and demeanour, or habitus. In a situation where people only dress up for special occasions, clothes have no instrumental function. The people of Samatite have a particularly characteristic way of moving and walking, but this is engendered by their work and by their ongoing interaction with their physical surroundings, as suggested above. On the other hand, dress has important symbolic functions: both the traditional *pagnes noirs* and the more modern *habilles*, represent significant social values and classifications. For the villagers, *pagnes noirs* represent the values that are central to Diola culture: continuity, balance and a closeness to nature. The more modern *habilles* are also important for their semiotic value. First of all, *habilles* help to delineate groups of people and underline the importance of their solidarity. This is made clear in the *assobi* outfits, which define

membership of work associations and kinship groups. They also mark out and gauge special occasions. As described above, an occasion can be marked as 'sacred' or 'social and secular' in accordance with the nature of the garments, or the combination of garments, that are worn.

The only person whose dress can be said to affect his demeanour is the rain priest, the prisoner king who occupies such a special and central role in the ritual life of an Animist village. His long, weighty and dignified khaftan marks him out as a special figure; not only because of the colour of his robes but also because of his whole appearance, and then not least his slow dignity, especially when compared to the quick and nimble gait of most of the Animist men. This dignity and deliberation is also prompted by the high red hat that the rain priest wears on his head, and which stays on his head at all times.

Social change in Samatite: migrants and intellectuels

As explained, the people of Samatite have become experts at resisting change, but nevertheless changes are taking place. It is not only the Senegalese authorities who are trying to break open this conservative community for pressure also comes from much closer to home. Of the 350 or so people who belong to the village of Samatite, about a quarter now live permanently in the city, mainly in Dakar, Banjul and Ziguinchor. These are the *intellectuels*, educated men and women who have managed to find work in the city and who have therefore decided to stay there. This group of people belongs in Samatite. They have the same share in the rice fields as their brothers and cousins and they return in the rainy season to help cultivate and harvest the rice. They feel responsible for the welfare of the village and they would like to see the village prosper. Living in the city, the *intellectuels* have developed attitudes and values that are no longer in line with those of the village elders. They would like to see Samatite open up, and modernize to some extent. Working together under the auspices of Djigolobo, the Samatite youth association that was set up in the 1980s and which has its base in Dakar, they have tried to initiate various projects in the village that might help to stimulate the economy and provide employment for some of the young people.

About five years ago, for example, Djigelobo, which means something like 'Get up and go', attempted to set up a co-operative shop in the village, which would sell a few useful articles that are now

only available in Elinkine, about five kilometres away. After lengthy negotiations, the village elders agreed to assist the plan, but insisted on running the shop themselves. The project was soon abandoned. The elders had been told that it was a shop 'for the benefit of all the villagers', and had acted accordingly: the amount of credit that was given in the course of the first six months ensured the early demise of the project. Later, it was suggested that an outsider, a family member of the Peul who runs the small shop in nearby Sam Sam, should take over the boutique, but the council of elders turned down the suggestion. Djigelobo even has to ask the council for permission when it wants to hold a dance or organize some other event.

Jean Pierre Assine is the grandson of the chef de village. Though he belongs in Mundung's concession he only returns to the village in the rainy season to help with the rice. He has done a course on tourism in Dakar and he is now a tourist guide on the coast nearby. Jean Pierre is also secretary of the Dakar branch of Djigelebo. Each Diola village has its own youth association, which has branches in Dakar, Ziguinchor and Banjul. The aim of these associations is to support the village youth and at the same time to keep an eye on them and to keep them in contact with each other. A small subscription is paid each month and with this money a big party, or '*bal*', is held on a Saturday night, every three or four months. The money made at the Saturday night *bals* is carefully administered and goes into a fund that is to be used for encouraging the economy in Samatite. The committee of Djigolobo hopes to attract the attention of a European NGO. They have two projects in mind: they plan to set up the co-operative again in Samatite, and they hope to start a chicken and pig farming project.

Jean Pierre is covertly critical of Mundung and the rest of the council. There is in fact increasing tension between the village elders and the more senior men of Djigolobo. Djigolobo had encouraged the opening of the small co-operative in Samatite, which failed because the elders had insisted on attempting to run it themselves. Although the elders have said they would co-operate with Djigolobo's plans for the chicken farming project, Djigolobo is not happy with the idea of their involvement. The officials of Djigolobo have lived in the city for many years now and they have developed a mentality and approach to such matters that is rather different to that of the village elders. The contrast is emphasised by the fact that there is no longer any great age difference between the officials of Djigolobo and the mem-

bers of the council of 'elders' who run the village. Christophe Auta, a schoolteacher who was elected president of Djigolobo when it was established in 1982 and who has remained president ever since, is the same generation as Mundung and hardly younger in years. The 'elders', however, have greater authority in village affairs, because they have remained in Samatite and because they now control the ritual offices. Jean Pierre and the members of Djigolobo do not criticise the elders openly but they are clearly frustrated by the council's capacity to stand in the way of their plans.

When discussing the role of the elders in village life, Jean Pierre often mentions the large amounts of palm wine—and other forms of alcohol—which the elders consume. Though not averse to alcohol, the *intellectuels* live, in the city, in a Muslim world, in which drunkenness is looked down on with something like disgust. In the village, however, palm wine is not only a symbol of the *Awasena* religion, it is also considered to be a gift of nature. Tapped from the palm tree and collected in the morning, palm wine becomes alcoholic of its own accord within twenty-four hours. The value of palm wine is based on the role it plays in the spirit shrine religion, as described in the previous chapter. Poured on the ground next to the spirit shrine, it is a token sacrifice to the spirit shrine in asking for help, support or enlightenment. The men, and the women, of Samatite love to drink palm wine: to sit in a circle, under a tree or next to the spirit shrine, and to drink from the communal pail. They see this as a way of cementing relationships, not only between people, but also between themselves and the spirit world. Inebriation is not considered something to be ashamed of, as the Muslims would have it. It is, rather, a positive state, which enables people, in particular the shrine priest, to gain insight into the spirit world.

Urban habitus

In appearance, there is also a wide gap between the village elders and the *intellectuels*. The latter are used to wearing Western styles of clothes in their city jobs: fitted trousers and a shirt, a legacy from the colonial period. When they return to the village they tend to 'dress down', and wear the same kinds of 'non clothes' that the villagers do, but they are easy to distinguish. Their sedentary jobs in the city have left their bodies flabbier and their shoulders rounder than their village age-mates. They no longer have the perpendicular bearing that comes of regular physical work.

> Their Western clothes, particularly their city leather shoes, have produced a way of walking and standing that clearly did not originate in the village. Though this difference remains unspoken, it underlines the different ways of life that the two groups live, and the permanence of their demeanour marks their relationship. This urban habitus means that the *intellectuels* never become part of village life and to some extent it brands them as only semi-members of the village community.

2d. *The relationship between the individual and the self*

The fourth relationship which needs to be brought into focus, bearing as it does on the perspective a society holds about the nature of the world, is that between the individual and the self. As Linares points out (Linares 1992: 52), the villagers of Samatite are in many ways an individualistic and competitive group of people, largely due, she suggests, to the Diola methods of rice production, which encourage a fiercely competitive spirit. Successful rice farming, a valued talent in Diola society, depends at various points in the farming year on an individual and independent judgement: when to start sowing, transplanting and harvesting the crop, how much fertilizer to put on the fields, where and how to find manpower at the appropriate times, and so on. If you are not willing or capable of making independent judgements, then you will probably not be a successful farmer. The need for this self-reliance and independent attitude leads to the rivalry and secrecy that so characterizes Diola communities.

Although this secrecy and competitive spirit are often noticeable in Samatite, there are also many ways in which this individualism is tempered. For a start, the rice paddies, though owned individually, have to be maintained collectively. That is to say, various features of the paddies, such as the irrigation system and the outer dike, which keeps out the salty river water, are the collective responsibility of all the men in the village. Regular working parties have to be collected together to work on this dike, and if it breaks, which happened twice during the time I was in the village, then all the men of the village join together to mend it. Furthermore, most of the men of Samatite find their wives either from within Samatite or from the next door village of Kanute, so family ties throughout the village are strong and many stranded. The quarrels within the village, and there are several, have the feel of family rows. There was long-term

friction between Adèle and Eugene, her brother-in-law. She accused him of having cheated her brother over the sale of some cattle. One afternoon the row broke open while Eugene, who had had too much to drink, was mending the roof of his house. He hurled insults down at Adèle all afternoon, and they were returned with interest. No-one felt threatened by the situation however, since Eugene and Adèle were related to each other by several channels; the row would be contained and would not cause a rift in village relationships.

In Samatite, the 'family' and collective nature of the village is often stressed. For example, one day Mundung was waiting for his niece Monique, to accompany her to the clinic; having waited long enough, he gave out a loud three-toned whistle and explained that this was Monique's 'call'. Everyone in Samatite has their own call, and everyone in Samatite knows the whole repertoire of calls. Similarly, every individual has a special nickname. This nickname is attached to a particular combination of names and stays the same through the generations. Thus a female named Awa Diatta, of whatever generation, always has the same nickname given to her. Customs like this focus on individual identity, but at the same time they underline group identity. Most importantly, they stress the continuity of the village and allow individuals to see themselves as part of an ongoing progression of generations.

Individual identity and the body

Individuals in Samatite do not only have a place assigned to them within the social group, they also have a place reserved for them, through the body, in the natural world. Every Animist Diola village has a specific totem animal, or *siwum*, with which the villagers have a particular and special relationship. In the neighbouring village of Kanute the village totem is the lizard and in Samatite it is the snake. In general, snakes in the Basse Casamance are greatly feared. In Samatite, however, snakes have a special position. For one thing, the snake, as totem, is the protector of the village; it ensures that no ill-intentioned person comes into the village and will bite any such person that does. Furthermore, every person who belongs to Samatite whether they live there or not, has the protection of their own personal snake, which is linked to that person both physically and spiritually.

Each time a baby is born to a man from Samatite a snake is born at the same moment, and this snake remains the new-born

baby's counterpart throughout his or her life. The nature of the relationship means that the health of these two beings is intimately connected; when the person is ill, the snake is sick, when he or she dies, the snake dies too:

> The totem is born at the same time as the man, is sick like him, experiences the same joy, the same sorrows, and the death of one leads fatally to that of the other. The double and the person shared a common soul and could not withstand the loss of the other (Baum 1999: 49).

The death of the snake leads inevitably to the death of the counterpart, and this is why it is absolutely forbidden to kill a snake in Samatite. In many cases, people never come face to face with their natural counterpart and simply live in the conviction that 'their' snake exists. It is normal to see snakes, however, in the rice fields, particularly in the rainy season, and when this happens the villagers stop their work and observe them, calmly talking to them and making no effort to interfere or harm them in any way. This is quite different in the neighbouring villages where anyone who comes across a snake sets up a hue and cry and soon has a following of little boys with sticks who do not calm down again until the snake has been beaten to death. On one occasion a group of children came to fetch me from the house; they had found a big snake and wanted to show it to me. They watched it quietly and with respect, guiding it back gently into the long grass. They explained: "We do not have the right to kill the snake and the snake does not have the right to bite us either".[22] At the beginning of this chapter it was suggested that the way in which the houses in Samatite are built—by giving form and structure to a sandpit—exemplifies the intimate and balanced relationship that the villagers have with their natural environment. The conception of the *siwum*, tying together the fate of the human and the natural worlds, suggests a similar relationship.

[22] Snake bites are one of the great hazards of the rainy season in the Casamance and every year several people fall victim. An apprentice nurse at the clinic in M'lomp, said she did not treat a single snake-bite victim from Samatite while she was there.

3. Summary: balance, continuity and the working body

This chapter describes the way in which the relationships maintained by the people of Samatite—with the supernatural and the physical environment, as well as within the social situation—are guided by ideals of balance and continuity. Although there is as much tension and friction within Samatite as in most small communities, and despite the competitive and secretive atmosphere that you often find there, equality, collectivity and group orientation remain the ideals. The Animist Diola is involved with the natural environment and he takes his role to be the maintenance of the natural cycle in accordance with the laws of Emitai. In his relationship with his rice fields, he aims to be partner rather than commander, taking his stipulated place in the agricultural year, the place to which he has been appointed by Emitai. He seeks to balance his social life with the demands and possibilities of the agricultural cycle and to ensure continuity with nature in his cultural life. This approach to the natural world is lived and experienced in the body and is embodied in the Animist demeanour.

Within this focus on balance and continuity, the body is seen to play a pivotal role and serves, in various ways, to foster and support this point of view. First of all, the body is seen as the primary tool with which the people of Samatite lay claim to their natural environment. Through the *siwum* it is intimately related to the natural world and through its capabilities the body ensures that the natural world continues to thrive and produce. The body not only forms a bridge with the natural world however, it is also the link which joins the visible and the invisible worlds, bridging the space that inevitably exists between the human and the spirit worlds; it is after all the body that is attacked and also protected by the spirits, whether good or evil. Thirdly, the body is a lively symbol of the values and ideas which permeate the Animist view of the world. In its simplicity, it represents the absence of social differentiation that characterizes Samatite life, while its wiry vigour expresses the cultural emphasis that is placed on hard work and agricultural production.

I began my fieldwork with the idea that in the encounter between dress and the body it would self-evidently be dress that gains the upper hand. That is to say, I assumed that dress self-evidently moulds and shapes the body and has a determining influence on the body's stance and demeanour. I was therefore investigating the function of

dress as a 'cultural tool', producing certain 'types' of body. Looking at the evidence from this chapter however, it would seem that the Diola in Samatite are 'resistant' to dressing—and therefore to this formative function of dress as well. The snide comment of the Muslim inhabitants of the neighbouring village of Santiaba that "the people of Samatite are not used to dressing" was shown to be largely true. At least within the village, where the old men have maintained their authority, the inhabitants of Samatite wear very little in the way of clothes. On a normal day, and within the village boundaries, people are not in the habit of putting on clothes, and dressing remains an activity that is reserved for special occasions. Even though these special occasions may be taking place increasingly often, and even though the women like to dress up, it remains an activity that does not fit in with the *Awasena* way of life. The form of dress worn to go to the *fetiche*, the *pagne noir*, is not only minimal it also remains as much object as dress, since it can be simply taken along over the shoulder and not put on the body at all. As far as the traditional dress of the women is concerned, the white T-shirts that they wear can be seen more as a token of decency, a nod in the direction of the missionaries, than a form of dress that will affect the body. Furthermore, there is the tendency to wear clothes that are as old and worn out as possible and to use them more as a form of body decoration, in the tradition of the scarification[23] that the Diola used to practice.

This 'resistance' to clothing is not equally strong throughout the community and it is at its strongest at the political centre of the village, among the council of old men. At first it is surprising to see the people who you know hold the reigns of power wearing such rags as they do. After a bit, however, you learn to recognize rags as precisely a symbol of power and influence in Samatite. Though the rain priest, when he is finally appointed, will wear the red garb of office, the old men in general tend to take a contemptuous attitude to clothes, also to Western clothes, and to connect them with the soft life, and the soft bodies, of urban living. The farther you get from the centre of power however, the less this attitude holds. Thus younger men and women tend to dress up more easily than older men and women. This is generally connected to some kind of visit

[23] The Diola were known for cutting open the skin on the chest and pressing coloured beads into the cuts, which then 'grew' into the skin once it had healed.

or trip outside the village, to the clinic, the market or for entertainment. When you leave the village you put on clothes, but the old women, as well as the older men, only leave the village when it is absolutely necessary.

This chapter puts forward various arguments that might be relevant to this resistance to clothing and absence of dress. The women say that they cannot afford clothes, but this argument can hardly be taken at face value. The rice harvests are large, the men purchase cattle, as well as *pagnes*, and into the bargain the women, and also the younger men, do have clothes, even though they only occasionally wear them. Nevertheless, it remains a valid argument in that the *Awasena* Diola is reluctant to turn his cattle and rice into cash, and in the past it was forbidden to do so. In Samatite, the land is not exploited to cultivate a cash crop and it is only the women who grow vegetables to sell. So *habilles*, which have to be purchased with cash, remain to some extent outside the *Awasena* Diola's way of thinking. Secondly, it was suggested that the relative lack of dress can be linked to the lack of social and political hierarchy in Samatite, as the comment of Weiner and Schneider (1989) quoted above suggests. The rain priest, who is unique in having a special form of dress, is also unique in having a special position in the village, which, though it rests on his spiritual gifts, is also a political role. It may also be linked with the political isolation of the village. The elaboration of dress in Santiaba and M'lomp is certainly related to the links these villagers have with a wider religious community, Christian and Muslim.

Finally, it was suggested that the lack of clothing covering the body is related to the pivotal role that the body plays in this community. As a working body, it is central to the *Awasena* beliefs and values, not only as symbol but also as intermediary. This pivotal role manifests itself, among other ways, in the pride that the villagers of Samatite take in their lean and muscular bodies. For the *Awasena* Diola, clothes never become more than a decoration of this 'working' body, which resists any form of covering up and which is never more than embellished by the forms of dress it takes on. In Samatite, bodily demeanour is shaped, rather, by the work that the villagers do, in the case of the men it is determined, among other things, by using the long heavy *kadyendo* for digging the soil and in the case of the women by, for example, the heavy loads they carry on their heads—a task that is carried out by most African women and which adds elegance and grace to so many demeanours in Africa.

These arguments are in fact linked to each other, since they are all based on the key attitudes that safeguard and protect the continuity of their balanced world. This world is threatened by turning the wealth of rice and cattle into the cash that purchases *habilles* and at the same time it is sanctioned and protected by the absence of political and social hierarchy, as well as by the political isolation of the village. More than anything however, this perspective is endorsed by the role of the body and by the pride that the villagers take in their bodies. The arguments are integrated by the conservative stance of the council of elders and their tenets are threatened by the will to change and develop that is nurtured by the migrant *intellectuels*. So in Samatite, the body is not shaped by the clothes that it wears but rather by the work that is involved in its interaction with the natural environment and in the daily round of labour that the Samatite people are bound to carry out in order to retain their way of life and render it viable.

In Samatite, it is above all as symbols that dress—both *pagnes noirs* as well as *dokets*—is relevant to the Animist way of life. The special significance of the *pagne noir* is its representation of continuity; it is indeed the connective tissue of the community. It ties the generations together, binding the living to their ancestors, in the giving of *pagnes* at funeral ceremonies, and to their progeny, in the giving of *pagnes* at birth. It also, thereby, binds the spiritual world—of the ancestors—to the material world of the living. As the gift offered at marriage, it ties families together; as the gift that is offered by a young man to his fiancée, it ties individuals together. In every way, the role of the *pagne* in Samatite life illustrates Weiner and Schneider's idea as to:

> . . . how readily its [cloth's] appearance and that of its constituent fibres can evoke ideas of connectedness or tying . . . binding humans not only to each other but to the ancestors of their past and the progeny who constitute their future (1992: 2–300).

The symbolic role of the *pagne noir*, separate from that of the body, is underlined by the way in which Mundung often does not wear his wrap to attend the shrine, but simply throws it over his shoulder. Similarly, the symbolic role of the woollen hat, denoting the status of elder, is underlined by the way Allassane Diatta perches a piece of knitting on his head.

There are two exceptions to the conclusion that, in Samatite, the body is not influenced by dress but rather resistant to it. There are

two kinds of people whose dress can indeed be said to affect their demeanour: the *intellectuels*, who belong in Samatite but who live in the towns, and the rain priest. As regards the *intellectuels*, their usual form of dress is trousers, shirt and Western shoes; their bodies have not developed the lean alertness of a permanent resident of Samatite. And the slow and deliberate carriage of the rain priest, at least as I witnessed him in Oussouye, is certainly brought about by the long red khaftan that he wears on his body and the high red felt hat he wears on his head. One of the most important ways in which the Animists' approach to the world is embodied, and embedded in their lives, is in the conventional resistance to wearing shoes. For the Animist, keeping in balance with the natural environment and remaining close to nature are important tenets of his religious life. Going barefoot, and in particular the prohibition on wearing shoes to which the rain priest is subjected, emphasizes this ideal.

CHAPTER FIVE

SANTIABA: HIERARCHY AND THE PERFORMING BODY

1. Introduction

It only takes about half an hour to walk from Samatite to Santiaba. Santiaba is the next-door village and in geographical terms it is very close. Yet the difference in the two environments, in the way the two villages look and feel, is quite startling. There is an order and an openness in Santiaba which is missing in Samatite, and you feel somehow released from the heavy green forest, even though you had had no feeling of being trapped there. The sandy roads are wide, and proceed in broad, straight lines through the village. The 'main' road, which runs through the middle of the village, is even marked out on each side by coconut palms, which give an air of grandeur to the village. The straight lines of the roads are echoed in the square bricks and the firm right angles of the houses, which are topped, at least most of them, with roofs of corrugated iron rather than of grass. The houses here—there are about twenty five households in Santiaba—are nearly all made with mud bricks, held together with cement, and are not built with plain mud, as in Samatite; and in Santiaba there are no ruined houses, sinking back into the earth. Most of the houses are surrounded by solid *ronier* fences, creating a small yard or garden, where brightly coloured garments are hanging out to dry on washing lines. Looking around, you see that there are indeed fewer trees in Santiaba than in Samatite, since many of them have been cut down to make way for the cultivation of millet and ground nuts. The millet is for home consumption and for making into millet beer, but the groundnuts are grown as a cash crop. They provide the means for buying things that they do not have in Samatite: bicycles, for example, and the radios, playing busy, Arabic music, that you hear when you come near to a house.

In the middle of the village, in the open and treeless *place publique*, is the small prayer house where the men of the village come together each day to pray and to talk. The difference in religion between

Samatite and Santiaba explains why there are so few ties between the two villages. In general, the men of Santiaba find wives for themselves and husbands for their daughters either from the Diola villages in the Kalunay, to the north of the Casamance river, or from the nearby village of Elinkine, where there is a large Muslim Diola community. In fact, as far as religion is concerned, Santiaba could be said to be part of the Elinkine community. Since there is no Friday mosque in Santiaba, only a small prayer house, and no imam, the men of the village walk the five kilometres to Elinkine every Friday to attend the mosque there. The mosque in Elinkine is a makeshift construction of *krentins*, a form of wattle hurdles made of *ronier* fibre, but a new mosque is being built. In the course of the past twenty years, Elinkine has developed a flourishing trade in dried fish. This trade is in the hands of the Mourides[1] population of Elinkine, and it is with Mourides money that the new mosque is being constructed.

Santiaba is one of the 'stranger' villages that were established in the Basse Casamance at the end of the nineteenth century, but nowadays the villagers consider themselves to be 'Diola *Mandanguisés*', Mandinko Diola. Linares, describing Fatiya, a Muslim Diola village on the north bank of the Casamance River, writes of ethnicity as a 'self-labelling phenomenon' (1992: 148),[2] and this remark seems relevant to Santiaba. Like the people of Fatiya, the people of Santiaba choose to identify themselves as Diola, pointing out that people in the village usually speak Diola, that they cultivate rice and that for three generations or more they have married Diola women. They apparently think of themselves as more Diola than anything else, yet they have not entirely lost their Mandinko identity: even the younger generation can still speak Mandinko, the community has its own *griot*, the oral historian who has an important role to play in a Mandinko community, and apart from rice the villagers still cultivate millet. The hybrid identity of the village is characterized by the *bois sacré* which, in Santiaba, refers to a treeless spot on the edge of

[1] The Mourides sect is one of the Sufi Islamic brotherhoods. It is a purely Senegalese brotherhood, having been established early in the twentieth century by Cheikh Amadou Bamba.

[2] ". . . the inhabitants of Fatiya think of themselves as being first and foremost Jola. They will point to their language and much of what they consider to be "traditional" Jola ways to prove their point. Thus ethnicity must be seen as a self-labelling phenomenon." (Linares 1992: 148)

the village to which the boys and their instructors retreat during the weeks of initiation. This spot bears no resemblance to the wild tangle of forest that makes up the sacred wood in Samatite or Oussouye even though they refer to the spot as the *bois sacré*.

The villagers: Jacquari and Bintou

Jacquari Sane knows the story of the founding fathers of Santiaba well. Apart from being the *chef de village* of Santiaba, he is also the village *griot*, the person who is entrusted with the oral history of the community. At the end of the nineteenth century a small group of Mandinko, including Jacquari's grandfather, came to the Casa region from the south east, from the Kabe area. They came to look for slaves, to sell as bonded labour into the groundnut trade higher up the Casamance River to the east. However, while they were here, a confrontation with the French from Carabane made them decide to stay. Jacquari describes the decision as 'giving in'; "we thought we were stronger than the Diola, but then we realised that the French were stronger than us, and we decided to stay". They were given land by the elders of Samatite, and they married local women, who taught them how to cultivate rice and how to use the *kadyendo*. In return, the men taught the women the Mandinko ways, and they began with the women's bodies. Jacquari says: "the women did not wear any clothes and we taught them how to dress. We grew cotton and we took it to the Kingdom (the name given to a group of villages north west of Ziguinchor where the people, originally Bainouk, still weave) to be woven. We made them *boubous* (clothes) with the *pagnes*". Although there is no sign of cotton growing in the Casa these days, the people of the Kingdom still weave *pagnes*, though only for themselves. It is interesting to hear that the Mandinko, like the Christian missionaries, started the process of conversion by addressing the bodies of their converts, and covering them up. This was just what the first Christian missionaries did, handing out gifts of cloth to the local people (Baum 1990: 380) and encouraging the women to cover their bodies.

Bintou Ndiaye is a large, friendly woman; she comes from Koubalan, a village on the north shore of the river. She is the daughter of the schoolmaster there, and she came to live in Santiaba about twelve years ago. She is Jacquari's senior wife, even though

she is much younger than he is and is the third woman he has married, one of whom has died. I was in Santiaba in the middle of the rainy season when there was a great deal of work to be done: the vegetables, the millet, the ground nuts and the rice all had to be tended to, waiting for the harvest. Each morning, after saying her morning prayers, Bintou works in the fields or in the garden and for this she wears her oldest clothes: a T-shirt or a blouse and a piece of material wrapped round her waist. She returns home at the end of the morning, washes, dresses and prays again. Although she has plenty of work to do in the afternoon—preparing the evening meal, cleaning the house and washing clothes—she is always well dressed, in *grand boubou* or *doket*, with

a length of matching material—a *pagne*—wrapped round the waist, and a large *foulard* or scarf tied round her head.

In the afternoons, Jacquari usually wears a long *zabador* and loose trousers of some kind, which again are clean and in good order, and, most importantly, shoes; most of the men in Santiaba wear the pointed leather *babouches*. Unlike the traditionalist Diola, it is forbidden for Muslims to walk around without shoes, and there is a horror among the people of Santiaba—men and women—at the idea of bare feet; the dirt which their feet would pick up in this way would render their bodies impure. If there is a trace of dirt (*impurité*) on your body when you pray, your prayers will not be heard in heaven.

Jacquari lives with his two wives in a large house right next to the *place publique*. The two wives have their own rooms and their own kitchens outside. Bintou has school-aged children who live with her, and Jacquari's sons by his other wives, Mamadou and Boubacar, live next door, in houses they have just built for themselves. The inside of his house is quite different from the houses of Samatite. There are pictures on the walls, photos of the vast and impressive mosque in Touba and of a well-known marabout, immediately recognisable for a Muslim even though, with his bonnet, dark glasses, his scarf and his robes, there is hardly any of him showing. There is also a framed extract from the Koran, written in French and in Arabic. There is a table, as well as a few chairs, though Jacquari and his family prefer to eat sitting on a mat on the ground. When I visited the village and talked to Bintou, we always sat in comfortable deck chairs on the veranda.

2. Worldview in Santiaba

In the previous chapter, we saw that the people of Samatite tend to identify Emitai, nature and man and to see them as forming together one enduring, recurring system. Animist cosmology seeks the harmonious balance between these three aspects of the world. In Santiaba, the world is arranged in a fundamentally different way, and at the centre of their cosmology are the concepts of precedence, hierarchy and rank. The people of Santiaba are Muslims and the tendency to stratify relationships can be seen as a reflection of the relationship which they have, as Muslims, with Allah. Piety means accepting the

will of Allah and subordinating one's thoughts and ideas to his. Furthermore, the relationship that the people of Santiaba have with their physical surroundings is markedly different from that of Samatite. While Emitai is identified with nature, in Santiaba, Allah is seen as opposed to nature; nature is considered to be polluting. Despite these two striking differences in the cosmologies of Samatite and Santiaba, they share a vision of a world in which the visible and the invisible, the material and the spiritual, are linked together and interact with each other. Mark's observation that there is a "sense of oneness of the visible and invisible world" seems to apply as much to Santiaba as to Samatite. In religious practices, for example, emphasis is laid on the material aspect of the religion rather than on the abstract, on 'doing' rather than 'believing', in the knowledge that the material and the immaterial are inextricably linked together. Linares describes the way the residents of Fatiya, a Muslim Diola village in the Kalunay, the north east region of the Basse Casamance, experience their religion:

> Although they see Islam as a total way of life, the Fatiya residents usually described their faith in terms of the practices that it prescribes, permits or forbids. . . . the Jola are concerned with correct behaviour; with the 'doing' aspect of their new religion. The bundle of practices they perform is, for them, Islam (1992: 158–9).

Mark (1985: 116) also looks for evidence that conversion to Islam among the Diola has changed the way they conceptualize the relation between the spiritual and the physical. Looking, among other things, at anti-witchcraft rituals, he concludes:

> The visible and invisible worlds continue to form an interacting, interdependent whole in contemporary Diola thought, even among Muslims (1985: 12).

In Santiaba, as in Samatite, the causes of disease and misfortune, as well as the source of healing and curing, are regularly sought in the supernatural sphere. In fact marabouts have often made their name as holy men by their ability to heal people; as among the Animists, healing has a spiritual dimension.

2a. *The relationship with the supernatural world*

God without nature

The most striking contrast between the worldview of the two villages is in the relationship which the villagers have with their natural envi-

ronment. In the Mandinko Diola culture of Santiaba, God has forsaken nature, and the natural environment has been reclassified and separated from the supernatural sphere. Emitai has set down the laws of nature and includes social laws as part of his 'system'; social laws are adapted to the laws of nature. Allah, on the other hand, through his prophet Mohammed, has set out a code of social and political behaviour, which covers all aspects of social and political life, but which excludes nature. For the people of Samatite, nature is a living part of their religion, to be respected and embraced. For the people of Santiaba, however, nature is to be feared and distrusted: earth, the rich, sandy Casa soil which the people of Samatite cherish and see as part of their covenant with Emitai, is classified in Santiaba as dirt, and is seen as polluting. In contrast to the Animist Diola, the Muslim Diola are forbidden to walk around without shoes on, as mentioned above, since even a trace of *impurité* on the body will nullify the prayers that you make. Likewise, the spirits that live in nature are seen in the Muslim perspective in purely negative terms, as causing disease and death. Whereas *Awasena* healers use herbal medicines, roots and leaves, the Mandinko marabouts cure by writing on a wooden tablet, washing off the ink and giving it to the patient to drink.[3]

Pagnes noirs *and* les choses anciennes

> I had understood, in Samatite, that when an important visitor comes to the Casamance, for example a member of the Government, all the Diola people, irrespective of religion, are expected to turn out to greet the visitor wearing their 'traditional' outfits: white T-shirt, *perles* (brightly coloured beads), and *pagnes noirs*. However, when I asked Bintou whether she had such a thing as a *pagne noir*, she looked at me with surprise. *Pagnes noirs*, I soon learned, belonged to *les choses anciennes* and to the world of the forest and the Animist. When the Diola women of Santiaba turn out in their 'traditional' garb, they wear a simple cotton pagne that is tie-dyed in indigo so that it resembles the authentic article. Bintou has a horror of the *pagne traditionnel*, and finds the uneven threads of this home-spun fabric clumsy and primitive; it is too close to the natural

[3] Cf. Linares 1992: 175. In fact, the Diola *marabouts*, as opposed to the Mandinko marabouts do still tend to use natural medicines as well.

cotton plant that it came from. Unlike the Animists, there is a sharp separation for the Mandinko Diola between nature and culture and this separation is summed up by Bintou's aversion to the *pagne traditionnel*.

These contrasting attitudes to nature are also reflected in the different way of burying the dead in the two villages. Nene Sambou, our neighbour in Samatite, assured me that she could never become a Muslim, and the reason she gave was that Muslims do not have proper funerals. She was referring to the fact that a Muslim funeral has none of the ceremony connected with the Animist funeral, and there is very little ritual or celebration involved. The body of the deceased is wrapped in a long piece of white cotton fabric and buried, and there is no dancing or singing. Nene is offended at this lack of ritual because it deprives the society of one of the important moments at which, among the Animists, the link between the community and the natural environment is established and celebrated as the body of the deceased returns to the earth. But it also deprives the *pagne noir* of one of its most significant functions. The wrapping of the body in these *pagnes*, and their exchange among families at this crucial moment, as well as their burial along with the body, ("*la terre est remplie de pagnes*"), symbolizes the close relationship between man and his ancestors, and between nature, man and Emitai.

The marabout and the imam

Unlike Emitai, Allah is not present in the world or in nature—in the sky or in the rain—but his presence is constantly felt in Santiaba, in references to Islamic law, to the Koran, and to Allah himself. The power of Allah is a recurring theme in conversations in Santiaba. While Emitai is seen to control the natural world, with man's activities being seen as a part of that world, Allah focuses on the social world. In the four books of sacred texts,[4] he has given substantial and precise guidelines as to how a good Muslim should organize his domestic life, his religious life and his political life. This dependency on written texts engenders hierarchy, since the texts produce the possibility

[4] There are four holy books and, together, these make up the texts which guide Muslims in their daily life: i) the Koran, ii) the Sunna, the tradition drawn from the Prophet's actions, iii) the Ijama, the consensus of the learned and faithful, and iv) the Qiyas, or reasoning by analogy.

of authoritative voices, which can interpret and explain these holy texts. The villagers of Santiaba, for example, depend on the imam in Elinkine to clarify and expound on the texts. There is no one in Santiaba who has been to the Koranic school (*école arabe*) and there is no one who feels confident about interpreting and understanding the Koran for himself. The imam in Santiaba is Koriba Tamba, who studied the Koran for four years at the university in Dakar before becoming an imam. He has a hard life, and a not particularly popular job, but people accept his authority when it comes to interpreting the Koran. The relationship that Tamba has with the Moslim villagers in fact reflects a whole range of other relationships, both 'above' and 'below' this one: it mirrors not only the relationship between Allah and the *umma*, the world wide community of believers, but also that between husbands and their wives and between parents and their children.

In almost any situation, the villagers of Santiaba can relate to each other as superior or inferior, dominant or subordinate, and at the top of this pecking order is Allah, the all-powerful and all-seeing. The worldly model for the relationship between Allah and his people is that between the marabout and his disciples, or *talibes*, a group of men numbering anything from tens to hundreds to thousands, who attach themselves to the marabout and support him and who in return benefit from the marabout's protection—and from his reputation. The marabout is the central figure in Senegalese Islam; a man who has proved himself to be wise and charismatic, and to have extraordinary spiritual gifts, usually gifts of healing. The powerful position which the marabouts have established for themselves in Senegal has its roots in the nineteenth century. It is related to the successful economic role played by the marabouts in helping the French colonial authorities to build up the profitable groundnut trade in various parts of Senegal, including the Moyen Casamance. The marabouts were able to produce groundnuts at exceptionally low prices because they had at their disposal a large, disciplined and cheap labour force in the form of their own *talibes*.

Even though Senegal is officially a secular state, the marabouts still have great influence because of their strategic position in the political arena and their ability to lead large numbers of disciples. A powerful marabout has no official political status, but politicians tend to ally themselves to certain marabouts, appearing with them on the television or in public appearances, and such appearances

deliver the politicians the votes of that marabout's disciples. The personal reputation of a marabout depends on two factors: on the one hand on the number of followers he can mobilize, and on the other hand on his potential to associate himself with other, more influential marabouts who are better known than he is. In order to maintain their status, marabouts are constantly looking to increase their following and to increase the ties they have with other spiritual leaders who they consider to be higher up the social/religious ladder than they are. The marabouts thus serve to link groups of Muslim followers into one vast pyramid, joining even the most far-flung villages like Santiaba with the Islamic heartland in Dakar. As such, the marabouts both represent and help to effect two important features of Islamic society: rank and unity. Today, marabouts are icons of Senegalese Islamic life and they are known to the population by their photos, which hang in every house, shop and taxi. There are several hundred marabouts in Senegal, many of them well known by name but it is difficult to tell them apart since, to a European, in their photos they all look quite similar. There is a ponderous immobility about their figures: swathed in large and heavy gowns, their heads covered with a wide scarf, they gaze out impassively from the photo, their eyes usually hidden behind dark glasses.

The body and the invisible world: proprieté *and* purité

> If you happen to arrive in Santiaba on a Friday, you see at once that it is a special day. The whole population, men, women, girls, boys and young children are all dressed up and gleaming. If it is morning, some of the men will have gone to the mosque in Elinkine, taking their sons with them. The women stay behind, talking and relaxing. The girls may take the opportunity of doing their hair, an operation that can take many hours of patience. Artificial tresses are plaited into the natural hair and gradually worked into one of the elaborate hairstyles that are currently fashionable, which have names such as 'banana', '*petit queue*' and '*comme les anciennes*'. The married women have also gone to great trouble to look their best, and the old women look the most regal of all, sitting back in canvas chairs on the veranda, a large foulard wound majestically around the head. In Santiaba, looking after your appearance, keeping your body clean and doing your best to dress 'correctly', is considered an important part of the duty that a woman has, both towards her husband and towards her religion. Ensuring a correct appearance is seen as part of the moral order.

Dressing well renders the wearer 'a good Muslim'. To dress correctly is to behave correctly; "If your body behaves correctly then so does your mind", Bintou told me. And a correct appearance begins with cleanliness: '*Purité commence avec proprieté*' I was often told—'Purity begins with cleanliness'. *Proprieté*, cleanliness, and having *un bon odeur*, smelling pleasant, are the basis of being a good Muslim. Before praying you wash your body in the correct manner in compliance with the instructions set out in various places in the holy texts that make up the devotionals:

> First, one may note that the Jola . . . not only know how to pray correctly, but are also deeply concerned with the mechanics of how one does the ablutions (washing parts of the body in proper sequence, and for the prescribed number of times). Literally everyone, men, women and grown-up children, know when and how to prepare for the five daily prayers (Linares 1992: 159).

Bintou's children also know with precision how to carry out the washing rituals that precede the five-times-a-day prayers.

It may be difficult for a non-Muslim person to get to grips with the relevance and importance of cleanliness to being a good Muslim, but in Santiaba people told me over and over again how cleanliness of the body is the starting point of having a pure mind. Koriba Tamba, the imam from Elinkine, told me that the most important thing that I had to know about the way Muslim men and women look is—*la proprieté. "La proprieté fait part de la croyance. Le saleté est être avec Satan"*,[5] he assured me. The angels of forgiveness keep away from a person who does not smell fragrant. Poverty is not relevant to cleanliness, he said. It is always possible to wash, and to wash your clothes, however poor you may be. Your neighbour will always give you soap.

The emphasis on corporeal cleanliness in Santiaba is connected with the way the body is classified in the Muslim world. As a Westerner, one is used to the idea that the body belongs to the realm of nature, but this is not the case for Tamba. "Le corps a une espèce de sanctité",[6] Tamba told me; it is a cultural rather than a natural entity, and it has to be looked after as such. Emphasis is put on corporeal cleanliness, for example, and on wearing shoes because the body draws the boundary between the

[5] Tr.: "Cleanliness is part of a person's faith. Dirty people are in league with Satan."
[6] Tr.: "The body is in a way sacred."

natural and the cultural, and the extremities of the body are dangerously poised on the edge. The body is not without danger, however. The body, particularly the female body, has the power to attract, to provoke and to lead astray; women must keep this in mind in their behaviour and in their dress, and they should avoid becoming agents of temptation. So the Koran requires women to cover up certain parts of the body: the hair, the arms and the legs, which are all powerfully provocative. On the other hand, these parts of the body are valuable and important, and they should also be seen as positive. For example it is forbidden to shave the hair in the way that Diola women do,[7] because the hair is part of the woman's beauty—as the beard is part of the man's beauty. So the body is powerful and provoking, but not negative. It should be guarded for the husband, and kept out of the sight of strange men, said Tamba.

The rules of dress included in the holy texts are based on the idea that the body is a powerful and sacred entity, but powerfully provocative and therefore dangerous. So first of all, the body should be covered, as Tamba explained, and secondly, it is important to avoid all forms of clothing which are designed to show, accentuate or improve the outline of the body. In principle, therefore, all garments that show off the figure—trousers, skirts or fitted bodices—are out of the question. Young girls may be allowed to wear these kinds of garments, but once a woman marries she must banish this type of dress from her wardrobe.

2b. *The relationship with the natural environment*

Trees and cash crops in Santiaba

In the previous chapter we saw that the close relationship the Diola of Samatite have with their natural environment was especially characterized by their relationship to the trees that embellish the village. Trees, for the Animist Diola, belong to Emitai's world and the sacred nature of the *bois sacré* is reflected to some extent in all trees. In Santiaba, the situation is quite different. Trees play no role in the Muslim religion, and are not, as in Samatite, taken to be the locus

[7] The shaved head was an important feature of the appearance of a traditional Diola woman. Nowadays most women do not shave their head in the normal way; the exception to this is the ceremony that is held after a baby has been born.

of a spirit world that protects the community and intercedes on its behalf. In as far as trees are identified with the spirits, the effect is rather the opposite. As Linares explains in the context of Fatiya, the remnants of the spirit-shrine religion are integrated into present day religious attitudes in entirely negative terms, as the product of Satan and as the forces of evil. The spirits that inhabit the natural world are seen solely as a source of disease, and the only reason for visiting a shrine is to propitiate the spirit that has caused it. Linares describes the situation in the Kalunay:

> The old shrines are spoken about entirely in negative terms: as the product of Satan, that is as the forces of evil . . . Most of Fatiya's sinaati have been reduced to their lowest common denominator. They function purely in the context of giving and curing diseases (1992: 160–161).

Trees and their products are, for the people of Santiaba, a commodity like any other, to be sold for their wood,[8] cut down where necessary to make way for groundnut cultivation, or planted in order to add allure to the village street, as the coconut palms were. The people of Samatite have an affinity with trees that is entirely missing in Santiaba. A powerful way in which this contrasting attitude to trees expresses itself is in the locations that are chosen for important events in the two villages. The elders of Samatite meet to talk and discuss in the shade of the large *fromager* on the *place publique*, which is the shrine of the village totem, the snake. In Santiaba, the elders meet in the main square, which is the most open and treeless spot in the village. This same sandy square was the site of the important ceremony which was held to mark the death, one year previously, of a well-known marabout who had lived in the village. Hundreds of people came to the village to pay their respects, and in order to provide the much needed shade and shelter which the open location failed to offer, a number of large square 'tents' had been set up, made of tarpaulins attached to high poles. The sight of so many visitors, seated in the shade of the makeshift tents, all of them dressed in long, colourful and billowing robes, their heads wrapped in voluminous turbans, was remarkably affecting; the whole village had been temporarily relocated to the deserts of north Africa and all that was missing was the camels. The immense green trees of the Casamance, of which there are still

[8] See Sypkens Smit (1996) on deforestation on the north shore of the Casamance river.

many in Santiaba, had been banned from this special occasion and the shade they could have offered declared redundant.

This contrasting attitude towards the natural environment is reflected in, as well as engendered by, the contrasting economic activity in Santiaba. In Samatite, the main economic assets, primarily rice and secondarily cattle, have been given important symbolic significance. They have at the same time been encapsulated and protected from further economic exploitation, and this has ensured the sustainability of the system. The Diola have been producing rice for hundreds of years and they have developed techniques and ideals which have enabled them to balance the supply with the demand. Economic activity is never just 'neutral' or arbitrary and the ways in which a community exploits the natural environment are always related in a definite and specific manner to the set of ideological beliefs that legitimise and make sense of those activities in a wider context. In particular, these ideas and beliefs relate to man's relationship to nature. If one looks at the way the people of Santiaba use their natural resources, and compares it with the situation in Samatite, then it becomes clear that the people of Santiaba have a different view about man's place vis à vis the natural world from the one described in the previous chapter for Samatite.

In Santiaba, the most important crop is groundnuts, and these are grown as a cash crop. Growing a crop for the market means that the level of demand is no longer in the hands of the community and the balance between supply and demand cannot be ensured. The market, and the price the market offers, are factors that inevitably influence the local situation, so that the relationship between the farmer and his land becomes triangular, with the market as the third point of reference. Gradually, the relationship between the farmer and the market takes priority over the relationship between the farmer and his land. At the same time, groundnuts are grown on the higher land around the village, where the trees grow, rather than in the alluvial depressions below the village, where the rice grows; this means that groundnuts are competing with the trees for space. Groundnut farming practices in the Casamance have not developed into a sustainable system; the red earth of the Casamance produces copious harvests of groundnuts, but the nuts take a great deal out of the earth. Every three or four years it is necessary to move on, to cut down more trees and to clear new land. In the course of a hundred years, this has led to the transformation of the landscape in and around Santiaba.

The attitude engendered by the practices that belong within the cultivation of groundnuts for the cash economy is one in which the natural world is seen to be at the disposal of the cultural world, and no longer its collaborator. There is a hierarchical relationship between the people of Santiaba and their natural environment; they consider it inferior, and they fear it. One of the main ways in which this relationship is manifested, and reinforced, is in their attitude to the soil. In the previous section, it was mentioned that in Santiaba people always wear shoes because there is an abhorrence of getting your feet—or any part of the body—'dirty' and 'dirt' includes the sandy soil. Before praying, the villagers always wash their bodies and make sure they remove all traces of this dirt. One of the reasons that the villagers of Santiaba look down on the people of Samatite is because they go barefoot and do not share the Muslim repugnance of earth on the body. The hierarchical attitude towards the natural environment is also given form, and endorsed, in the way in which the village has imposed straight lines and right angles on the natural lie of the land in the construction of their village. Coming from Samatite, where the situation is so different, you have the impression that in Santiaba they have thrown a net over the landscape and 'captured' it.[9]

Work and technology in Santiaba

The previous chapter suggested that hard, physical labour and a restricted level of technology is part of the sacred covenant that has been struck with Emitai. Work is valued in its own right, it is a form of vocation, and technology is sanctioned and protected, for example by the ritual surrounding the function of the blacksmith. Within the Mandinko social patterns that have developed in Santiaba, both work and technology play a different type of role. Mandinko society is layered and ranked, and in such a community physical labour becomes the work of the slave, of someone who is lower down the social echelon. The holy man, the *marabout*, spends his valuable time in contemplation and does no work,[10] but has people to carry out work for him. In the more thoroughly Mandinko villages on the north shore, work is even seen as degrading, and respected elders spend their time

[9] Cf. Forster in *Passage to India*. "The roads, named after victorious generals and intersecting at right angles, were symbolic of the net Great Britain had thrown over India." (1991 [1924])

[10] Compare the situation of the rain priest, who is not 'allowed' to work.

involved with politics and religion, advising people and contemplating the scriptures. In some villages it is only the women who work and in those cases it is usually the young, in-married women who do most of the work.[11] Work is no longer a way of earning respect and has even become a sign of social inferiority. Pélissier describes the transformation from traditional to Mandinko Diola:

> The Jola, hard working and after profit, essentially anxious to accumulate rice and to augment their cattle, have borrowed from the Mandinko, not only their religious conceptions, but also their life-style and their hierarchy of values. These peasants, rustic and concrete, have become, in the image of their models, contemplative and attached to long words. . . . their love of work and sense of land have singularly diminished (1966: 799–800).

As for technology, Linares describes the situation in the Kalunay villages. Here, the men no longer use the *kadyendo* at all and, since the mid-1960s, have started to use the ox plough to cultivate their groundnuts (Linares 1992: 131). This has halved the amount of time needed to harvest the same amount of groundnuts, an efficient means of production, which offers the possibility of using twice the amount of land.

In Santiaba, the situation is less extreme and everyone who is able to helps in the fields. However, as a person becomes older, he or she is not expected to do as much as they used to do, either in the house or in the fields. Work is not considered degrading, but even so status in connected with sedentary, contemplative activity, with praying and with interpreting the Koran. There are no ploughs, as yet, in Santiaba and the men do still use the *kadyendo*. The point is, however, that conditions and ideologies no longer stand in the way of new, more 'efficient', technology. Work is no longer a vocation and the use of the *kadyendo* is no longer linked to religious beliefs.[12] The cash earned from groundnut cultivation could in principle be used to purchase

[11] Pauline Sambou, of Mlomp had become a Muslim when she married. She had found life in her new village, in the Boulouf, the north-west region of the Basse Casamance, very hard; not only had she had to give up palm wine and pork, she was also expected to look after her mother-in-law, who expected to be waited on hand and foot. After five years she divorced and returned to Mlomp, but she remained a devout Muslim. The demands which Islam make, especially on the women, sometimes only serve to confirm their faith.

[12] In Samatite, the *holopuc*, the metal tip of the *kadyendo*, is made and attached by the village blacksmith as part of his ritual activity. Though the people of Santiaba use the same blacksmith, they do not attach the same sentiments to the *holopuc*.

a plough and put it behind an ox. In Santiaba, cattle and the *kadyendo* are no longer part of the collective symbolism which, in Samatite, protects them and ensures their special and limited use.

The elevated body

The previous chapter described the crucial role played by the Animist's 'working' body in ensuring the sustained viability of the economic system in Samatite and suggested that it is this role that shapes the physical demeanour of the villagers there. In Santiaba, the attitude towards physical work is different. It is not to say that the people of Santiaba do not work hard; they too are successful farmers, and in fact, with two crops to harvest annually, rice and groundnuts, they may put in more hours a day than do the villagers of Samatite. The cultural significance that is given to work is different however. At midday, the men and women return from their fields, wash in the appropriate manner, put on clean clothes and make their prayers. It is this encultured body that they focus upon and the body is not considered to be part of the natural world. The separation is emphasized in such things as the prohibition on bare feet mentioned above and on the importance that is attached to washing, to shoes and to clothes in general. It may also be the reason that the villagers seem to like wearing very bright, 'unnatural' colours, bright purples, magenta reds and greens that you do not find in the plant world. You notice these differences particularly among the older women. Unlike the old women in Samatite, they do not work and they prefer to spend the day, dressed in *grand boubou* and *foulard*, sitting elegantly on chairs on the veranda. This is such a contrasting picture from Samatite, where you see even the oldest women, hardly dressed at all, sitting on the ground, and busily engaged in basket making or helping prepare the food.

The previous chapter also pointed out that the Samatite Diola respond in a literal sense to the description which Thomas gives of them as living 'close to nature'. They prefer to sit on low, hand-carved stools and they sleep on cow-hides on the ground. In Santiaba, by contrast, there are chairs and beds, and people only tend to sit on low stools or on the ground when they are working. When men are talking together, they are far more likely to stay standing; when the women met together to discuss village affairs, they sat in chairs, usually a sort of deck chair, a wooden frame

into which a length of strong canvas is slung for sitting on. Although people generally eat sitting on the ground, on a mat, standing or sitting on a chair appears to be the preferred attitude. There is no-one in Santiaba who sleeps on a cowhide; these belong to the category of *les choses anciennes* and are thought of with disdain.

The experience of time and place in Santiaba

One of the things you notice when you enter a house in Santiaba are the photos and posters that are hanging on the wall: there is nearly always the photo of a *marabout* and a mosque, and there is often a calendar. For the villagers of Santiaba, one of the cornerstones of their faith is their belief in the fundamental unity of the Muslim world and their conviction that they form part of the worldwide Muslim community, the *umma*. These posters and photos are part of a symbolic array that constantly remind the villagers of the existence of the *umma*, the community of Muslim believers who stand together in the *dar al-Islam* (land of Islam). Although the idea of the fundamental unity of the Muslim world is to some extent mythical, since the Muslims have been no kinder to each other than any other religious group, nevertheless, judging by the Muslim community in and around Elinkine, Allah and the Koran do exercise a strongly unifying and binding force. Senegalese Islam is divided into 'brotherhoods', religious groups who have their own history, their own traditions and their own religious views. In the Elinkine community (which includes Santiaba) there are members of three such brotherhoods, the Mourides, the Qadiriya and the Ibado. The Mourides and the Qadiriya are both long-established brotherhoods but the Ibado brotherhood is recently formed and has a fundamentalist stance. Their women wear the veil,[13] for example, and the men are not allowed to touch, or shake hands with, a woman other than their own wife. This is normal behaviour in many Muslim communities but it is not usual among Muslims in the Basse Casamance. Members of the Ibado brotherhood are outspoken in their views that they

[13] This gives the Ibado women a very distinctive demeanour. Suleiman Sane, the teacher at the Koranic school in Elinkine and a member of the Ibado movement, told me that a Muslim should always be praying, his eyes fixed on the ground. 'Humility' is the key to correct comportment: "Il faut marcher humblement sur la terre" ("You must walk through the world in a humble manner"). Wearing the veil in the appropriate Ibado manner elicits exactly this type of 'humble' attitude in their women.

alone represent the true faith, and yet all the brotherhoods come together in the mosque each Friday, to pray and discuss. Since they live by the same book, the Koran, they say they find it self-evident that they should come together to pray.

More importantly, the *umma* offers the people of Santiaba a connection with the world outside of the Casamance, a community with which they identify and which offers the concept of a unified world, to which they too belong. It presents them with a way of overcoming the purely local concept of space and time that seems to persist in Samatite. The calendars that hang on the walls in Santiaba remind the villagers that there is not only an agricultural year, in which the seasons and the crops follow each other and return each year, but there is also a Muslim year, punctuated by the Muslim festivals but spanning the centuries. The people of Santiaba are more aware of their place in the world and of the existence of an Islamic history than their neighbours in Samatite. In Samatite, the immersion of the villagers in 'cyclical' time was seen to be related to the importance of the funeral, and the celebration of renewal and regeneration which a funeral inevitably marks. Though it seems unlikely that there is anything approaching a clean break between how time is experienced in the two villages, it is nevertheless interesting to note the lack of ceremony that accompanies a death in Santiaba, certainly when compared to the rituals and celebrations that follow a death in Samatite. In Santiaba, the body of the dead person is wrapped in a long white piece of cloth and carried by the family to the cemetery where it is put, without formalities, into the grave. The ceremony that is held forty days after a person dies is an important occasion, but it lacks the feeling of celebration that marks the Animist funeral.

2c. *Social relations in Santiaba: precedence and submission*

Relations of political authority

Inequality and the concept of hierarchy structure all social relationships in Santiaba, whether this is inequality based on differences in age, gender or lineage. A Mandinko Diola can be identified by the long greeting ceremony that he employs (Linares 1992: 206). The function of this ceremony is to negotiate the relative social status of the interlocutors. There are various factors that play a role in this calculation, but it inevitably results in one party taking precedence over the other. Mandinko society is based on a caste system of nobles and commoners,

whereby privileges are conceded according to rank. Among the Mandinko Diola, the caste system is no longer fully applied, but nevertheless some remnants of the system have remained, among them a differential access to land. Thus the senior families of a village are those families that arrived in the village first. Jacquari Sane, whose family was the first to be given land in Santiaba, by the local landowners, self-evidently becomes *chef de village*. Linares describes the situation of the founding families in Fatiya:

> A Mandinko village is divided horizontally into two clear and distinct groups: the founders and the strangers. Members of the class of founders share the same patronym. They are in charge of initiating all political processes. They are basically regarded as the patrons, whereas the strangers are regarded as clients: . . . the legitimating fiction for this situation is provided by Islam. Founding lineages act as senior stewards over land that belongs 'ultimately' to Allah (1992: 153).

So the *chef de village* is always taken from Jacquari's lineage because the members of his family are seen as 'senior stewards' of the land. The village has grown partly on the basis of outsiders being adopted and given land, in exchange for their allegiance to and inferior status towards Jacquari's family. This is why the status that Jacquari and his sons enjoy has a permanence that is incomparable to that of any family in Samatite. Jacquari's status is inviolable in a way that even the position of the rain priest is not; in Samatite, even the rain priest depends for his status on the approval of his congregation.

On a practical level, the political organization of Santiaba differs from that in Samatite. Although the group made up of the senior members of each of the family concessions has a recognizable political role in the village, their authority is subject to that of Jacquari. As Linares explains in the case of Fatiya:

> Power to make binding decisions is always monopolized by members of the chiefly line. Immigrants have an active voice in the general village congress, where most local land-tenure decisions are made. But even though they can voice their opinions, they cannot introduce new policies nor implement decisions (Linares 1992: 164).

As far as I am aware, this also reflects the situation in Santiaba. In Samatite, the individual authority of the elders rests on their control of one of the spirit shrines, a situation that does not exist in Santiaba. On a theoretical level, the political situation in the two villages could be said to be quite similar, in that political discussion is based on, or

geared towards, a religious interpretation. Village disputes, for example, are decided on the basis of the Koranic texts. Jacquari's authority is limited by his relative lack of religious education. He has never attended the Koranic school, and he does not feel confident in interpreting the Koranic texts. This means that important village matters are often taken to the imam in Elinkine. Hierarchy and precedence do not only apply within the village but also to the village as a whole and to some extent, Santiaba has to be seen as a political satellite of Elinkine.

The pervasive nature of hierarchy in Mandinko Diola villages, such as Santiaba, has wider political implications. Authors who have written about the Casamance (e.g. Leary 1970, Pélissier 1966) usually mention the way in which Islam is the principle organizing force in Mandinko society. As Mandinko influence spread west, into Diola society, it gradually remodelled their originally egalitarian relationships into relations of hierarchy. This process can also be seen as having various long-term political effects on the communities involved, in villages like Santiaba. In taking on the Islamic traditions of the Mandinko, it became possible for the village to extend its ties and allow it to become part of a larger community:

> . . . the process of Mandinkoization can be analyzed from the point of view of a flexible political strategy that facilitates many things: the incorporation of migrants into local social networks, the economic linkage of local communities with larger towns, the institutionalization of privileges, the extension of kinship loyalties . . . (Linares 1992: 148).

And so it is in Santiaba. The culture of hierarchy that was adopted along with the Mandinko ways has enabled the village to spread out socially and economically, by taking up newcomers. At the same time, Santiaba, by means of the life-style and religious beliefs that it shares with the rest of the *umma*, has become part of a wider political and religious community, in a way that Samatite has not begun to be.

Status and the grand boubou

You need no inside information to know that Jacquari is the most senior person in Santiaba; the composure and decorum that his figure exudes tells you so at once. His clothes are those of any respected Mandinko elder: a long, light-coloured *zabador*, with loose, cotton trousers underneath, a shawl wound round the neck, a small white bonnet on the back of his head, leather *babouches* on

his feet and a wooden walking stick. In some ways the wooden walking stick should be seen as his badge of office; it gives him the appropriate walk of a village elder, unhurried and dignified.[14] Like Bintou, Jacquari wears his old clothes for working in the fields in the mornings, but he comes home at midday, to wash, change his clothes and then say his prayers. Like other Mandinko Diola he does not work in the afternoon.[15] On Fridays, when he goes to the mosque in Elinkine, he puts on a *grand boubou* over the top of his zabador.

The *grand boubou* is the most popular garment among Senegalese men and women, because it lends itself in so many subtle, and not so subtle, ways to the expression and acquisition of status. Though the basic pattern is very simple—a long piece of material with a piece cut out for the head—the *grand boubou* is nevertheless the perfect vehicle for positioning oneself in the social hierarchy. Among the Mandinko, high status is connected with passivity, low status with physical activity; in the greeting ceremony mentioned above, for example, the higher status person stays put while the lower status person approaches. A higher status person never moves quickly or gesticulates. Status is also characterized by the amount of social space that an individual takes up, and by the amount of social baggage that is attached to the person; that is to say, it depends on the amount of property that person owns or has at his disposal, in the way of land, goods, wives or influence. The prototype high-status person, not just in Santiaba but among all Senegalese Muslims, is the marabout, whose role in Senegalese history, described above, gave him access to all of these things. Today, the marabout is still an important person, both politically and socially, in Senegal. In a world in which the immaterial aspects of a person are seen to be immanent in his material body, the marabout's possessions are seen to attach to

[14] Walking sticks or batons have a marked influence on a person's way of walking—producing, for example, the military swagger of the army officer. In the Diola context, there is the example of the *kankaran*, the grotesque and other-worldly figure that plays a role in the Mandinko initiation celebrations. His bizarre appearance is greatly underlined by the two batons that he carries, one in each of his hands. This gives him an absurdly 'inhuman' manner of walking, which is unique and instantly recognizable.

[15] Cf. Linares: "A 'Mandingized' Jola . . . stops work at mid-day" and "is always well-dressed, for he has had time to go home, wash and put on his *boubou*" (1992: 206/7).

him and weigh him down. His copious robes, which take up a great deal of physical space and weigh him down physically, are not so much symbolic of his weighty attachments of power, but rather they stand surrogate for them. His slow deliberate movements are seen as being caused by his responsibilities and his possessions and not only by his robes.

Complementing this outfit, as its almost obligatory accessories, are the *babouches*, usually made of white or yellow leather. The pointed toecap and the open back make them quite unlike any other form of footwear. This type of footwear has a strong influence on the body's movements. The *babouches* incline the body's weight slightly backwards, but at the same time they seem to project the body's movements into the space around it, expanding the body so to speak. For a beginner, they are quite difficult to keep on the foot at all, having no heel to them; and this forces the foot to make a slightly circular movement, which gives the sensation of expansion. *Babouches* are in fact excellent for instructing the wearer of the *grand boubou* how he should move in the appropriately circumspect manner.

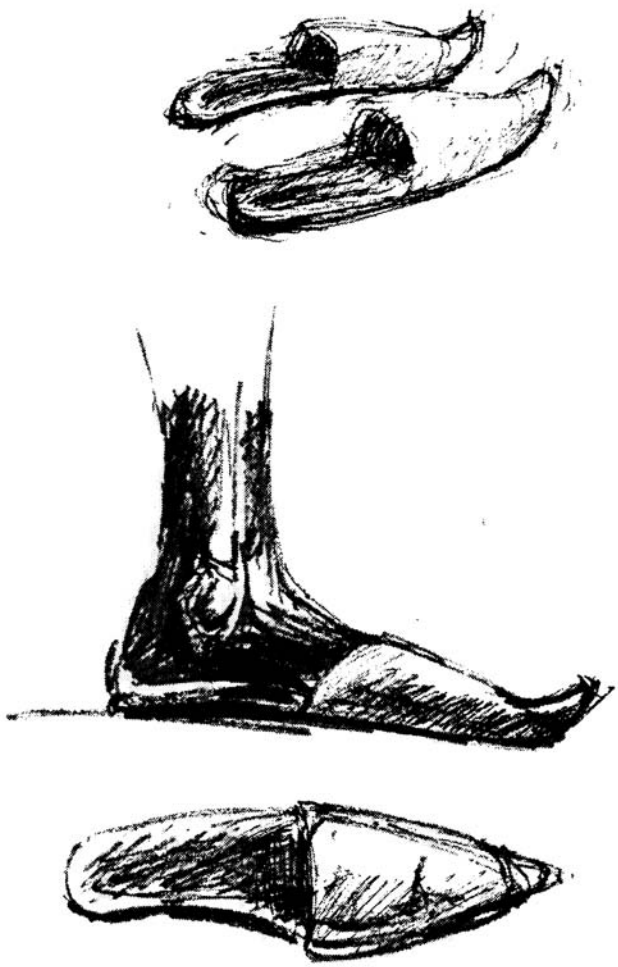
So for Jacquari, walking and moving in an appropriately ponderous manner not only expresses his importance but also endorses it, since everyone sees in the way that he walks that he is an important person; and his clothes can assist him in this. First of all, there is the length and the width of the garment; the longer and wider the *grand boubou*, the higher the status of the wearer. This is not only because of the economic aspect—quite simply, the more fabric, the more expensive—but also because it is only men and women with the bearing that goes with a high social status who succeed in wearing large amounts of fabric. To wear a *grand boubou* that trails on the ground is the ultimate test of demeanour; it is only the most practised and self-assured who will carry this off.

Secondly, the type of fabric that is used can be adapted to grade and classify the wearer—and also the occasion. The *grand boubou* can be made in any fabric, but the thicker and more lavish the fabric the more allure the garment has, not only because of its appearance, but also because of its weight and the effect this has on the gait of the wearer. The *grands boubou*s worn in the Casamance are usually made in cotton but this may be anything from a thin gauzy material called *khartoum* (usually worn only by women), to a light cotton print, to a *bazin*, the thick cotton damask.

The 'weightier' the garment, the 'weightier' the status of the wearer. Weight can be added to the outfit by wearing more garments underneath the *grand boubou*: the most appropriate outfit for important men, for example politicians and marabouts, is the *quintaquemper*, an ensemble that is made up of no less than five garments, worn one on top of the other: loose trousers, undershirt, shirt, zabador and *grand boubou*. The visual effect of the *quintaquimper* is striking, the wearer seemingly weighted to the ground by his ponderous outfit, but the wearer does not feel incapacitated by the outfit. Just the opposite, in fact, as it enables him to behave in an appropriate manner.[16]

[16] Cf. van der Laan page 128.

In Santiaba, contrary to the situation in Samatite, the older you are, the more clothes you are obliged to put on. As Jacquari's son, Mamadou, told me: "While you are young, you wear what you like. Once you marry, you must wear Muslim clothes, at least on Friday to go to the mosque. Then as you get older you must give up Western clothes. At 60 a man may not wear 'tight' (Western style) trousers, only the loose cotton trousers (*pantalon corde*) or the *cha'ia*, very wide trousers, gathered at the waist. And he must always wear a shawl and a bonnet, and carry his prayer beads of course." Age is an important factor in understanding the Muslim dress regulations. As Mamadou pointed out, it is totally acceptable



> for young Muslim men to wear Western style trousers and shirt; this is in fact normal wear for young men in the town, Muslim, Christian and Animist alike. As a man gets older, however, he may no longer dress in these kinds of clothes and by the time he is an old man it has become unacceptable for him to be wearing either tailored trousers or shirts. It would be inappropriate to his rank. To some extent it is the grandmothers and grandfathers who are the most elegant members of the village, and this supports the status that is accredited to age.

Gender relations in Santiaba

If you are used to the villagers of Samatite and to the egalitarian, if somewhat antagonistic, relations that exist between Samatite men and women, then it is quite surprising to see women waiting on their husbands in the way they do in Santiaba. When a woman serves her husband his meal, for example, or hands a glass of water to him, or to a male visitor, she accompanies this with a small curtsey, as a sign of respect, a gesture that is unknown among Animist Diola. The unequal social relationships that exist in Santiaba, between various groups of people, constitute an important difference between this village and neighbouring Samatite. This marked social hierarchy, which pervades all the relationships in Santiaba, is part of the Mandinko identity, which the Diola women accepted when they first married the founding fathers of Santiaba. This inequality is rooted in the Muslim religion which the women adopted at the same time. In Islamic society there is a strict separation of the sexes and men monopolize authority in all spheres of life: political, religious and domestic.

The authority that men hold over their women is based on the Koranic concept of women as the weaker sex, by nature unable to take a full part in public life. According to the Koran, for example, a woman's evidence in a court of law is worth half that of a man. The man's authority extends a long way, and the Mandinko believe that a woman can only enter paradise with the approval and agreement of her husband. This pre-eminence in the eternal sphere is reflected, in the temporal sphere, in various ways, most notably in the almost complete absence of political or ritual roles for women in Santiaba. In the previous chapter it was shown that the egalitarian relations between men and women in Samatite ultimately rest on the ritual authority that is held by women in the traditionalist religion. In Samatite, the women can both 'pay' and 'pray'. Linares describes how,

in Fatiya, the women can do neither. In the Muslim religion, women have no ritual role to play. The prayer leaders, the imams and the marabouts are all roles that are exclusively filled by men, and in fact women are not even allowed to enter the mosque. Women who have passed the menopause may attend the mosque if they stay right at the back. The reason that is given for this prohibition, an explanation that crops up in many contexts, is that the presence of women would disrupt the prayers of the men:

> In the eyes of men, women are not only sexually inciting, but also potentially polluting . . . if a women is menstruating and goes near a mosque where the marabout is doing the virdei (praying his prayer beads) she risks ruining his prayer (Linares 1992: 174).

In Fatiya, the women cannot 'pay' their way either. In those villages, like Fatiya, where the Mandinko customs have made serious inroads into the original Diola culture, the women do all the work in the rice fields while the men, using oxen and a plough, work the groundnut fields. This means that the women do not have time to grow vegetables, so the whole of the family's cash income is for the men. Moreover, in those situations, the women are entirely under the authority of their husbands; Linares claims that a Mandinko (or Mandinko Jola) wife needs her husband's permission even to attend the funeral of her own father (Linares 1992: 207).

In Santiaba, the situation is not so extreme, but it is similar. Although the men do help with the work in the rice fields, the women also help their husbands cultivate groundnuts. Consequently, they have no time to grow vegetables for cash, while the income from the groundnuts is all kept by the husband. Thus the women are indeed dependent on their husbands for cash. The Koran makes it clear that dependency has responsibilities; the man is to look after his wife and allow her to live in as much luxury as he can afford. Judging by the women's clothes, their husbands are generous. The women clearly have large wardrobes and each afternoon they are able to put on clean and new-looking outfits and *foulards*. Furthermore, their houses are better equipped than those of Samatite. Wives bring their own kitchen equipment with them at the time of their marriage, but the husband provides the things in the house: chairs and tables, beds, radios and the holy pictures and scripts that hang on the walls. Nevertheless, it remains the case that the women of Santiaba are both politically and financially dependent on their husbands.

Gender relations expressed in dress; dressing 'correctement'

Like Belle, Bintou spent some time in Dakar before she married and worked there as a cook with a Wolof family. While she was in Dakar she wore all the various styles of clothes that were fashionable at the time. She was well paid and she enjoyed going to her tailor and having the latest fashion made up for her: *marinières*, the elaborate tops with enormous puffed up sleeves and decorated with rows and rows of broderie, *taille basses*,[17] as well as *dokets* and the kinds of Western clothes, such as jeans and T-shirts that were already popular at that time. When she married and came to live in Santiaba, the styles of clothes she chose to wear gradually changed. For one thing, she started wearing the *grand boubou*. The *grand boubou* is a difficult garment to wear, or at least to carry off properly and look elegant in. It has no shape of its own and has to have life and line blown into it; it demands a certain degree of self-awareness from the wearer. Once a person has taken up the challenge of wearing a *grand boubou*, however, she, or he, will reap the benefits, for it teaches the wearer to 'make an appearance' and helps the body to achieve just the amount of passive self-assurance that is required to impose itself on the younger, or in some other way inferior, members of the village.

Once Bintou had become a mother it was no longer suitable for her to wear outfits that showed the outline of her figure, and before too long she was wearing only *dokets* and *grand boubou*s. Bintou told me that Muslims who live in the city are often more relaxed about how closely the women have to follow the Koranic rules on dress than they are in the villages. "How strict you have to be depends on the level of education of your husband. If he is an *intellectuel*, then he will not insist that you cover your head in the house". In the village, however, there is a high level of social control and people soon start gossiping if anyone is unsuitably dressed. Newly married women are sometimes reluctant to abandon their figure-hugging outfits and to cover their sophisticated hair styles, but this inevitably gives rise to gossip, and justifies a reprimand from Malik, the young man who calls people to pray in Santiaba and who functions as the imam's representative in Santiaba. Women always cover their heads when they go out of

[17] A form of garment that became fashionable in the 1950s: a tightly fitted bodice with a large flounce around the waist.

the house. When they are working, in the mornings, they usually tie a simple piece of material around their heads; when they dress, in the afternoon, they wear a *foulard*, a long piece of material which is tied in a stylish fashion around the head.

There are two moments in the year when Bintou tries to have new clothes made for herself. These are the big Muslim festivals of Tabaski, the festival which commemorates Abraham's sacrifice, and Korité, which marks the end of the Ramadan. She often uses a visit to her family in Koubalan as an opportunity to buy fabric in Ziguinchor, where the prices are lower than they are in Elinkine, and go to a tailor there. There are several tailors in Elinkine but, although she sometimes has things made there, she feels they do not keep up to date with the fashion. She never goes to Fatou, the seamstress in Kanute who makes most of the clothes for the people of Samatite. Bintou's husband, Jacquari, usually gives her money for her clothes. He has several plots of groundnuts and he already has three strong sons to do the work for him, so he can afford to do so.

As Bintou gets older she becomes increasingly averse to buying the cheap local printed cotton, *lesgosse*. If she can afford to, she buys a better quality wax print, possibly one made in Europe, or, sometimes, *bazin*, a thick cotton damask that is an ideal material for the *grand boubou*, thick and supple, so it falls beautifully and follows the movements of the body. Her aversion to *lesgosse* is also a matter of status. As described above, the weightier the material, the weightier the status of the wearer, not only because of the symbolic value of heavier material but also because of its effect on the manner of moving and walking. Quick, agile movements, the kind of movements that are associated with lower status, are impossible to make if you are wearing a *grand boubou* made up of a heavy *bazin*. Bintou, like Jacquari, can place herself quite precisely in any social hierarchy by the style of her *grand boubou*. The length and width of the garment, as well as the type of material used, all these can be used to grade the wearer in a precise manner. A tailor in Ziguinchor told me that the embroidery around the neckline of a *grand boubou* also used to function as a gauge of status. However, since the arrival of machine embroidery, an elaborate neckline no longer has the status that it used to.

Women's status related to men's status is reflected and realized in the kinds of materials and outfits that are considered appropriate

for each gender. Men, for example, never wear the kind of lightweight cotton (*khartoum*) *grand boubou* that is considered suitable for women. Furthermore, it is only the young men who wear printed or patterned materials. The contrasting shapes and colours of a printed fabric represents movement and activity and, consequently, signifies a lower status. The *talibes* of the Mourides brotherhood, for example, wear printed patchwork outfits. They wear a tunic over loose cotton trousers, both made up of material that is printed in such a way that it looks like patchwork. These outfits represent their material poverty and, more importantly, their dependence on the marabout. For this same reason, older men do not generally wear printed fabrics. By the same token, women never wear the voluminous five piece outfits, the *quinquemper*, that men do. Women do not wear the *babouches*, but wear an equally effective form of footwear: heeled and often elaborate sandals which give the body height and produce an appropriately elevated walk.

Last year, Bintou had two outfits made for her. For the Korité festival at the end of Ramadan she had a *doket* made up for her by a tailor in Elinkine, not the knee-length version that is worn in Samatite, but a *doket* that reaches almost to the ground. It has a wide flounce around the hem and the yoke is entirely covered with *broderie*. Although the *doket* is not as difficult to wear as the *grand boubou*, this long form of the garment, and especially the flounce around the bottom, engenders a demeanour that is quite different, and more 'elevated' than the short variety worn in Samatite. The other new outfit Bintou had made last year was for a large reunion of the Sane family, on the north shore of the Casamance river. She went together with a group of Sane female in-laws and together they had *assobi* outfits made for them: *grand boubous* made from expensive light blue *bazin*. She also bought a new pair of elaborate sandals for the occasion. Around the village she only wears the flat rubber slipslops; with all the sand, she explained, it is impossible to wear anything else. However, when she dresses up she prefers to wear heeled shoes, which give her more height and give her more elegance.

A phrase one often hears in connection with dress and dressing is: "*Il faut s'habiller correctement*".[18] '*Correctement*' presupposes a

[18] Tr.: "A person should dress appropriately."

body of knowledge that governs what a person should wear at what occasion; it thus comprises the rules about dress that are set out in the Koran, it comprises knowledge about the practical application of those rules at any given time and place, and it also comprises knowledge about the wearer's position in the social hierarchy. These days it also presupposes knowledge about current fashions and what garments and styles are considered up-to-date. As far as the men of Santiaba are concerned, dressing appropriately is seen to present few problems. A man's status is more or less fixed and there are few fashions in their clothes.

For women, however, it is more complex; not only do fashions of dress change and evolve quite quickly, even in the Casamance, but, more importantly, there are fluctuations within the Muslim hierarchy as to how strictly the rules of dress that appear in the Koran should be applied. Suleiman Sane, the Koranic school teacher who is a member of the fundamentalist Ibado movement, and its leader in Elinkine, told me that one of the main reasons for the establishment of the movement in Senegal was that Senegalese women were too lax in applying the rules of the Koran to their appearance. The way he put it, in fact, was that the Senegalese men were too lax in disciplining their women about their way of dressing. The Ibado women have to be covered from head to foot, including the whole of their arms, even when they are inside the house. It is therefore interesting to see that the women are doubly dependent on men in their ambitions to dress *correctement.* They depend on the imam to interpret the rules of the Koran in a way that is currently acceptable, and they depend on their husbands for the rank which they have in the village hierarchy.

Other social relationships

Inequality between the sexes is not the only form of social inequality in Santiaba. There is also the disparity of rank that exists between wives. This being a Muslim village, many of the men have two wives and among wives there is inevitably a form of ranking. One of the wives, usually but not necessarily the elder wife, is the senior wife and enjoys various privileges over the junior wife. The senior wife may, for example, tell the junior wife when she has to cook for their husband. The seniority that accompanies age is also more underlined than it is in Samatite; sons and daughters-in-law are always obliged to help their parents in the field and cook for them, an obligation

which is not reciprocated, as it is in Samatite. In all respects, the in-marrying woman is considered to be subordinate to her husband's family and the women who marry into a village do not have the same status as their husbands' sisters, as they do in Samatite. Not only are they expected to look after their husband, they also have to look after their husband's mother, cook for her and help her in many other ways. Such a system tends to be self-perpetuating, since many mother-in-laws make up for the difficult time they had as newly-weds by demanding a great deal of their sons' wives. Elderly women generally stop cooking for themselves or indeed doing any work at all, getting their younger co-wives or their daughters-in-law to do the work for them.

Dress, rank and unity

Dressing *correctement* is important to Bintou because of the way in which it joins her to the wider Muslim global community, the *umma*. Whereas the Animists of Samatite look inwards, to their spirit shrines, Bintou and her fellow Muslim villagers look outwards, to the Muslim world. As mentioned above, the material culture of Santiaba—the calendar and the photos on the wall of the house and above all their clothes—functions as an important reminder to the villagers that they belong in a wider, larger world. Bintou knows that she will never go to Mecca, but she also knows that as long as she dresses in the proper fashion, as prescribed by the Koran, she will be part of the Islamic community because she dresses, and behaves, as a Muslim should. When you talk to Bintou you realize how much dressing the way she does is a part of her religion; in dressing she is carrying out her religion. It also makes you realize how strongly social ranking, when it is given a conventional material form, as it is in dress, has the power to bind a community together. Bintou feels she could go anywhere in the Islamic world and feel at home. Even though she would not be at the top of the social scale, as she is in Santiaba, she feels that recognizing her place in the social position, high or low, gives her a place in the Islamic social pyramid.

2d. *The relationship between the individual and the self*

As in Samatite, the group plays an important part in the establishment of individual identity. In many contexts, a person sees his or her role, and ensuing obligations and privileges, as part of an association of people. On important occasions for example, Bintou, like Belle, identifies herself, in her *assobi* outfits, with a group, and has her clothes made up for her along with a collection of women with whom for one reason or another she can identify: a work association, a kinship group, or a group of in-laws. In the context of Samatite, I suggested that the emphasis which is put on group membership functions as a way of tempering the keenly competitive spirit of the Samatite villagers when it comes to material wealth. This situation is different in Santiaba; among the Mandinko Diola, the highest good is the possession of wisdom and knowledge rather than the possession of material goods. As Pélissier says, they have become 'contemplative and attached to long words'. In Samatite, group membership is a way of consolidating existing, near-to-home ties which are constantly under threat because of the rivalry and suspicion that is ever-present in Samatite life. In Santiaba however, group membership is used to re-establish useful, long-distance ties, particularly family ties. Bintou's family all live on the north bank of the river. Claiming and making use of family ties, whether as sister or as in-law, are ways of establishing herself in a wider social network.

Individuals in both Samatite and Santiaba identify to an important extent with the material aspect of the self, that is, with their own bodies. Bintou identifies herself with her body; as she explains it, she does not wash her body because she is a good Muslim, but she is a good Muslim because she washes her body. This is also the reason why dress and clothes are so important to her; her status in the village is allied to her appearance. However, there is a difference in the way in which this identification with the body is placed in a wider context. Whereas in Samatite individual identity is linked, through the body and the concept of the *siwum*, with the natural environment, the individual in Santiaba, where there is no tradition of the *siwum*, is linked, through the body, with the spiritual or supernatural sphere. This link to the sacred is stressed in Santiaba; as Tamba had said, "*Le corps a une espèce de sanctité*".

Identity and the body

In Santiaba, appearance is not a mere façade but a substantial fact; it does not so much *represent* status but rather *realizes* status. Fatou Dieme, a woman from Elinkine, established her status in 'making an appearance' at a baptism. Over the last few years, she had built up a good business for herself by selling dried fish on the Diola market near to the port in Dakar. She travelled with the overnight boat from Carabane to Dakar one or two times a week, sold her wares and returned.[19] At a certain moment, there was a baptism celebration in Elinkine, and Fatou made her appearance wearing a *grand boubou* that had all the characteristics that are associated with status: it was made of a sumptuously heavy light blue *basin*, it trailed along the ground and it was beautifully decorated. She wore the same material wound fashionably and flamboyantly around her head. This was her arrival as an important person in the Elinkine community; it was simultaneously a sign of her new status as well as a substantiation of it.

3. Summary

The values and principles that order the social and economic lives of the Santiaba villagers are different from those that order life in Samatite. Many of these differences stem from the contrasting attitudes to the natural environment in the two villages. While the people of Samatite see the hand of their creator, Emitai, in the trees, the soil and the rain, trees in Santiaba are seen as a commodity, while the soil is seen as dirt, which pollutes. The contrasting attitude towards the physical environment leads to a different attitude towards the villagers' interaction with it: to physical work, to technology and to the body. The tendency to look down on nature is part of a more general inclination in Santiaba to place things and people in an order of precedence. In the Muslim religion, submission to Allah and obedience to the marabout play an important role.

In Samatite the body plays a pivotal role in ensuring the balance and continuity that characterizes the *Awasena* world. It forms a unique link between the human and the natural world and as such it plays

[19] She used to travel with the ill-fated Joola boat, which capsized in the autumn of 2001. Fortunately she was not on it when it went down.

a key role in establishing and maintaining the world as Emitai intended it. For the villagers of Santiaba the body is also important to the practice of their religion, but in a quite different way. Not as their link to the natural world—which they disdain—but as the starting point for creating the land of Islam (*dar al-Islam*). The pure, clean, sweet smelling body is where pious Muslims start their journey of faith.

These differences in worldview within the two villages are manifest in the differences in the bodies of the villagers and in their bodily demeanour. In Santiaba, hierarchy and stratification are intrinsic to all social relations. In any context, the villagers of Santiaba can relate to each other as superior or inferior, dominant or subordinate. This can be expressed through a person's body and in the disposition that accords with his or her status. In turn, the body is instructed or prompted by the form of dress that a person is wearing. High status is identified with the marabout and with his contemplative life, devoted to Islam and to studying the Koran. This leads to a link being made between high status and passive, slow and deliberate movement and it is contrasted with physical activity, which is linked to low status. Other than in Samatite—where I concluded that it is the *kadyendo* rather than dress that helps the body to achieve an appropriate demeanour—in Santiaba dress plays an important part in achieving this end.

The *grand boubou* is an appropriate garment for expressing status. The more material that is used and the heavier the material, the more ponderous and deliberate the movements of the wearer become. A man may wear up to five garments, which forces him to make majestically slow progress. Furthermore, the loose slippers that are worn with the *grand boubou*, the *babouches*, slow down movement as well, inclining the body backwards and expanding it into the space around it. In Santiaba you can say that there is a firm relationship between the Muslim worldview, dress and the body. In Santiaba, hierarchy functions as an important organizing principle of social relations; the body, prompted and assisted by the forms of dress that the villagers wear, articulates the relations of precedence and submission which enable a person to take his or her place in the hierarchy. In Santiaba, we see that dress produces a 'performing' body, which, through its demeanour, takes part in the social process.

Dress also has a representational function. In fact, despite the importance of the formative function described here, it is the representational function that is usually noted. That is to say, the

features of the *grand boubou* that produce a high status body—the abundant use of a heavy material—are taken to symbolize high status themselves. In the same way, *babouches* are seen to be the true mark of a Muslim; they are like a badge, announcing the faith of the wearer. Here again, this representational function can be seen to be based on the strong instrumental influence that *babouches* exert. The same could be said about the walking stick that a Muslim elder has with him; it is taken to symbolize his dignified status, but its symbolic qualities are based on its capacity to assist his demeanour.

CHAPTER SIX

M'LOMP: CHRISTIANITY, EDUCATION AND THE ENCLOSED BODY

1. Introduction

As soon as you arrive in M'lomp, you see that it is a different kind of village from the other two places looked at here. For a start it is much bigger. Being about ten times the size of Samatite, M'lomp is one of the largest villages in the area with almost four thousand inhabitants. It lies on the tarmac road that goes from Elinkine to Oussouye, about eight kilometres to the east of Samatite. The centre of the village is the roundabout, a concrete construction which makes an oddly modern sight on a road that only carries about one car every ten minutes even at the busiest time of the day. The roundabout is not the only sign of the region's colonial past and of its contact with Europe. Near to the roundabout there is a large church with high double doors, and further up there is a collection of white square buildings behind tall plastered walls. Here, French nuns run a small maternity hospital, where most of the region's babies are born. Next to the hospital the sisters organize the *dispensaire*, a clinic where one of the sisters attends to the sick each morning. A little further away from the centre of the village there is another mission house, where five Spanish priests live and work. The priests run a secondary school for boys and they have also set up an agricultural college.

Between the church and the roundabout are a number of *boutiques*, small but well-stocked huts that sell a mixed collection of drinks, *comestibles* and hardware. They also sell postcards, most of them depicting the two-storey house that tourists come to see—famous because it not only has two storeys, but is also constructed in the traditional way, from baked earth. There is a museum as well. Inside its circular fence, the 'traditional' and 'authentic' Diola way of life is displayed in the form of a collection of old and rather shabby examples of the implements and objects which the inhabitants of this area still use. There is a *kadyendo*, a spear, a collection of implements used for tapping palm wine, a cowhide, a low, waisted stool, pottery

cooking pots and a *bonbolon*, the hollowed out tree trunk that serves as the village drum. The museum is a reminder of the tourism boom, which had promised to offer a viable form of economic development to the Basse Casamance in the 1980s. Up until the early 1990s small, air-conditioned tourist buses were part of the regular traffic from Oussouye to Elinkine, and they would usually stop off in M'lomp. The visitors paid CFA 1,000 (Euro 1.50) each and would then be shown around by a young man from the village, a member of the *Association des Jeunes* which set up the museum and still runs it. The buses also used to take their tourists to the shop run by the French sisters where the handiwork of some of their projects was on sale: baby clothes, and embroidered table napkins, but nothing very African.

Unlike the other two communities looked at here, M'lomp has a mixed population. There are a few Muslim families, mainly Peul, who run the small shops; though they have been in M'lomp for some time, they have not tended to marry into the community. Then there is the flourishing and conservative Animist community, which still maintains some of the most important spirit shrines of the region, as Baum (1999) describes. There is a rain priest, or *roi*, in M'lomp, a respected figure for all the Animists of the Casa region. At the same time there is a large Christian community. Its roots go back to the time of the first missionaries, who came to Carabane at the end of the last century. Pascal Diatta, one of the older members of the present-day Christian community, remembers the missionaries, in particular Père Joffroy, who used to hand out tobacco to encourage the people of M'lomp to turn to Christianity.

The archives show that Père Joffroy's strategy in setting up the mission post in the early 1930s was in many ways judicious, in that it presaged the 'development' orientation that would be taken by many Western governments and NGOs thirty years later. Joffroy writes to his superior that his plan for the mission is:

> (i) the training of excellent catechists who are sufficiently compensated and who are supervised very closely; (ii) the establishment of dispensaries where the catechists become nurses healing our poor Diolas and ease their maladies . . . and make them also respect and love the mission; (iii) the creation of industries that would allow our Christians and our catechumens to earn money at home, to meet their needs and thereby to break this obstacle to evangelisation that presently exists: all of the youth are absent from January until July . . . (Baum 1990: 385).

His far-sightedness is demonstrated by the fact that missionary work

in the Casa still rests on these same three pillars: education, medical support and the generation of employment in small-scale projects.

The focus of this chapter is the Christian community that fills the large church in M'lomp each Sunday. In terms of its social consequences, there is a great difference between conversion to Islam and to Christianity. When an Animist Diola becomes Muslim, for example through marriage, she, or occasionally he, steps into the Islamic world and into a social structure that is based on Islamic principles. As explained in the previous chapter, this implies far-reaching changes in social and economic relationships. Furthermore, conversion to Islam is a once-and-for-all step, and re-conversion is not really an option since it is forbidden by Islamic law. When a person converts to Christianity, however, the nature of the change is quite different. Conversion to Christianity represents a decision of openness towards the new religion and towards a new worldview but does not necessarily bring any immediate transformation in the convert's way of life. Moreover, re-conversion, in this case, remains an option.

There are many people in the Casa, also in M'lomp, who see themselves as Animists while they are in their villages in the Casamance, but who, during the time they are working in the town, in Dakar for example, attend the Roman Catholic mass on Sundays. There are no Diola spirit shrines in Dakar,[1] and attending mass is an alternative which they feel at home with. When these people return to the Casamance, however, they are often 'called back', as they put it, to the shrines. They encounter some form of misfortune in their lives and then they feel that they can only redress the wrong by taking action, and by sacrificing at the appropriate shrine; they are convinced that if they fail to do so, misfortune will continue to stalk them. Nevertheless, this group will often join in the important Christian ceremonies and they remain familiar with Christian customs and Christian prayers. Other people combine the two religions even within the context of village life. They have been baptized, for example, but find that their new religion does not have sufficient cultural roots in their lives to support itself, or them: Catholicism does not provide the answers to the problems they experience, or it may not even recognize those problems.

To some Diola Christians, the priests simply are not equipped to

[1] The Lebou, an ethnic group that is local to Cap Vert, do have spirit shrines in Dakar and a few Diola attend these.

understand the relationship between the material and spiritual, as Baum recounts:

> One day I was discussing the concept of after-life with a leading, ritually orthodox Christian. He commented that if one is good one goes to Heaven and if one is bad one goes to Hell. When I asked him if one always remained there, he replied that people are eventually reincarnated. I asked if he learned that in catechism. "No, the priests say you remain there forever, but that is because they don't have eyes to see them returning to be reborn" (Baum 1990: 376).

In some areas of their lives the Christian Animists remain loyal to their traditionalist practices. Particularly in the case of infertility and disease, the Christian response—medical treatment or prayer—appears to many Diola to be a somewhat inadequate answer to their difficulty, and they find solace and hope—and perhaps redress—in the more active *Awasena* rituals, sacrificing at the appropriate spirit shrine.

For these reasons, the Christians of M'lomp form an amorphous group. 'Path' is one of the words the Diola use for 'religion' and this is an apt description in the context of conversion to Christianity. When a person converts to the Christian church, he or she takes a new direction. This new road acquaints the converts with Christian symbols and Christian learning and as they start practising their new religion this gradually generates another turn of mind. There is, however, a gap between the beliefs of Christianity and Animism, as described in the arguments of Thomas (1959/60) set out below, especially between Animism and the kind of Christianity practised by the European missionaries. It seems probable that the sermons which are preached in the church each Sunday by the Spanish priests do not always respond to the religious knowledge of the congregation; at best they represent a 'model for' the listeners' worldview rather that a 'model of' it.

The villagers: Brigitte and Patrick

Patrick Lambal is the catechist in M'lomp. His father converted to Christianity before Patrick was born, but Patrick is the only one of the sons to have remained Christian. He lives in a large family concession in M'lomp, where his is the only Christian household. His wife, Brigitte Diatta, works with the French Catholic sisters, running a dressmaking project for young girls. Patrick trained as a teacher and he has a job in Ziguinchor, working in the gov-

ernment department for *Sport et Jeunesse*. Patrick generally wears the quasi uniform that most of the Casa Christian converts of his generation wear: khaki-coloured fitted trousers and on top a short sleeved tailored jacket with patch pockets. It is a Western type of outfit that could be described as a 'safari suit', and its severe tailoring has something military about it; it reminds you of the colonial era. Brigitte ensures that his clothes are always clean and crisply ironed; no small task in a village without electricity, where an iron has to be kept hot by repeatedly filling it with hot coals. Brigitte has an air of distraction about her and has little care for her appearance. Unlike most Diola women, clothes do not interest her. Her brother had died from a snake bite a few weeks before I arrived and she was wearing black as a sign of mourning, a custom that the Christian Diola have taken over from the missionaries: a long black skirt and a black blouse, her head uncovered. Brigitte was born to Christian parents and she spent most of her childhood with the French sisters in Oussouye. In return for helping the sisters in the house, cleaning and cooking, she received her education at their school.

The sisters also taught her to sew, providing patterns that were European in design, and, like the other girls who lived with the sisters, she grew up wearing skirts, blouses and dresses, like a French girl. Skirts and dresses are the characteristic form of dress for the Christian community in M'lomp. If you see a woman wearing a skirt (*jupe*) or a dress (*robe*), then you can be sure that she is a Christian; a married woman who is Muslim would be forbidden to wear such a garment, since it shows off the lines of the body, and it would probably not occur to an Animist to do so. This is not to say, however, that Christians always wear European clothes and never wear, for example, a *grand boubou*. In the Christian community there are no rules about outward appearance, mainly because no great importance is attached to it. Gradually, you learn to pick out the Christian women, however, and certainly on a Sunday it is not too difficult to do so. The appropriate clothes to go to the church in produce a silhouette that remains close to the lines of the body; it is not too flamboyant and it does not take up too much space. So it is unusual to see a woman at church dressed like a Muslim might be dressed, in large *grand boubou* and elaborate *foulard*. The men who go to the church in M'lomp on Sunday are practically all dressed like Patrick, Western-style trousers

and shirt; on their feet they have simple leather sandals or, sometimes, the closed shoes that Europeans wear. Although there are no rules, it would be also be unusual to see a man wearing a *grand boubou* in a church, and even more unlikely that he would be wearing the pointed *babouches* that Muslims generally wear.

Brigitte and Patrick have four children, but during the school term Brigitte has eleven children living in her house. Patrick acts as *tuteur* to the seven additional children, who are sons and daughters of his cousins and other family members. For a small monthly sum of money the children become part of Patrick's household during the term time so that they can attend the secondary school of the Spanish priests. Patrick is Roman Catholic, and considers secondary education to be very important. Unlike many parents in the Animist *quartier* of M'lomp, Patrick sees the successful termination of secondary school as the best way of ensuring his children's future. The parents of his 'extra' children live in villages that are too far away from M'lomp for them to be able to get to school every day, so sending them to stay with Patrick is seen as the obvious solution. The parents feel justified in asking this favour of Patrick, even though it demands a great deal of him and his wife, because he himself is one of the people who is benefiting from his own education. Patrick did well at school and went to study in Dakar, in order to become a teacher. During the week he works at his job in Ziguinchor and also teaches physical education at a Catholic secondary school there; he comes back to M'lomp at the weekend.

Brigitte and Patrick live not so far from the church, in a *quartier* where Christians and Animists live side by side. From the exterior of the house it is not possible to guess at the religious orientation of the inhabitants. As you enter Brigitte's house, however, you soon notice the small signs of a Christian household. Like the Muslims of Santiaba, Brigitte has photos hanging on the wall, most of them religious: a photo of a past pope, a calendar from the Ziguinchor diocese with a photo of the bishop of Ziguinchor on it and a poster that is promoting the breast feeding of babies. The Senegalese authorities are attempting to counteract the commercial propaganda for powdered milk which has prompted many mothers to adopt bottle feeding. They have issued thousands of posters of a large and prosperous looking woman in blue, breast feeding a fat little baby, and the nurse at the clinic distributed them. Brigitte also has a long table and several chairs. This is not

for eating at, for she eats with the children sitting on the floor, from a communal bowl in the normal way. The table is for the children to do their school homework, because Patrick insists that the children will only learn to write properly if they have a table to work at. When you enter Brigitte's house, you experience a feeling of orderliness and discipline. The things in Brigitte's house are signs, or symbols, of a more 'disciplined' way of life. The table recalls the routine of schoolwork, the calendar is evidence of a way of life in which time is taken in hand, detached and structured. The propaganda issuing from the poster affirms the possibility of alternative approaches to child rearing, and of discussing these alternative approaches in terms of theories.

2. Worldview in M'lomp

Linares' book (1992) links changes in economic organization among the Diola with the introduction of new ideology:

> . . . changes in religious ideologies can set off major historical changes in the economy. They do so by changing the balance of power through symbols that invest new tasks and relations of production with new practical meanings (1992: 79).

Linares stresses the power of the set of religious symbols to the Animist and Muslim Diola communities: palm wine, rice, cattle, *pagnes*, pigs, in the case of the Animists, groundnuts and the Koran in the case of the Muslims. As far as the Catholic Christian community of M'lomp is concerned, the new symbols which accompanied the introduction of their religion touch on the subjects in Père Joffroy's letter home: Western education, Western medicine and paid employment. These can be brought together under the heading: *'civilization'*, a term that is used in the Casamance, also by Muslims, to denote all things European or Western. *Civilization* refers not only to the European objects that the French colonialists brought with them at the end of the nineteenth century and to the outward signs of colonialism, such as the mission schools, churches, European clothes and the ubiquitous *baguettes*. It also refers to the intangible set of ideas that the Europeans brought with them, above all to the concept and institution of school education, and to Christianity. *Civilization* refers to the new approach to the world, an approach that emphasizes the inner, mental faculties, in which the individual becomes a more self-conscious and self-monitoring person.

Ngoy Lambal is a wise and articulate old woman who has not herself become a Christian, but who is keenly interested in the way in which Diola life has changed since the arrival of Christianity, and in the way in which French colonialism and *civilization* have transformed Diola life. The French, she says, taught the Diola to "chat (*causer*) and to choose". This describes in a concise and effective way the break with the immediate environment which precedes and initiates the process of modernization. The Christian missionaries, she indicates, taught the Diola to take a more distanced, objective or mediated view of their own lives, to see life through the lens of observation. They taught the Diola to be more self-conscious about their activities, to chat about them and see them in a more objective light, so that they learned to choose between one alternative and another.

M'lomp's little museum provides a good example of this new, self-aware attitude. The *Association des Jeunes* set up the museum at the instigation of the village schoolmaster. In the collection of artefacts that are on show in the museum the Diola put their own life on display, and label it 'traditional'. The tourists who used to come to see the two-storey house showed such an interest in the houses and in the way of life of the people of M'lomp that the schoolmaster thought of bringing all the artefacts together, putting them on show, and making money out of the display into the bargain. The strangest aspect of all about the museum is that the examples on show are invariably more 'ancient' looking than the tools and instruments which the villagers actually use; the pots and the fishing net are slightly broken, the wooden instruments are black with age. The uncomfortable uncertainty that you experience, as a Westerner, is as to whether the schoolmaster is taking his cue from a Western museum and seeking out examples that look as though they have been found in an archaeological dig, or whether the things on show are simply too old and worn out to be of use to anyone in the village.

2a. *The relationship with the supernatural: mediation of the spirit world*

The missionaries generally focus on what they see as the similarities between Animism and Christianity. They stress, for instance, the similarity in the roles of Emitai and the Christian God, who created the world and who control it, and the central role played in both religions by sacrifice:

> Christian concepts of God and of the community of saints have parallels in many African religions. Like Christianity, Awasena religion has sacraments of spiritual purification at birth and has rituals of confession and of offering prayers with wine. In the concept of the oeyi or priest-king, a man who is both sacred and slave, all-powerful yet a prisoner of his power, Diola converts could readily understand the sacrifice of Jesus . . . (Baum 1990: 375).

The striking difference, however, between the two religions is that the Christian God has disappeared from the world and is no longer part of the physical environment, the rain or the sky. The spirits no longer live in the trees and forests but rather in the architecture of the church. With Christianity, the supernatural has been removed from the central place it has in the lives of the Animists; it has been cordoned off, and given a separate place with an indeterminate location.

Thomas (1959/60) is sceptical about the place of Christianity among the Diola people. He appears to have felt that Christianity was "too abstract" for the Diola mind and that Christianity, with the emphasis that it places on education and the acquisition of abstract knowledge, could never take root in the Casamance. He refers to the Basse Casamance as an excellent observation point from which to monitor the rivalry between Islam and Christianity in seeking converts from among the traditionalist Diola. In fact, he writes about the presence and activities of the two religions in terms of a competition. Furthermore, he has no reservations about seeing Islam as the 'winner' (1959/60: 772).

Thomas agrees that it is no easy matter to take the step from the Animist to the Islamic path, entailing, as it does, various forms of submission and abstinence that demand determination and self-control. In many ways it would seem easier to take the step to Christianity, which does not require its followers to give up pork and alcohol, nor require the women to submit to the authority of their husbands in the way that Islam does. Nevertheless, he has no doubts that the transition to Islam is a more self-evident and feasible step for the Animists to take. He claims that the *Awasena* worldview is nearer to that of the Islam than it is to that of the missionaries who brought Christianity to the Basse Casamance. In Thomas's judgement, the Christian religion remains difficult and inaccessible to the Diola mind because of the abstract nature of the Christian theological concepts, and also because, in the Bible, moral power is not identified with temporal power:

> Non seulement le christianisme implique une rupture totale avec la coutume, mais encore il reste une religion trop complexe, difficilement accesible, qui n'a pas la simplicité dogmatique de l'Islam. . . . Sa symbolique est trop abstraite. La Trinité, l'Incarnation, l'Immaculate Conception et la mise en croix surtout déroutent les Noirs, non à cause du merveilleux qu'ils seraient prêts à admettre, mais parce que ces mystères heurtent leurs idées sur la toute puissance de Dieu (idem: 775).[2]

In his view it is far easier for the Diola to accept the precepts of Islam, with their accent on the exterior, and on 'doing':

> L'Islam, en effet, n'exige qu'un minimum de pratiques toutes exterieures, moyennant lesquelles le fidèle est promis à un avenir à l'âme (idem: 775).[3]

Conversion to Christianity requires taking a step inwards, into an interior world in which many of the values of the secular world are stood on their head. Thomas appears to feel that such a step, into what he sees as an 'abstract' world, is too great for any but the most Europeanized Diola to be able to take.

Without agreeing that Christianity is somehow beyond the scope of the Diola mind, it is true that the form of Christianity being offered to the Diola in M'lomp is largely based on a European worldview, a worldview that is characterized by its analytical and 'scientific' approach to the world. It is also true that in one fundamental way, the Animist worldview is much closer to Islam than to this European form of Christianity. It is basic to the Animist mentality to see the material and the spiritual as intrinsically joined, as Mark pointed out (Mark 1976: 86). The spirit world takes part in the everyday world of the Animist, for better or for worse, and material misfortune is seen in terms of spiritual maladjustment or malevolence. Death is seen as taking place as the result of some spiritual cause, such as witchcraft, which is why the most important part of the funeral rite is the interrogation of the body. Similarly, the causes of disease and infertility are looked for in the spiritual power or evil intentions of a neighbour

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[2] Christianity implies a complete break with tradition; it is also a very complex religion, inaccessible and without the dogmatic simplicity of Islam. Its symbolism is decidedly abtract; the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Immaculate Conception and the crucifixion are hard for the blacks to accept. Not because of the miraculous aspects of the events, which they are quite prepared to accept, but because these mysteries damage their ideas about an all-powerful God.

[3] Islam demands a minimum of practices, all exterior, in return for which the believer is offered a blissful future. Christianity, on the other hand, adresses itself only to the soul.

or rival, or in some form of misconduct on the part of the person who has suffered the misfortune, or of his family. On the positive side, the Animist knows he can count on the spirit world for help.

The difference between conversion to Christianity and conversion to Islam is to some extent exemplified in the ritual of conversion itself. Conversion to Islam is an unproblematic procedure. It requires little preparation since, as Linares points out, a Muslim "describes his faith primarily in terms of what he should *do* as a good Muslim and not in terms of what he needs to know" (Linares 1992: 159), so preparation in terms of knowledge or understanding is unnecessary. The ceremony itself is short and simple:

> Conversion itself was (and still is) a fairly simple procedure. A marabout shaves the convert's head (a forelock if it is a woman) at a baptismal ceremony, bathes the head, whispers Koranic verses into the ears, and gives advice. Previous to the ceremony, the marabout teaches the new convert how 'to Koran' (verb, kakaran); this means teaching him or her by rote a few verses of the Koran, enough so the individual can pray alone. Conversion occurred in groups or, more rarely, alone (idem 1992: 94).

The situation is very different in the case of Christianity. In M'lomp, conversion to Christianity demands a long period of preparation, during which time a whole body of knowledge about the new religion is passed on to the catechists. Adults and children who want to be baptized have to attend the weekly catechism classes for at least a year before they can be accepted into the church. Converts are taught stories from the Bible, they are taught about the birth and death of Jesus, they have to be able to recite the twelve articles of faith and, before finally entering the Church, they have to learn to recite various prayers. Though a certain kind of knowledge is highly valued in Islam, wisdom and good judgement being prized even above age, knowledge is not a condition for entering the faith, as it is with Christianity.

The previous chapter showed that the people of Santiaba also tend to understand the realms of the spiritual and the physical as forming an interacting and interdependent whole. "If your body behaves correctly, then so does your mind", Bintou had told me: the outer and the inner person, the material and the spiritual, the mind and the body, are self-evidently related. For the Muslim, the clean body is the starting point of a pure mind, a *sine qua non* for being a good Muslim. To refuse to give soap to a poor neighbour, so that he or

she can wash both body and clothes, would be unthinkable for a good Muslim, because this would be taking away that person's chances of salvation. Outward cleanliness is vital to the spiritual health of the inner person; "Purity begins with cleanliness", and "To be dirty is to be in league with the devil" was how the imam had put it. In the Muslim, as in the Animist mind, there is an interpenetration of things and thoughts, which does not come naturally to the European mind. For example, Animists believe in wearing small objects, *gris gris*, on or around the body to protect them against evil forces and Muslim Diola continue to do this, adapting them to their new religion by adding or inserting a text from the Koran, for example.

The Christian missionaries do not understand the relationship between the material and the spiritual in this way and they discourage their converts from wearing *gris gris*. They tend to find it 'primitive' to endow an object with such powers. They do not mind converts wearing a cross around the neck, but they see this as a *sign* of their faith rather than as a form of effective protection. For the French sisters, the idea that a pure body leads to a pure mind is also a 'primitive' idea; they give precedence to the inner person and see the outer part of the person, the body, as a natural shell. It has to be looked after but it has no influence on the working of the mind; you cannot become a good Christian 'doing' your Christian faith, as Bintou can become a good Muslim. Nor do the missionaries recognize the possibility of the body being under the influence of the spiritual world. The "sense of oneness of the visible and the invisible world" (Mark 1976: 86) is broken through.

Pigs and pagnes

The Christians of M'lomp have not rejected the Animist symbols in the way the converts to Islam have done; in fact in some cases they have embraced them and given them new meaning. Pigs, for example, have a symbolic value among Christian communities but this is not so much for their value as sacrificial animals, which is the source of their symbolic value among the Animists; among the Christians they serve as a sign of their solidarity with the Animist way of life, and of the Christian resistance to Islam. Muslims identify pigs with dirt, and find them polluting, so for a Muslim it is offensive to have a pig in the vicinity. Christians on the other hand enjoy eating pork, as they enjoy drinking palm wine. Although the symbolism of these *comestibles* is not directly religious, it does indeed

stand for the way in which the Christians see the religion that they have adopted as embracing Animism rather than rejecting it.

Pagnes traditionnels also play a part in social and religious life among the M'lomp Christians. Like pigs, they serve to denote the perceived continuity of the Christian faith with the Animist way of life and with *les choses anciennes*. At the crucial moments of life—at birth, marriage and death—*pagnes* have a role to play. At Christian funerals in M'lomp for example, the body is wrapped in *pagnes traditionnels*, the thick light coloured ones which are used mainly for burials, before being placed in a wooden coffin and buried in the European way in the Christian cemetery. *Pagnes* are a valued present for a Christian mother at the birth of her child.

2b. *The relationship with the natural environment*

Christianity and agriculture in the context of M'lomp

In the Basse Casamance, beliefs and practices are bound up with each other. People are generating the conditions for their religious beliefs not only in their farming practices but also in their interaction with the natural environment. People who change religions also change the focus of their farming activities, as we saw in Santiaba, where, apart from rice, groundnuts are grown as a cash crop, and where attitudes to the soil and the trees have altered. Most of the farmers in M'lomp, Christian and Animist, continue to cultivate their rice fields using the same methods that previous generations did. However, the Spanish priests are teaching them to use their land in a more 'rational' way, in order to generate more income by producing for the local markets. The priests do not, however, encourage the production of groundnuts, aware that groundnuts are a powerful Islamic symbol and that they form part of an Islamic way of life.

Two of the Spanish priests at the M'lomp mission are agronomists, and they use the knowledge they brought with them—Western knowledge about various types of soil, agricultural methods and patterns of weather conditions—to help the local men and women increase the productivity of their terrain and generate a cash income. The priests have set up projects that include rearing pigs and chickens, setting up market gardens and orchards, preserving fruit and even producing bottled palm wine. Using various forms of analytical calculation, they have worked out schemes that minimize inputs, such as physical labour, and maximize outputs, such as cash returns per

hectare. One of the elements they have introduced into the calculating process is artificial fertilizers. This is less labour intensive than the mixture of manure and ash, *fumiers*, that is used in Samatite. It is also easier to apply and demands less of the farmers' skills. Knowing how much fertilizer to put on the rice fields always requires attention and care; using too little produces a poor crop, but using too much causes the rice to grow too fast and too high, and it then collapses into the paddy and rots. Artificial fertilizer is more concentrated than *fumiers*, and its potency is easier to measure. So artificial fertilizer represents an 'improvement' to the agricultural methods because it is seriously labour saving and demands less of the farmers' individual skills. In the Animist way of life, however, physical labour and skills of observation have an important and formative role; they produce a certain attitude to the natural environment.

In the late 1980s, the priests started an agricultural college in M'lomp in order to teach the young men of the village how to get around with the methods of farming that belong in the world of development projects. It was clear to the priests that the young men needed more detailed and accurate knowledge of agriculture if their work was to be a success—in Western terms. The priests set out to teach the young farmers new techniques, based on Western methods of agriculture—for example the benefits of artificial fertilizers.

The agricultural college in M'lomp

> The mission's agricultural college is at the end of a long sandy track on the outskirts of the village. As you approach, you hear the unexpected sound of a tractor at work, and soon the immaculately-kept fields of the mission school come into sight: three hectares of flat open land, on which is planted every kind of vegetable and fruit: onions, tomatoes, pineapples, leeks, cabbages, beans, peas, lettuces, *bissap*, sweet potatoes, squash, paprika, melon, courgettes. There seems to be no sort of vegetable that refuses to grow in the rich Casamance soil. There are two or three strategically placed wells, equipped with electric pumps, while an abundant supply of plastic hose pipes makes it possible to water every square metre of the area without going to too much trouble. The area nearest to the mission is irrigated from a water tower, which keeps the pressure up and makes it possible to use long-distance sprinklers. The vegetables are planted with precision, in straight rows and equally spaced. Although the Diola women are experi-

enced and competent gardeners, it is unusual to see such well-kept plots as these. There is not a weed to be seen, the brown earth is well dug and finely crumbled, and the beans and peas are staked, European fashion, with bamboo.

Each year, the school takes in about twenty-five students. For a small annual fee, they are given two years' tuition in various forms of market gardening and animal husbandry. The course is open for boys and girls over the age of about sixteen, who have some form of basic schooling and who are not yet married. They welcome the young from all religions. The majority of the boys come from Christian families, however, and as yet, no girls have applied. This is a pity, since in the villages it is more usually the women who produce and sell the vegetables rather than the men. In the first year, the students' time is spent in the classroom, learning about the basics of land use and land improvement, how to grow vegetables and rice effectively and how to care for various species of animals, such as goats, sheep and cattle. The classrooms are located around two sides of a central courtyard, and a third side is made up of barns housing various types of farm machinery. There are ploughs and harrows and there are two tractors. The classrooms resemble the classrooms which one might find in any other school or college: rows of desks, chalk and a chalkboard, and informative posters pinned on to the walls. In the classroom that I visited, the previous lesson had been about fertilizers, and various chemical formulae had been written on the chalkboard. There was also some information on the board about rabbits and how best to farm them; it appeared that most of the students had never seen a rabbit, and the teacher had written that rabbits have very big ears. The textbooks have been produced by the priests themselves and are tailored to the experience and circumstances of the Basse Casamance.

In the second year, the students are given a plot of land on which to cultivate, and the first year's theory is put into practice. The plots are approximately a quarter of a hectare and the students choose to grow whatever they wish. They also help to run the mission farm, which has many hens, pigs and one or two cows. The idea is that this practice year will put them in a position to organize their own smallholding in the future, so a degree of freedom as to what they grow is part of the training. The produce is sold at the market in Oussouye, and also serves to feed

> the various Catholic missions: two in Oussouye and two in M'lomp. The local people are also encouraged to go to the farm to buy their eggs and also chickens, which are certainly plumper and more tender than you generally get at the market. During this second year, the students practise gardening in the way they have been taught. They use fertilizers, and European tools such as the hoe and the rake, and their plots look as well kept as the rest of the mission lands.
>
> After the boys leave, they have the option of renting a small piece of land from the mission for three years, for a very reasonable monthly sum, and of starting out on their own. The plots offered are rough and unworked, but there is an ample supply of water, and they have the use of the mission hose pipes. A few of the students continue the connection in this manner but no one has made a sustained success of his plot, and in fact most of the plots remain unused. It is not quite clear why the scheme does not work or why the boys are unwilling to take up the offer of land. You usually hear that it is 'too expensive', but this is hardly a rational response. The aim of the two-year course is to set out the economics of running a small market garden and to show the students how to make money from it. With the small monthly rent asked by the mission, the boys should certainly be able to make money from the plots, particularly because the mission would help them get the vegetables to market. Perhaps it is because, among the Diola, it is more often the women than the men who grow vegetables, though the girls are not keen to take part in the mission course. Perhaps the younger generation is discouraged from taking part in the mission scheme due to pressure from members of the older generation who see the possible financial success of the young men as a threat to their own authority. Furthermore, there is no necessity for the boys to take up the mission's offer. Life in M'lomp is not so very different from life in Samatite. Each family has its rice fields, its cattle and its vegetable plot, and in the dry season palm wine tapping offers all the young men the possibility of earning extra money.

As far as the priests are concerned, the boys' reluctance to continue to take part in this market garden project should not be seen as failure and the school should not be judged on the basis of its short-term success, or lack of it. This form of education, which is necessary if

the Diola are to enter the modern age, can only be put across gradually; it is a question of making a start somewhere. As they see it, education is an investment which will carry long-term fruit and which will set off a process of change; the priests are not looking for overnight success. Furthermore they do have their success stories. Pierre Yves Diatta comes from a Christian family in M'lomp and went to the Catholic secondary school. He was an excellent student and he won a scholarship to study agriculture in France, and later in the United States. He is currently working for a Canadian development organization, which has been engaged by the Senegalese government to set up projects in the Basse Casamance. The projects are aimed at harnessing and maximizing the region's productive capacities and at benefiting local people. Pierre Yves' local knowledge is invaluable to the NGO and he has been given a leading role in the execution of the mandate. He has helped to set up a women's project in Ziguinchor, producing fruit juice to be sold locally, and tinned fruit for export. According to Pierre Yves, this could benefit any number of Diola women living in Ziguinchor and help them to improve their living conditions, their health and the health of their children. Whether this really happens remains to be seen of course.

Pierre Yves' relationship with the Casamance soil is different from that of his father. Through his work, he has set aside the farmer's approach that he inherited and has developed the agronomist's instead. He relates to nature's resources by way of his powers of analysis, calculation and imagination, thinking up all kinds of ways in which the earth can be made to yield a type and level of production that can be used to support and benefit a certain sort of social structure. The exploitation of the soil has become a medium for a further, more encompassing task, the task of development. His aim is no longer to produce as large a harvest as possible, within the confines of traditional schemes. Rather, the harvest has become an instrument, part of a larger scheme which will help women in Ziguinchor to improve their standard of living. The natural environment is no longer a material entity but has become an analytic, abstract entity, which is thought of in terms of its properties and its potential. The priests feel that, by teaching the techniques of 'modern' agriculture, they are preparing the ground for more people like Pierre Yves. For them, the modernisation of agricultural methods is the only way forward. Even though they are unable to make 'Pierre Yves' out of all their students,

their college will in the long run, they hope, enable Pierre Yves and his colleagues to transform the traditional forms of agriculture that are used at the moment.

Christianity and the body in the context of M'lomp

The previous two chapters illustrated the central role played by the body in Samatite and in Santiaba. In both of those villages, the body has a central role. In Samatite, the body is crucial to the society's equilibrium, and it is an integral part of personal identity; in Sanitaba it is the means by which a person becomes 'a good Muslim'. In both communities, the body takes part in the supernatural life by being open to the spiritual world; the invisible is present in the visible body. For the Christian, the body is becoming encapsulated and objectified; the role assigned to the body in the Christian community is no longer one that spans the natural and the supernatural worlds. One could also say that the body, in M'lomp, is becoming 'medicalized' by way of the sisters' clinic. The analytical approach that Western medicine takes towards the body helps to effect this, for example in attitudes towards cleanliness. Posters aimed at preventing cholera encourage villagers to wash their hands and to keep themselves clean in order to fight the bacteria or *microbes* that will otherwise attack their bodies. This is an understanding of disease which is different from the Animists', who see disease as stemming from a disturbance in the order of Emitai's universe. It is also a far cry from the concept of '*purité*', whereby Muslims attach physical cleanliness to the purity of the soul.

Marie Françoise, the French sister who runs the clinic in M'lomp, finds the idea that the body is 'open' to spiritual forces a difficult one. She views the body as she was trained to view the body during her medical education. Before Marie Françoise came to the Casamance, she studied to become a nurse in France. These days she organizes and runs the clinic, with the help of two or three Diola assistants. The clinic is open every day except Wednesday and Sunday and she sees between thirty and fifty patients a day. The diseases she is faced with range from cholera to malaria to measles and mumps and her patients are of all ages: babies, children, pregnant girls and old men. Working all the year round under hot and often difficult conditions with too few medicines and too many patients, she is nevertheless tireless in her mission to help the local people and to lighten their load. One day in the week a doctor comes up from the small

hospital in Oussouye to help her and to consult about particularly difficult cases. Although there are a few 'standard' diseases in the area, in particular malaria (*palu*), which everybody seems to suffer from now and again in varying degrees, Soeur Marie Françoise also has to be on the look out for all kinds of other problems, from flu and angina to cholera and whooping cough. The medicines she has at her disposal are sent to her directly from France and she has a reasonably well-stocked apothecary, but her skills are constantly challenged. Over the years, she has been able to help thousands of people and they have come to trust her diagnoses and her cures. People come to her from far and wide; the villagers from Samatite, for example, prefer to come to M'lomp, even though the state-run clinic in Elinkine is nearer. When people talk to her about disease being caused by witchcraft, or of it being the result of some past misdemeanour, she finds she is not dismissive of these ideas. It is not her focus however, and it is not the way she has been trained. It is her job and her responsibility to cure her patients' bodies, by analysing their symptoms and making an objective judgement as to the nature of their problem. She has, quite literally, no time for thinking about disease as being the effect of spiritual attack. It is her expertise and the expertise of Western medicine that leads her in a particular direction vis à vis the nature of the body and prompts her to view the body as a 'closed' system: private, individual and complete in itself. Moreover, the rows of people who sit waiting for her every morning in the clinic's veranda only help to endorse her approach.

The Christian body, as it is experienced in M'lomp, can in fact be said to be 'closed' in three ways. Firstly, it is closed off from the spirit world; Christians, at least European Christians such as the sisters, do not experience the possibility of the body being vulnerable to outside spiritual forces; the knowledge of the body that Soeur Marie Françoise has to hand does not allow this to be thought of as a possibility. Secondly, the Christian body, being closed off from the spirit world, is also closed off from other bodies. The spiritual forces, which can attack and protect all bodies, also serve to join bodies. While witchcraft can strike at the bodies of a whole family, or a whole concession, the spirit shrines serve to protect these same bodies, and these spiritual possibilities have within them a unifying force. People are joined in a common threat. In more practical terms, one can conclude that Diola bodies are also opened to each other and unified in dance. In various contexts—most usually at funerals but on numerous other

occasions as well—dancing serves to join together the bodies of the villagers and consolidate them into a single entity. Tambiah (1981: 113) for example describes the way in which dance, due to its rhythmic, sonic and kinetic features, creates a oneness among the dancers, at both the mental and the bodily level. In this connection, it is relevant that at Christian funerals there is no dancing; in fact this is the most noticeable difference between a Christian and an Animist funeral. Dancing at a funeral is indeed a shocking idea to the Christian, who feels it to be a sign of disrespect to the deceased.

Thirdly, the Christian body is closed off from itself. The practice of education generates the experience of an inner, thinking person, and the practice of medicine shows the body to be an object or 'shell'. This brings about a situation in which the Christian may experience the body and the mind as separated, understanding them to be two distinct entities. This objectification of the body and its quasi separation from immaterial influences is intensified, perhaps, by the religious life of the sisters. In their monastic life, it is the inner person that is focused upon, that is nourished in prayer, that wrestles with the conscience, that understands the articles of faith in this or that way, and so on. The separation between the inner and the outer person thus becomes a pattern or a habit, rather than a conviction. Along with this habit of separation, the body comes to be seen as controlled and disciplined by the inner person. This same separation is also realized in the kinds of 'civilized' clothes that the Christian men and women are encouraged to dress themselves in by the French sisters. In their refinement and complexity, the tailored clothes that the Christians wear—the same sort of the clothes that the sisters themselves wear—snuff out something of the body's vitality by civilizing it and taming it.

The sewing atelier

> Brigitte runs the sewing atelier, one of the projects that was set up by the French sisters in the sixties. In 1990, they set up dressmaking and embroidery courses at the mission house and their goal in initiating the project was threefold. They wanted to try and keep the young girls from leaving M'lomp for Dakar by providing some form of training for them in the village itself; a form of training which they could later turn into work, as *tailleuses*. They also wanted to help the girls by providing them with *habilles*. Since the girls always say that their aim in going to Dakar is to

purchase *habilles*, the sisters felt that offering to help the girls make their own clothes might reduce the inclination to go to Dakar. Thirdly, they hoped that their project would counteract the increasing number of teenage pregnancies. The girls who left for Dakar were returning more and more often with a child but without a husband, and the sisters felt that this was causing difficulties for both them and their families. The sisters hoped that keeping the girls in the village would help to reduce the problem. At the same time, the sisters opened a small shop where the girls taking part in the courses would be able to show, and hopefully sell, the things that they made. Although the project can hardly be said to have curbed the stream of girls who leave for Dakar each September,

nor to have influenced the number of *filles mères* returning from Dakar, nevertheless there are regularly twenty or so young women and girls who follow the course each year, and one or two of them continue to work as *tailleuses* in the village after that.

As far as the dressmaking course is concerned, the focus is put on learning to design, cut and sew European, tailored clothes: 'civilized clothes'. Soeur Marie-Claire, who set up the project, is adamant in her feelings that the local forms of dress, the *doket* and the *grand boubou*, are not worth learning about. In fact she barely considers them to be clothes at all, because they have no *coup*, they are just square pieces of fabric sewn together. She refers to them as 'primitive' clothes because they are not tailored to the body, and because, in her words, "they do not fit". The beauty of the local clothes, the *doket* and the *grand boubou*, is indeed that they do not 'fit'. Cut straight, without any darts or tailoring to weaken the lines, they are moved *by* the body, but not *with* the body. They retain a life of their own and they produce bodies that know how to perform.

So each year Brigitte has the job of teaching her pupils the complicated art of pattern cutting and tailoring. It is no small feat to get a one-dimensional piece of cloth to fit smoothly onto a three-dimensional, articulated body. It took Western Europe several centuries to perfect the art of tailoring so it is surprising how successful Brigitte's pupils become, in a single year, in producing garments that, with the aid of complicated darts and curved seams, enclose the body and fit closely to its rounded volume. It is inevitably the sleeves that cause students the most problems. The *doket*, and other local styles[4] that have some form of inset sleeve, solve the problem of joining the sleeve to the bodice by pleating or gathering a great deal of extra material into the head of the sleeve. Tailored clothes, however, have developed a form of sleeve that eliminates the necessity of this extra material.

Brigitte herself is well aware of the characteristic demeanour that this sort of tailored, civilized clothes brings forth. Echoing the words of my interpreter, she describes the Christian demeanour

[4] The *taille basse*, for example, a popular garment in the city, especially for young women who still have slim figures, has a fitted bodice but the sleeves are inset with pleats rather than with shaping.

as more timid, less certain of itself, than that of the Muslim women. Muslim Diola seem *"plus à l'aise avec le corps"*[5] is how she puts it. They move more easily, and have fewer problems with their bodies' boundaries; Christian women seem to be more likely to complain about weight problems than Muslim women for instance. That Muslims move more easily than Christians is an idea that is easily recognized by other Christian women, though they often put it in different terms. The Muslims like to show themselves off, they say; they like to wear brighter colours than Christians and to use more jewellery. The 'timidity' of the Christian demeanour is often linked to Sunday church going. People say it is because Christians spend so much time on their knees, praying (though Muslims probably spend longer) while others say that ostentation is inappropriate in a church. Brigitte certainly does not seem to mind that she is less 'at ease' with her body than her Muslim friends are. As a Catholic she seems to find outward appearance to be of little importance. She works as hard as she does in order to ensure that her four children will be well educated and not so that they will be admired for the way they look. She brings them up to care about what they have in their heads, and not to care too much what they have on their bodies.

While the demeanour of the Christian women may be hard to characterize, being indeterminate more than anything else and missing the *grandeur* of the Muslim women, the bearing of the Christian men, or at least of those who, like Patrick, prefer to wear tailored trousers and shirt and Western shoes, tends to be easier to identify. Patrick, who is about fifty and no longer slim, has a particular slouch, his head thrusts forward and his shoulders somewhat round. Tailored clothes incarcerate the body and restrict its movements. The *finesse* of the tailoring ensures that each piece of the body is separately enclosed so that the coherence of the whole is lost. It is a restricted habitus. When I had asked Jacquari Sane's son why it was that the older villagers in Santiaba never wear Western clothes, it was this restricting quality that he mentioned. Western clothes do not leave the body free, and he finds this undignified, especially as a person gets older. Patrick, on the

[5] Tr.: "more at ease with their bodies."

other hand, is not out to hold the stage with his body. As a teacher with a responsible job, he entrusts his status to what is in his head, to his education and to his standing in the village.

The experience of time and place in M'lomp

Brigitte has a calendar hanging on the wall of her house. This is very common among Christians in M'lomp, as it is among Muslims in Santiaba. The calendar is not necessarily current and may even be five years out of date, but that is irrelevant, as its function is as much symbolic as anything else: the calendars are there to show that

the household is part of a wider community, which exists in a global framework of time and place. It is important to Brigitte and Patrick to know that they keep time together with a community that spreads out to Europe. At the same time, keeping time with Europe—or rather one or two hours behind Europe—implies that they can also locate themselves in relation to Europe and place themselves on a map of the world. They have been taught at school just 'where' Senegal is situated, and this relation becomes reality for them when one of the successful students, like Pierre Yves, returns from France or the United States with photos and travel tales. The calendars are usually religious, having been published by the Ziguinchor diocese and showing a photo of the local bishop or the pope. As the previous chapter mentioned, the villagers of Santiaba also tend to face outwards and see their community in a wider context, but this has different implications in the two communities. For the villagers of Santiaba, the process of unifying time and place is first and foremost a matter of becoming part of the *umma*, the worldwide Islamic commonwealth. The Christians of M'lomp tend to take distance from their locality in order to see themselves as part of the universal church.

2c. *The consequences for social relations of conversion to Christianity: education and politics*

Conversion to Christianity does not mark any immediate or dramatic change in the social situation of the convert in the way that conversion to Islam does. Becoming a Christian marks a decision on the part of the convert to follow a new path and to take on some or many of the Christian practices: going to church, sending one's children to school and wearing 'civilized' clothes, but the social consequences of becoming Christian are not immediate. Christians in M'lomp continue to live amicably alongside their Animist relatives and neighbours and there is little friction between them. It is education, more than anything else, that is the most important agent of change among the converts. Christians are indeed likely to be better educated than Animists. Although Animist parents may encourage their children to go to primary school, they often discourage any further education, for fear that it will draw the children away from the shrines. Within the church community, however, great emphasis is put on education at all levels.

It is as much the practical consequences of education that affects people's lives as its cognitive consequences. Education does not

necessarily lead to any profound changes in attitudes. For example, Christians often continue to believe in the power of the spirits shrines and in the efficacy of 'traditional' medicines and cures. Nearly all the villagers in M'lomp, Christian and Animist, believe in the power of traditional medicine, smeared on to the bodies of the rebel soldiers, to divert the bullets of the Senegalese army guns. At the same time both Animists and Christians have been quick to assimilate the medical knowledge brought by the missionaries when it is shown to be effective. The practical consequences of education are more far reaching however. As a result of their education people tend to move into the towns and find employment there, as Patrick has done. This sets in motion a process of gradual change, whereby the individual is eased away from village life and from his or her Animist beliefs and practices. Not only is the convert 'pulled' towards the town, by education and employment, he is also 'pushed' away from the village.

Although about half of the village of M'lomp is ostensibly Christian, there is no political place for a Christian in the village, other than through the state, as *chef de village*. Christian men and women easily take part in Animist ceremonies and feasts, but they do not maintain shrines, and this limits their political influence in the village. Although Christian men sit on the council of elders, the fact that they have no shrine to their name diminishes their political weight; as in Samatite, political authority in M'lomp rests on ritual authority. An elder with no shrine has no way of proving himself. This may lead Christian men and women to seek political office outside the village, in the state system, or even in the international arena. Patrick's case is typical. He is a capable person, but he has nowhere within the village that he can look for political responsibilities. In the past, Patrick has put himself up as candidate for mayor in Oussouye, running as a member of the then opposition party.

Dressing like Europeans

Like Patrick, Brigitte has no ritual role in M'lomp; being a Christian, she cannot hold a ritual position within the village. Although she often serves as spokeswoman for the women of the village—for example when there are difficulties with the Forestry authorities, *Eaux et Forêts*, Brigitte is asked to take a mediating role—she will not progress to the role of *madrone*, the senior ritual role for a woman in M'lomp. Her day is spent working with the sisters, either teaching sewing or helping in some other way in the mis-

sion house. Not only is Brigitte 'pushed' towards the sisters and a more European way of life, she is also 'pulled' towards them. Her employment, which is well paid by local standards, offers her status and respect, both from the villagers and from herself. She is proud to be well-educated and she will certainly make sure that her children receive the same benefits that she has. So the sisters have become her role models, not only in her beliefs and attitudes but also in the way she dresses and, consequentially, also in her demeanour.

Thomas is dismissive when describing the clothes that Christian Diola wear:

> Nous laisserons volontiers de côté l'attitude des chrétiens, car elle n'offre rien de typique: ou le Diola chrétien s'habillera comme le fetichiste . . . ou bien il utilisera des vêtements achetés à l'escale (culottes, chemisettes, sandalettes s'il s'agit d'un homme; robe colorée et mouchoir de tête s'il agit d'une femme). Cette façon de procéder, non seulement n'est pas locale, mais il y a bien des chances pour qu'elle ne soit pas spécifiquement africaine (1959: 358).[6]

Though Thomas is right that the clothes may be purchased in town, for instance at the second-hand markets, they may also be made locally, in the sisters' sewing classes for example: dresses (*robes*), skirts (*jupes*), blouses (*chemisettes*) and two pieces outfits (*deux pièces*). As far as the men are concerned, their trousers and shirts, as well as the characteristic 'safari suits', are purchased in the towns; they are factory made and often imported. These clothes may well not be African, but they affect the wearers' stance nevertheless, and also the wearers' experience, by enclosing and 'separating' the body.

European clothes—of which Thomas is so dismissive—help to generate the experience of enclosure and separation. These clothes, close-fitting and inhibiting the body's movements, disenfranchise the body and re-model it; and, as Thomas suggests above, they even seem to de-Africanize it. There is something ambivalent, or even contradictory, about the Christian's demeanour, since it is a

[6] Tr.: "We will ignore the appearance of the Christian, which has nothing authentic to offer. The Christian Diola either dresses as an Animist or he wears clothes bought in the town: trousers, shirts and sandals if it is a man, brightly coloured dress and headscarf if a woman. This is not in keeping with local custom and indeed it is not even African."

bearing that negates itself; the body denies its own presence, and represents its own impotence. Tailored clothes provide the body with the experience of its own enclosure, subordinated to the mind, and separated from other bodies. It is impossible, as stated already several times, to identify the ideas of the converts with those of the European missionaries, or to claim that the converts experience their bodies in the same way the missionaries do. Brigitte, like many other converts, may well still believe in the power of spiritual forces to harm or protect her physical welfare. Nor does she see the world in the abstract and mediated way that the missionaries do. Nevertheless, by wearing the clothes of her role models, the sisters, she, too, learns to experience the body as an 'object', exterior and subordinate.

2d. *The relationship between the individual and the self*

Using some of the ideas from the previous section, you could also suggest that the Christians of M'lomp are being gradually 'pushed' and 'pulled' towards a more individualistic attitude towards the self. Brigitte and Patrick, for example, manage to some extent to escape from the intense peer pressure to conform because they have—at least partially—escaped the power of the shrines. For example, one of the most effective occasions of social levelling and social conformity is the funeral. When a person in the village or in a neighbouring village dies, all the inhabitants are expected to attend the funeral. During the funeral, the people attending it are expected to join in the ceremony by drinking large amounts of palm wine. According to Linares, a person may have to attend two funerals a week (Linares 1992: 28). In economic terms, attending a funeral means giving up a day's work, a penalty which the more modern Diola feel very strongly but which most Animists do not dare to evade. Brigitte and Patrick are less likely to feel themselves obliged to attend funerals. They are less constrained by the spirit shrines and less subject to the effects of village rivalries.

At the same time, Brigitte's way of life, close to the sisters, pulls her towards a more distanced and objective view of the world, and therefore of herself as well. The language that she uses in her daily life illustrates this distancing process. On the one hand, she is learning to think, as the sisters do, in terms of theories and mediating mental structures, to chat and to choose as Ngoy Lambal puts it. She speaks, objectively, of '*hygiene*' and '*microbes*', presupposing a world that can be controlled. She talks about the possibilities that will be open to her children once they have successfully matriculated from secondary school, and she is aware of the dangers and difficulties of *adolescence*. In writing the reports for her pupils at the *atelier* she is also forced to think in abstract and distanced terms about their progress and their potential, and in making up the accounts for the mission's shop she becomes increasingly used to quantifying and qualifying the results. The consequences of such insignificant examples may be small, yet it seems plausible to suggest that her attitude towards her own life is more distanced and objective, in other words more modern, than that of her Animist neighbours.

3. Summary

The form of Christianity that has been brought to the Basse Casamance by European missionaries is characterized by its gradual progress towards a more abstract and objective way of thinking about the world, one which stresses the importance of understanding and knowing. In this highly mediated world it is the head, rather than the body, which is given priority. The body is put at a distance: it is no longer the bridge to the natural world, as the Animist's working body is, since this task has been taken over by the technological advances of the agronomist. Nor is it part of the natural world, by way of the *siwum* or animal double. Nor is it the agent, through religious practices, of sanctity, as it is to the Muslim. The Christian body is separate, individual and enclosed; it is no longer vulnerable to spiritual forces, but in exchange for that it forfeits some of its own agency.

This chapter describes how Père Joffroy's plans for the Casa area have gradually been instigated by the missionaries and by other Western influences, such as tourism, and how this has changed the way the Christians experience the world—and their own bodies. In providing education, Western health care and paid employment, the missionaries prised the converts away from their immediate experience of the world. The natural world has been objectified. In the various agricultural projects the natural environment is increasingly seen through the lens of 'natural science'. The body itself is becoming medicalized as the converts understand the efficacy of the sisters' medical expertise. Using the sophistication of a technically competent society, the body has 'taken shape' and has been given boundaries in the tailored clothes which Brigitte helps the converts to make. These tailored clothes remodel the body and take its place; the enclosed body then offers itself as a useful and fertile surface, on which the semiotics of dress have full play.

Hollander (1975), in her examination of the body and clothes in Western art, notes the fundamental difference between flat clothes and tailored clothes. The primary function of Western dress, i.e. tailored clothes, as opposed to flat clothes, is:

> . . . to contribute to the making of a self-conscious individual image, an image linked to all other imaginative and idealized visualizations of the human body. Western clothing derives . . . its claim to importance through its link with figurative art, which continually both interprets and creates the way it looks (Hollander 1993 [1975]: xiv).

Even in M'lomp, one sees the influence these non-African types of clothes have on the body, which becomes a surface and a shape, the object of the society's idealized visualizations. As in the other two villages, the Christian body serves as an important symbol of the Christian worldview, representing in its diffidence the subordination of the body to the head. More to the point, the diffident and separated body offers the Christian the experience of the Christian worldview, in which the converts becomes observers, the knowledge that they have gained at school distancing them from their environment.

The diffidence of the Christian body becomes evident if you observe the crowd of people milling around in the open area outside the church after mass on a Sunday. Christians, both men and women, distinguish themselves from a group of Muslims or Animists by their tame and somewhat dowdy appearance. The women's clothes are mostly African versions of European clothes. Made up in the brightly coloured cotton prints associated with West Africa, their shape, following the body's contours marks them as non-Muslim; they wear the dresses, skirts, blouses, trousers and shirts as described above. It is not easy to describe the way in which these European tailored clothes debilitate the body, cover it up and cause it to 'disappear'. On the face of it, the Muslim body is more covered up and 'invisible'; covering the body, at least the woman's body, is even part of Muslim law. Yet the effect of the abundant and elaborate clothes, which the Muslims wear, is to vitalize the body, and to bring the full force of its agency into the social arena, as described in the previous chapter.

The tailored clothes that accompanied the arrival of the Christian religion assisted in the transference of the Christian worldview by enclosing the body and by allowing the wearers to experience the implications of an enclosed body, which subjects itself to the mediating knowledge of the mind. Dress and worldview work together to enclose the body and reduce its agency. The enclosure of the Diola body is not an event, but rather it is a direction, a slow process of enculturation that begins when a person decides to adopt the Christian religion. It is quite likely that such a person will not immediately adopt another style of dressing. Gradually however, as such people get 'pushed' and 'pulled' towards life outside the village, as described above, they start to wear more Western styles of clothes, and the process of enclosure sets in.

CHAPTER SEVEN

POSTSCRIPT: DRESS IN THE CITY

Sara Senghor owns a shop in Ziguinchor, which sells household accessories: cups and saucers, knives and forks, dishes and casseroles, pots and pans. Her clients belong to the group of better-off residents of Ziguinchor, for the goods she has in her store are not cheap, being imported mainly from Europe, rather than from Asia, which is where the less expensive products tend to come from. Sara is dedicated to keeping her shop interesting and up-to-date. She travels at least twice a year to Europe, mainly to France, to find new things. By European standards her wares are not from the top end of the market, in fact they are rather from the lower end of the market, but in Ziguinchor they are much appreciated; you are proud to be a client of Sara's. Sara is a large welcoming woman, a Diola from the Boulouf, in her early forties. She herself is Muslim, and she is married to a Diola from the Casa, who is Christian.

Sara does not agree that it is possible to link a particular way of dressing with the religion of the dresser, in fact she is quite offended by the very idea, because she links this notion with religious prejudice. She points out that Ziguinchor is known for its religious tolerance and for the way the religious populations mix and intermarry, as she herself has done. In Ziguinchor even the cemetery has a mixed population, which is unique in Senegal, and perhaps in the world; the graves of Muslims lie next door to the graves of Christians. These days, people wear what they wish, irrespective of their religion, she claims; no one cares what you wear or how you dress. That used to be the case of course, but those days are now over. She takes herself as an example. She thinks of herself as a good Muslim but a modern Muslim; she does not take the words of the Koran too seriously. The day I meet her she has on a bright green silk printed dress, which she bought in France on her last trip there, and heeled slippers. Her head is uncovered, that is to say, she is not wearing a *foulard* but a wig. Wigs are very common these days, and save the wearer the time and expense of having her own hair straightened or plaited. But if I should come again the following day, she would probably

be wearing one of her many *grand boubous*, complete with *grand foulard* and matching *pagne*. For the following day was a Friday, and on Fridays she, and most of her friends, Christian and Muslim, like to wear a *grand boubou* to pay due respect to the Muslim congregation.

When I point out that her easy, sophisticated attitude to dress may well largely depend on the fact that she is married to a Christian, she agrees. In the Christian world how you dress, appearance altogether in fact, is not considered to be an important issue, though modesty is recommended. Many Muslims husbands refuse to allow their wives to go out into the street with their heads uncovered, as Sara's husband allows her to do. Sara has friends whose husbands, even well-educated husbands, do not like their wives to wear Western dress at all, certainly not after they have had children. And to be truthful, Sara has the type of generous and well-polished body, with gleaming skin and rounded silhouette, that looks more at home in one of her expensive *grands boubous*, like the one she had on the next time we met. Western clothes tend to demand a body with better-defined boundaries, and more angles, if they are to look their best.

Like Sara, many people in Ziguinchor associate the idea that there might be a link between religion and a certain way of dressing with religious intolerance. Since the Diola are proud of their open attitude towards differences of faith, people in Ziguinchor are often reticent about discussing differences in dress in relation to religion, as though talking about such things would indicate their prejudice in one way or another. Sara is proud of Senegal's status as a secular state and of its official acceptance of all religions in general and of mixed marriages, like hers, in particular. The vast majority of the population is Muslim, yet Christians have a definite place in society, not least because of the country's colonial past. The first president of Senegal, Leopold Senghor, was himself a Christian and he had a Christian wife, while the second president, Diouf, a Wolof and a Muslim, also had a Christian wife. More surprisingly, the current president, Wade, himself a member of the Mourides Muslim brotherhood, has a Christian wife as well, as do several other members of his decidedly Muslim government. A mixed marriage indicates a level of education and intellectual sophistication that speaks in your favour.

Sara's husband, Albert, is a teacher at one of the state-run high schools, and like most teachers, Muslim or Christian, his everyday outfit is Western: a short-sleeved cotton shirt and long trousers.

Though many of the better-known high schools are run by the church, and have mainly Christian teachers, the teachers at the state-run schools may be either Christian or Muslim. It is only on Fridays that you can see who is who, since on Fridays most of the Muslim teachers discard their Western dress for a more Islamic outfit: three-quarter-length khaftan or a *grand boubou* worn with loose cotton trousers. Men do not often go to the mosque in Western clothes, though some do, and Sara points out that it is not forbidden.

Albert usually wears the clothes that his wife tells him to wear. She has bought a beautiful, heavy damask *boubou* for him, in the bright light blue colour that is so flattering to the black West African skin. He wears this only occasionally however, for example when he and his wife are invited to a reception by the governor of Ziguinchor. The *grand boubou* remains the most dignified garment there is, also for men. Albert agrees that for his age group and profession, it would be difficult, except on Fridays, to indicate a person's religion from his dress. However, as Muslim men get older they generally prefer to dress in the looser, more comfortable clothes of the Islam. As Jacquari Sane suggested, they find something undignified in the tight and restricting trousers that Westerners wear.

Albertine Manga is in her late fifties and comes originally from Oussouye. She attended school with the French sisters there and, when it became clear that she was a bright and ambitious student, she went on to high-school in Ziguinchor and then on to university in Dakar. She now runs a small polytechnic school for girls who do not make it to high school, either because they do not have adequate marks, or because their parents to not have sufficient funds. She is dedicated to her job and does her best to inspire her pupils to achieve as much as they can. She has a commanding presence and is always well-dressed; the double income of herself and her husband, also a Christian and also from Oussouye, who is employed by the municipal department *Eaux et Forêts*, ensures that she has enough money to have clothes made for herself whenever she needs them. She has a wide variety of garments in her wardrobe, Western and Senegalese: jackets and skirts, blouses, *dokets*, *grand boubous*, or *robes*, which she wears as the occasion demands. Dress and appearance is not a subject that she is particularly keen to talk about however. Like many Christians she finds it basically unimportant; she would rather talk about her pupils. The day I meet her she is wearing a *grand boubou* but without a

foulard on her head, but she attaches no significance to that. Yes, a *grand boubou* should be worn with a *foulard*, and at any kind of Muslim occasion she would of course cover her head, as a mark of respect to her Muslim friends.

In having such a varied wardrobe Albertine feels she has kept up with her times. When she was young, in the period when Senegal was ruled by the French, and shortly afterwards, it was usual for her and her friends to wear mainly Western clothes. She supposes it was as a sign of their level of education and of their intellectual ambitions. And some of her friends, particularly male friends, have refused to change; they have retained the short-sleeved jacket and trousers of the colonial period and have declined to adopt a more 'modern', or Islamic, way of dressing. Her husband, for example, does not own a khaftan or a *grand boubou* and goes to even the grandest and most formal occasions in Western dress, a jacket and trousers. He is not the only one of his friends who has refused to adapt his way of dressing, Albertine says. As for herself, she feels there are more important things than how you dress, but nevertheless she admits that it is important for her to be able to dress *correctement*, appropriately, for any occasion. She also admits that her spreading figure and the comfort of the non-Western styles of dress have influenced her readiness to adopt the more flowing, unrestricting styles of dress as she has become older.

As an involved member of the Roman Catholic parish in Ziguinchor, Albertine is keenly hoping for the end of the troubles in the Basse Casmance and a return to peace and tranquillity, and she points out that it is important not to be provocative in the way you dress. She explains that one of the main reasons for the political unrest in the Casamance was the influx of northerners, following Senegalese Independence, who were sent down from Dakar to fill the more important administrative and commercial posts. This caused a great deal of resentment in the Casamance. The Diola were on the whole well-educated, the many missionary schools in the area having ensured a high level of learning and university degrees, and local people felt that the new government should have made more effort to have Diola appointed to these positions. However, since the troubles began, the government in Dakar has made some effort to involve the Diola in running the region. Although many of the important positions in Ziguinchor, including that of governor and *procureur général*, are still held by Wolof, a number of these posts are now held by Diola. There

are two Diola politicians in the new Government, one of them being Minister of Defence. Furthermore, the majority of the parliamentary deputies sent from the Casamance are also Diola, as is Pascal Diatta, the Regional Director of the Casamance, a post that was instigated as 'liaison officer' between the Casamance and Dakar. Into the bargain, the most prominent local person is probably Robert Sagna, a Diola, who is mayor of Ziguinchor and who for many years was part of the government during Diouf's presidency, holding various ministerial positions. Albertine implies a gentle criticism of her husband and his friends for failing to adapt to the 'new order'. A good Christian should not hang on to a way of dressing if it is going to give offence or mark sensitive distinctions. Of course things are different in the small isolated villages of the Casa, whose political and religious autonomy, or isolation, means they give offence to no one.

Emma Sambou is originally from Kanute. She married Alexander Babene, from Samatite, fifteen or so years ago and they now live in Ziguinchor, where Alexander is a schoolmaster at one of the Roman Catholic primary schools. Emma did not go to secondary school. Like most of the girls in Samatite, she attended primary school and then left to go and work as a maid in Dakar. There she earned enough money to buy a suitcase full of clothes, which she still wears, and to provide herself with the pots and pans and other household goods that she needed when she married Alexander. She does not have a job because, among other reasons, she has no time. She has a 'family' of eleven to look after, at least during the school term times; four of her own and seven children of family and friends from Samatite and Kanute. If your husband is fortunate enough to have paid employment then relatives have no compunction about asking you to take in their children so that they can attend school in Ziguinchor. Of course the parents pay a small amount for board and lodging but it is not enough to cover the costs that children of that age bring with them. So money is a constant source of worry and problems in Emma's household. This is the main reason she is reluctant to talk about clothes she says—she cannot afford to buy them. She does her best to acquire a new outfit twice a year, and in any case at Christmas time.

Christmas is a popular time for buying clothes, Easter as well. Emma thinks of herself as Animist; she took great trouble to return to Samatite as soon as she could after the birth of each of her children to carry

out the cleansing ceremonies, and she returns to take part in the women's ceremonies as often as she can. It is impossible to 'be' Animist while you live in Ziguinchor though. It is a religion of practices and the spirit shrines remain put in Samatite; you cannot simply pack them up and bring them with you to the town. There used to be spirit shrines in Ziguinchor. In fact long after the local Diola had been converted, to Christianity or Islam, men and women went on looking after the shrines, secretly keeping them alive because they believed in their spirits more deeply than they did in the God who was offered them. But gradually the shrines were neglected and deserted and now they are all gone. Like most of her friends from the Casa villages, Emma thinks of herself as belonging to the Roman Catholic community as long as she is in the town. She sometimes attends mass in the cathedral on Sunday and she joins in the celebrations at Christmas and at Easter.

Emma has a few treasured *pagnes noirs*, which she keeps for wearing at the ceremonies in Samatite. She does not bother too much about what she wears for everyday but she would like to have some beautiful clothes for the special days. The clothes she has made by the tailor in Ziguinchor are inevitably made from cheap material as she cannot afford expensive fabric and this means that once they have been washed a time or two they look worn and drab. Most of the money they can afford to spend on luxuries like clothes goes towards buying decent garments for Alexander to wear to his work at school. It is not appropriate for a school master to wear clothes that are old and frayed. Alexander also has a short khaftan and loose cotton trousers, but he does not have a *grand boubou*. Again this is mainly a question of money, Emma says.

Urban dress and the 'expert' body

In Ziguinchor, as in the villages, religion still provides the poles around which dress styles tend to cluster. For strict Muslims there are the same dress prescriptions that apply in Santiaba while for Christians paying a great deal of attention to appearance is considered unnecessary. At the same time, as these short case studies show, a number of other factors determine what a person wears, the level of your income being one of the most important. Sensitivity to religious distinctions is another factor that bears on the subject, as is

fashion. In a country that is 95% Muslim, the *grand boubou* is considered the most elegant and prestigious of garments. From the various informal and unstructured conversations I had with people in Ziguinchor about what they wear and why, the most striking impression was of the way in which dress functions as the 'connective tissue' of a community, as Wilson (1985: 12) has put it. Many people in Ziguinchor, like Sara, are disinclined to signal differences in their manner of dressing and, in as far as they feel themselves a community, as the Diola in Ziguinchor tend to, prefer to build bridges in the way they dress. As a corollary of this, the urban body has to be adaptable; it has to be able to accommodate itself to various environments and to remodel itself as required. In order to look more closely at this urban, adaptable body, this chapter looks at the various ways of dressing that were discussed in the previous three chapters to see how these garments and outfits have fared in the context of town life in Ziguinchor.

Pagnes traditionnels: a museum article

In the summer of 1999 an important and popular exhibition was put on at the *Alliance Française* in Ziguinchor, which focused on the traditional Diola *pagnes*. It was not a large exhibition and the exhibits, with one particular exception, were quite ordinary. The exception was the remains of a short, warriors' tunic (*turki*), said to have dated from the second half of the nineteenth century. The label claimed that it had been worn by one of the warriors who fought in the *jihad* under Fodé Kaba, the Manding warrior-marabout who repeatedly attacked the north shore Diola with the intention of converting them to Islam. Though partially disintegrated, it was clear that the cotton from which this tunic was made was so thick and closely woven that it would have offered protection from the spears of the defending Diola. It also had the pointed 'tongue' of material that formed a triangular lip of material over the throat, protecting that most vulnerable part of the body from the spears and arrows of the enemy. You still often see this 'tongue' in the neckline of a typically Manding outfit, a reminder of their role as evangelizing soldiers. For the rest, the exhibits consisted of a series of *pagnes noirs*, also referred to as *pagnes traditionnels*, most of which dated from the colonial period, and they were accompanied by large blown-up photos of the original owners

wearing them. What made these *pagnes* special was that they were being worn by women on the north shore, in villages which, like Santiaba, no longer use them. These *pagnes* were similar to those worn by Mundung and Belle to go to the fetiche: five 20 cm wide bands of home woven cotton strips, sewn together to make a two-metre length wrap. The exhibition also included a series of photos and descriptions tracing the fabrication of *pagnes* in the *royaume*, the district around Seleki, to the west of Ziguinchor, where you find the last remaining Bainuk villages. The Bainuk grow, spin and weave cotton and they produce their own magnificent soft cotton wraps, but the supply of cotton is limited and these *pagnes* are not for sale.

It was interesting to note the respect and admiration that the two young men who put on the exhibition had for their subject. They were both Muslim Diola and had both grown up in the Kalunay, in Manding Diola villages. They had grown up with no knowledge of these beautiful cloth wraps and had 'discovered' them only recently. The two young men had had no idea that *pagnes* were still made, just a few miles away from Ziguinchor, and had come across them by chance. They then started their research and unearthed the exhibits in their own and neighbouring villages, among people who perhaps had much the same attitude towards them as the people of Santiaba, and who saw them as the 'primitive' remnants of past times. The photographs they made in Seleki had been taken with the enthusiasm and eye for detail with which a butterfly collector might approach a rare and beautiful species. The *pagnes* are their Diola heritage and they were proud to put them on show. How different from Bintou, who brackets *pagnes* under the heading *'les choses anciennes'* and tends to dismiss them.

In Ziguinchor, in other words, the *pagne traditionel* has become the symbol of an authentic and *bona fide* Diola culture. As more and more Diola leave their villages and come to the town, and in some cases, as a result of conversion, change their customs and beliefs, they experience the desire to bring their identity into focus. Faced, as never before, with other ethnic groups, most of them more powerful and prominent than their own, they feel the need to sharpen the profile of Diola identity, to breathe life into it and to ground it. This revitalization process can be seen as running parallel to the increasing political resistance to 'colonization' from the north, which culminated in the establishment of the MFDC, but which is not necessarily part of it. This process feeds the Diola's political awareness

but it exists as a cultural project on its own. In this process the *pagne* has been resuscitated and now, far from being dismissed, is used as a cultural tool to help build a new traditional Diola identity, demonstrably ancient and rooted in the past.

In some ways the same can be said to have happened to rice. In the north shore Diola villages, as in Santiaba, groundnuts have become a more important crop than rice, bringing in cash earnings which, in all Diola villages, are now used to buy imported Thai rice. In Ziguinchor, however, bundles of rice are used to embellish every hotel reception desk in the town. The bundles are indeed decorative, the rice grains hanging ornamentally from the strong stalks, and they are effective symbols, helping to endorse the image of the Diola as a peasant, rooted in the earth. The *pagne* has leap-frogged its way over Bintou's contempt and has become a symbol again, helping to ground a new and distinctive Diola identity.

The way in which Muslim Diola in Ziguinchor use the *pagne noir* to aid in the construction of their authentic and rooted identity is similar to the way in which the figure of Alinesitoué Diatta has been adopted to the same end. Alinesitoué was a young girl from the small village of Kabrousse, about fifteen kilometres to the south of Elinkine, who led an inspired resistance movement against French colonialism—and against the new religions—in the early 1940s. Although she is now remembered for her anti-colonial stance, not least because it was the French who were responsible for her deportation and subsequent death, people who listened to her confirm that she spoke out as strongly against the infiltration of Islam and Christianity as against the French. People came to Kabrousse from great distances to hear her speak and she herself addressed the hundreds—some say thousands—of people who attended, urging them to hold on to their traditional Diola ways. She insisted that the Casa people turn their backs on the imported religions and return to the spirit shrines, and also that they stop cultivating groundnuts at the expense of rice. These days, however, she has been adopted by Christians and Muslims as a figure who has helped shape Diola identity; she has been designated the Diola Jeanne d'Arc and the core of her message is overlooked.

The image of Alinesitoué is important here because when she spoke at these gatherings she always wore what is now taken to be the most authentic form of Diola dress: *deux pagnes*, two *pagnes noirs*, one tied round the waist and coming down to the lower leg, the

other tied under the arms and reaching down to the upper leg. In fact however, this was a 'newly authentic' way of dressing, which took into account the arrival of Christianity and covered the breasts. Up to this time, one *pagne*, around the waist, had been sufficient. In Ziguinchor these days, the figure of Alinesitoué is often used in connection with the Diola past, and she is depicted wearing the *deux pagnes*. Judging from the examples of the exhibition at the *Alliance Française*, and of Alinesitoué as well, it appears that symbols resonate further once they have been hollowed out.

Business suits and *boubous*

In Ziguinchor, people are sometimes inclined to ridicule the idea that people from different religions wear different kinds of clothes; they remind you that, on the whole and with some exceptions, people of a certain level of education and sophistication wear all kinds of clothes—business suits and *boubous*. Like Sara, they point out that in Ziguinchor, contrary to the situation in the villages, people of different faiths are even buried together in the communal cemetery, indicating that in the town people are more open and tolerant, and that it doesn't matter what you wear. It is certainly true that many people have both kinds of clothes in their wardrobes, but on closer inspection there is a pattern that emerges from the occasions and situations on which these two types of garments are worn.

The presidents of Senegal have set this pattern. Both ex-president Diouf as well as president Wade choose to wear European clothes for the official photographs that you see hanging in every office or hotel: a two piece suit, complete with shirt and tie. Their clothes match the rigid and static nature of official photos, the body closed, giving nothing away, the figure more like an emblem than a person. However, when they are meeting people personally, at social functions or receiving visiting dignitaries, moments when the personal authority of the president is not only on show but also being put to the test, and when he needs to be ranking himself against associates and rivals, both Diouf and Wade prefer to wear the *grand boubou*. In other words, when it is admissible for a person to throw his weight around, and to validate a personal status with a visible presence, then the *grand boubou* seems to be the appropriate form of dress. However, in situations where rank is not an issue, for example as in the president's

official photographs where the president's rank is secure, or because the nature of the context precludes the wrangling process, then Western dress, which closes and restrains the body, is called for.

This is perhaps the reason that, in the offices of government departments in Ziguinchor, it is difficult to tell from the clothes of the people working there who is a Muslim and who is a Christian—except on Fridays. For the rest of the week people tend to wear the same outfit that is associated with office work all over the world: fitted shirt, tailored trousers and enclosed shoes. Prominent people, the heads of the departments, even add a tie on particularly important occasions, enclosing the body further and rendering it figuratively inviolable by covering up the little hollow at the base of the throat, in much the same way that the Manding warriors covered that same spot with the tongue of the *turki*. The closed, restrained body is more suited to the 'civilizing' context of the civil service, in which people are required to work together at close quarters, and therefore to modulate and differentiate their interaction.

The *zabador* and *grand boubou* remain the Muslim form of dress and it is unlikely that a *marabout* would be seen in Western dress. For ordinary citizens, however, it remains important to show that you feel at home in Western clothes and that you can wear them when it is appropriate to do so. If you belong in an educated milieu, this is something you have to be able to do. The modern people of Ziguinchor have developed what you might call an 'expert' body: at home with both Western and Muslim forms of dress. They have learned to 'close' the body at will. By putting on fitted, tailored clothes, the body is restrained and controlled. Tailored clothes become the form of dress that is suited to the office, because the office context is incompatible with vying for rank. The pecking order in the office context is more complex than mere social ranking. It is safer to close down the body and keep away from danger.

In how far does the 'expert' body have to be acquired? The answer would seem to be that it does have to be learned, and that Western dress cannot be adopted simply at random. A compromise has to be made. Muslims in Ziguinchor, politicians and businessmen, like to show that they feel equally at home in both types of costume; however, it cannot be said that they look equally good in both types of dress. For a Muslim, bodily volume is a social asset, as explained above, and it adds weight to a person's status. A voluminous body also has a natural slowness and deliberation, which again is associated with

high rank; there is an unconfined, majestic quality about this body. However, once this voluminous body is forced into a tailored suit, the majestic quality tends to disappear. However large or well cut the suit, this body seems to be overflowing, challenging its boundaries and unhappy with the constraints these boundaries pose. The performing body and the enclosed body have to be remodelled before they can join forces and become an expert body.

Christians and the *grand boubou*

Modern Christians are also developing such 'expert' bodies, and learning to be more flexible in their way of dressing. Pierre Yves, for example, the agronomist from M'lomp, claims that he wears the *grand boubou* to go to an occasion with Muslim friends and even for important Christian occasions such as weddings. I do not know in how far he has really been able to adopt the gait that is appropriate to the *grand boubou*, since the one time he said he would be coming to an occasion dressed "*comme un muselman*", he actually turned up in a suit. He claims that he is able to wear the *grand boubou*, as long as he wears *babouches* on his feet. "*Sans babouches*: *ça ne marche pas!*" ("It doesn't work", was his own translation). There is an element of political correctness in this attitude. Pascal Diatta, for example, the Diola Christian who is Regional Administrator for the Basse Casamance, is more often to be seen in public wearing tunic and loose trousers than anything else. His job is to build a bridge between the Casamance and Dakar and he is careful to dress in a way that cannot provoke. His attempts at wearing Muslim dress are somehow unconvincing however. The material he generally chooses to wear, a simple printed *lesgosse*, is too light and flimsy for his high status and he has been unable to affect the slow tread appropriate to his important role. This might be because, unlike Pierre Yves, he has been reluctant to adopt and wear the pointed leather *babouches*. He has been reluctant to do so perhaps because they remain one of the fiercest of Muslim symbols, but they also remain one of the most effective tools for acquiring the appropriate demeanour for wearing the *grand boubou*.

The generation of Pierre Yves' father has not found it so easy to adopt this expert body in the way that their sons have, however. Albert Badji is about the same age as Antoine Badiane, the Christian from Oussouye who has never been initiated and who, therefore, remains

an outsider in his own village. The members of this generation were encouraged, during their upbringing, to adopt a more thoroughly European orientation and they find it more difficult to bridge the gap. Albert studied agricultural economics in Dakar before returning to Ziguinchor to work in a government department. Albert never wears Muslim dress. "It is not part of our tradition", he says and leaves it at that. He claims that on a special Diola occasion, he would wear the two *pagnes noirs*, one round the middle and one round the shoulder, a form of dress that represents Thomas' *Diolas purs*, and that is reminiscent of the image of Alinesitoué. That is to say, Albert prefers to turn back to the Animist traditions rather than to step over to Muslim ones.

Albert is a friend of Robert Sagna, the mayor of Ziguinchor, also a Diola and a Christian and one of the few nationally recognized figures to come from the Casamance. Albert and Sagna studied agriculture together in Dakar and they have much in common, including their attitudes to dress apparently. Sagna is not seen in *grand boubou*. A few years ago, he was invited to the important annual occasion organized by the Layène Muslim brotherhood in Dakar. Members of the Layène brotherhood distinguish themselves by dressing exclusively in white, and their annual congregation in Dakar is well known for its stunning visual effect. Sagna was a government minister at the time, and political considerations prompted him to accept the invitation. He acquired the five-piece *quintaquimper* outfit, in white, as indicated for the occasion, as well as white leather *babouches* for his feet. Sagna is a large man and he must have looked magnificent. However, all that his family remembers about the occasion is the haste with which he hurried up to his room on his return home, and changed his clothes. The story has it that this was his first and last experiment with what, for him, remains exotic clothing.

Summary

In some ways, dress as a 'tool' comes into its own in the town. This study suggests that there is a link between cultural orientation, in the cases discussed religious orientation, and the body's demeanour, and that dress plays a role in producing this demeanour. One of the features of modern life in Ziguinchor is that people have to, and wish to, live and belong in a variety of cultural domains. This adaptability

was also found in the malleability of the modern, 'expert' body in Ziguinchor. The women in particular, people like Sara and Albertine, are keen to build bridges with their ways of dressing and not to provoke—Albertine gently chides her husband for being unable to adapt to wearing a *grand boubou*. Albertine and Sara are well aware that, in wearing different types of clothing, they are also adapting their demeanour and their behaviour in an appropriate manner, modifying it to fit in with the occasion. That occasion might be a Muslim religious festival, which will require the body to perform, or it might be a meeting with Western colleagues, whereby the restriction of tailored clothes prompts the body to withdraw, giving way to the head. In other words, Sara and Albertine are aware that they are using the garments as tools, to elicit appropriate behaviour.

It is worth pointing out that there are plenty of people in Ziguinchor who do not achieve this modern, 'expert' body—the husband of Albertine, for example, and many of his friends, who grew up in a different era and have been unable to change either their habits or their *habilles*. Nor have the people at the centre of religious life adapted in this way; it would be as unlikely that a marabout would wear Western clothes as that an African *religieuse* would take to wearing the *grand boubou*. As Robert Sagna found out when he accepted the invitation of the Layène brotherhood, the habits of a life time do not allow this flexibility. For Sara and Albertine, however, dressing appropriately, *correctement*, and having a wardrobe that enables flexibility, is an integral part of being a modern person.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

Samatite: the 'working' body

In his essay *Red Calico*, the anthropologist van Beek (2001) comments on a series of photographs taken by Roy Villevoye of the Asmat people from Papua New Guinea. The photographs are full-length portraits of men in various forms of dress, some of it Western, and the main part of the series shows men wearing T-shirts. Van Beek focuses on the photos of the T-shirts. The T-shirts are interesting because of the state they are in. They are not just worn, or even worn out; they are so ragged and shredded that there is hardly anything left of them, and in some cases seem to remain on the body thanks to just one or two threads. At first glance, van Beek suggests, the Westerner may find the images disturbing. Has globalization reduced the Asmat to this miserable level of poverty? Is this a pitiable attempt on the part of the Asmat to emulate Western culture by adopting Western clothing? Were these once-proud people unable to withstand the superficial glamour of Western goods, even though they clearly cannot afford them? The Asmat are famous throughout the world for their wood-carving traditions and the Westerner might be prompted to ask himself whether these images represent the "economic, political and cultural defeat" of this artistic people:

> . . . as we know from Gerbrands' pictures from the 1960s, their appearance was stylish, powerful and recognizably their own. But here we are confronted with people dressed in Western rags, an image of Third World poverty and defection we are all too familiar with. It seems we are looking at a Salvation Army appeal, a poverty parade (van Beek 2001: 79).

On closer inspection however, having looked more carefully at this supposed initial reaction and found it wanting, van Beek concludes that what Villevoye has captured in his photographs is a quite different phenomenon. Wearing T-shirts in this way, in van Beek's words wearing them not as clothes but as cloth, represents the Asmat's way

of wearing a Western T-shirt and integrating it into their own cultural traditions. It is true that the Asmat would not have been able to afford the luxury of clean, whole and well-pressed T-shirts, but then this is not their aim. They have adopted the T-shirt for their own and transformed it from a garment that covers and represents the body into a form of decoration of the body, an embellishment similar to body painting or scarification. Van Beek comes to this conclusion by noticing the individuality of the remnant T-shirts and the way in which they 'fit' (idem: 87) the personal style of the owner. Added to this, there is the deliberation and the apparently intentional patterning in some of the slashes and tears in the T-shirts, which reveals the element of creativity in the garments. Van Beek relates this treatment of the T-shirts to the artistic traditions of the Asmat and in particular to the place occupied by the body in those traditions. Human and animal figures play a central role in their woodcarving conventions and:

> the body clearly is a crucial element in Asmat aesthetics, not only as a stylistic form, but also as the focus of a strong cultural symbolism (2001: 89).

It is the central role played by the body in Asmat culture, as well as the manner in which they have adopted and transformed imported garments, that makes van Beek's essay relevant here, relevant that is to the first group of people looked at in this study: the Diola of Samatite. At first glance the Asmat and the *Awasena* Diola would appear to have little in common. The *Awasena* Diola are first and foremost farmers, and they have little in the way of artistic traditions. In contrast to their Mandinko neighbours, they have no woodcarving tradition other than making the tools they need for farming, hunting and tapping palm wine; they are not sculptors and they do not weave. And while the Diola who live north of the river have adopted Mandinko masking practices, the Casa Diola do not have this tradition. Among the Diola of Samatite stylishness does not play an important role, as van Beek implies it does for the Asmat. One feature they do have in common however is the value they place on the human body. Chapter Four illustrates that the body, for the *Awasena* Diola, is valued not only as part of the natural environment but also as the primary tool whereby they lay claim to the natural environment. The body also has strong symbolic value for the Diola of Samatite, even though they do not use its image for artistic ends as the Asmat

do. They also share with the Asmat the tendency to adopt Western clothes, in the case of Samatite second-hand clothes, into their own traditions of body decoration, in the case of the *Awasena* scarification and beading. I mentioned the 'joking' element that appears in the way the men of Samatite use second-hand clothes, and this approach appears in Villevoye's photographs as well. One of the photos shows a 'warrior' complete with spear and red head band, who has decorated his torso by wearing a bra.

At the end of Chapter Four, I point out that the idea with which I began this study, the idea that dress moulds and shapes the body, does not really hold in the case of Samatite. As far as the people of Samatite are concerned, their bodies are shaped by the work that they do in the rice fields and by the pivotal role that the body plays in maintaining the natural environment. It is the *kadyendo* rather than the *pagne noir* that shapes their lean bodies and erect demeanour; it is rather their resistance to dress and their insistence on leaving their feet bare that produces the body they are so proud of. I had started from the assumption that the encounter between the body and the dress that it wears, the essential meeting place of nature and culture, would be somehow dominated by dress, and that dress would influence and configure the body. This did not turn out to be the case in Samatite, where, rather, the body remains the 'dominant' party. In Samatite, dress, including the shell suits and football shirts that the villagers buy at the second-hand market, remain, as they do for the Asmat, an embellishment, exterior to the demeanour of the body itself. In other words, dress remains within the traditions of body painting, scarification or tattooing, unable to affect the way the body moves and interacts with its environment, natural or social.

So this Conclusion, rather than asking in how far dress practices produced distinct types of bodies in the three villages, looks at the different types of encounter between the body and dress that have been illustrated here. How do dress and the body meet each other and interact, and how does this relationship fit in with the beliefs and practices of the villagers; in how far is dress shown to be the 'cultural tool' that was suggested? Within this framework the body is seen as the site at which, in its interaction with the world around it, ideas and ideals are lived and experienced. In some cases, but not always, dress is seen to influence the manner in which the body behaves. In these cases we might say that dress influences the way

in which the body lives and experiences certain specific ideas or concepts that are written into those forms of dress.

In the case of Samatite, we saw that this was not the outcome of the confrontation between dress and the body and nor was it so in the case of the Asmat of Papua New Guinea. Van Beek tentatively suggests that this way of using clothes, as decorating the body rather than covering it or moulding it, suggests "a primary concern with the body" and as "emanating from a sculptural tradition focussed on the body as a central symbolic object" (2001: 91). I would suggest a similar finding in the case of the Samatite Diola. The central role of the body makes it indomitable; its cultural status overshadows the contribution made by dress to the encounter. As among Asmat, it is impossible to account for the absence of clothing in Samatite, or for the ragged state of the clothing, by pointing to the economic situation. For one thing, the women do have clothes; it is simply that they do not wear them on a regular basis. For another: it is the older men in the first place, those with the most resources, who treat a more covered or complete way of dressing with disdain.

Santiaba: The 'performing' body

In Santiaba, too, the body is important. The body is seen as the starting point of a person's religious activity, as well as being the starting point of religious experience. Whenever I asked about dress or dressing, the conversation always turned to this topic: to be a good Muslim was to have a clean and pure body, and this began with washing, with soap and with proper care. Phrases such as 'Purité commence avec proprieté' ('Purity begins with cleanliness') and 'La proprieté fait part de la croyance' ('Cleanliness is part of religion') are not empty creeds but form the basis of the religious content of everyday life in Santiaba. Washing, not just your body but also your clothes, is part of the routine that accompanies the recurring calls to prayer throughout the day. Though Santiaba people give the body a different position in their representation of it than people in Samatite do—it is not part of the natural environment but is, rather, opposed to the natural environment—they are more aware of its central role than Samatite people are.

In Santiaba, the encounter between dress and the body can be seen as one of mutual vitalization, and bodily awareness is accentuated

by the importance that is also given to dress. Every afternoon, having spent the morning working in the fields or in the vegetable garden, Bintou Sane and her friends return to the house to wash and put on clean clothes in order to pray, in the proper manner and at the appropriate moment. Bintou wears her clothes only two or three times before she washes them. This represents a large investment of energy on her part; washing and drying the clothes, preparing the iron (flat-irons filled with hot coals) and then doing the ironing (generally on a table covered with layers of fabric) are all time-consuming tasks. When Bintou has ironed her clothes—wraps, *grands boubous* or *dokets*—to put them away, they become flat packs of cloth; they have no shape at all. But when she takes the folded cloth, from the suitcase that she uses as a wardrobe, and puts it on again, a metamorphosis takes place; the cloth comes alive and it becomes a garment once more. Her shoulders offer the supports from which the garment rediscovers itself; it falls in soft folds down over her large frame, the extra fabric forming supple pleats which move with the movement of her body. Equally transformed, the wrap, secured tightly around the waist—by rolling the end of the fabric over on itself two or three times, rather than tucking it in between the body and the fabric as most Westerners would—forms itself into crisp diagonal pleats across her stomach, fanning outwards towards the ground. If Bintou is wearing a *doket*, then the wrap is largely hidden from view, but if she is wearing a *grand boubou* then one sees a slice of the wrap through the seam that is opened on the side, and it forms a solid and pleasing contrast to the loosely hanging overgarment.

While the body breathes life into the fabric, activating its threads and its design, the newly-constructed garment galvanizes the body and gives it a sense of its own presence. The effect of the encounter extends in two directions. Wearing a straight-cut, uncut or wrapped garment causes a person to be constantly involved in the body's movements and gestures. Keeping large surfaces of fabric appropriately positioned on the body is something that has to be learned, it could almost be called an art, and some people never master it at all. But when that person has learned the basics of this technique, then it is the garments that become the teachers. The wearer's body becomes alert to his or her actions, performing, though subconsciously, the tiny gestures and bearings that allow control and manipulation of the ample amounts of fabric. Moving around gracefully and competently in such voluminous garments makes serious demands on the

body's techniques, and negotiating the material world requires constant attention. Banerjee and Miller describe the on-going awareness of the body's agency, including the anxiety, that is involved in wearing straight-cut or wrapped clothes, in this case the sari:

> The sari wearer sees herself as engaged in a constant battle to make her 'second skin', that six yard piece of rectangular cloth, move, drape, sit, fold, pleat and swirl in a manner obedient to her will. . . . this requires a constant, though unconscious, responsiveness to the way the sari moves with every gesture she makes. . . . The sari forces a continued engagement, a conversation, between a woman and her garment (Banerjee and Miller 2003: 27).

This sustained engagement involves the body in the daily round of activities. Only occasionally, in the coldest weather, do people in Santiaba wear any form of under garment, apart from the women wearing a bra, so that skin and fabric confront each other directly and work together to negotiate the social relationships in the village. As mentioned in Chapter Five, every family and every individual in Santiaba has a place in the village hierarchy and this position is accompanied by an appropriate form of bearing. As a general rule of thumb, slowness and heaviness accompany a high status and the more measured and ponderous a person's gait the more eminent he or she is likely to be. This is the reason why the fabric from which a garment is made becomes such a relevant issue. Relations between men and women are assimilated into the village hierarchy. Men's garments are unavoidably made from thicker and heavier fabric than women's; thick cotton, or a damask weave is the most popular fabric for a man's *boubou* while women take a thinner cotton, sometimes of a gauze-like quality, or even a synthetic chiffon type of material. At the same time, women from the family of the *chef de village* are more likely to have material that is beaded or heavily embroidered than women from other families. This is certainly more expensive, but it also produces a more dignified gait. Furthermore men wear various layers of garments. Though no one in Santiaba runs to the five layers of the *quintaquimper*, the imam in Elinkine regularly wears three layers, having on a short tunic between his *zabador* and his *grand boubou.*

This way of dressing, teaching the body to be constantly aware of its comportment and its boundaries, also inculcates 'correct' attitudes to the natural surroundings. In Santiaba, a sharp dividing line is traced between nature and culture and the body is drawn in on the side of the cultural. The people of Santiaba shudder at the idea of

not wearing shoes; soil and sand are seen as polluting the body and as making the body unclean and therefore unfit for prayer. In the focus on cleanliness and washing that permeates correct forms of dress, this state of body, which is taught to even very young children, becomes a state of mind. In the context of the meeting between dress and the body, the body is drawn into the terrain of the *umma*, the global Islamic community.

So while we saw in Samatite that the body remained unaffected by dress, and that dress became more of a decoration to the body than an influence on the body, in Santiaba that same encounter is more one of partnership. While the body vitalizes the garments it wears, those garments galvanize the body and attune it to its work as part of a social hierarchy. The body becomes a 'performing' body. The clothes worn by the people of Santiaba come from a wider cultural and political context than Santiaba itself. They are garments that are prescribed as correct Muslim attire and they teach their wearers to behave and carry themselves in a manner that is appropriate to the *umma*, the wider global Muslim community. For Bintou, this idea of being part of a global community is important. While she takes a great deal of pleasure from her clothes, they also lend meaning and conviction to her life in Santiaba, since they play such an essential role in incorporating her into the *umma*.

M'lomp: The 'enclosed' body

Unlike the Muslims of Santiaba, the Christians of M'lomp have no God-given rules to go on when it comes to how they should dress their bodies, and not many as to how they should treat their bodies. Unlike the Koran, the Bible's New Testament, which most Christians would use as the terms of reference for their behaviour, is not so keen on rules, certainly not when it comes to matters such as what a person should eat or wear. In general, and outside the field of church liturgy, such things are treated as irrelevant, as long as a certain modesty is maintained. The Christians of M'lomp have inherited the clothes of the Europeans who brought Christianity to the region in the late 1800s.[1] And these clothes come from a centuries old, intellectualist tradition, which has been dedicated to the pursuit of expertise,

[1] See note 9 page 11.

not only in its cultivation of reason but also in the technical skills it has developed. The tailored clothes that Soeur Marie Claire helps her pupils to make in their sewing classes are certainly a product of this tradition, and she is right to be proud of them, for tailored clothes are in many ways a miracle of technical prowess. Getting a flat piece of material to 'fit like a glove' around the human body has taken centuries of proficiency and dedication, and Marie Claire does not intend to abandon this knowledge. It was the missionaries, Muslim and Christian who first brought clothes to the Diola, urging the women to cover their breasts and maintaining that the uncovered body was primitive and uncivilized. But nowadays it is Soeur Marie Claire who refers to the Muslim garments as primitive and uncivilized. Though she does not openly disapprove if women come to the church dressed in *grand boubous* it is nevertheless not a garment she finds particularly appropriate for a Christian.

Coming herself from the European tradition, which so values technical skills, Soeur Marie Claire tends to take it for granted that her clothes are in every way superior to the simple garments she rejects. She is probably not even aware—because it is not her intention—that in promoting this form of dress she devalues the body. It may seem paradoxical that in Santiaba, where Islamic law insists that the woman's body must be covered up in such a way that it is impossible to see the body's form, the body remains so very present. While in M'lomp, where Christians tend to wear the fitted clothes of Europeans, which cling to the body and retain its silhouette, the body itself seems to disappear, or at least to disappear as a participating force. Although they leave the outline of the body clearly visible, the upshot of the encounter between these tailored clothes and the body that wears them is that the body loses its coherence and its sense of itself. Quite the opposite of the situation in Samatite, where the body successfully resists the influence of dress, in the case of M'lomp the clothes take the place of the body. The effective closure of the body takes away its work. The closed body experiences its own demise and learns to see itself as object rather than agent. Although this is not the intention, it is also not a coincidence. The tradition from which these clothes have emerged is one in which the body plays less of a role than the thinking part of the self.

I suggested in Chapter Four that the timid and diffident demeanour of the typically Christian body I observed in M'lomp, less sure of itself and more aware of its boundaries, was in some way due to the

lack of coherence, or continuity, that tailored clothes induced in the body. A tailored jacket, or tailored trousers, represent the body in a most effective way and often they flatter it as well. But to some extent such clothes take the place of the body; the body behind the façade disintegrates, or at least loses its continuity. The body becomes to some extent a collection of parts, and loses the cohesion with the conscious part. This assault on the body's continuity can be traced in the cloth as well. The most difficult task that Brigitte has to cope with in her sewing class is the pattern cutting. Even the most simple of dresses requires cutting out any number of pieces of cloth and she then has to teach the girls to sew the pieces together correctly; and in the right order. Although this cutting up of the cloth is now an accepted part of wearing modern clothes in the Casamance, nevertheless it is fundamentally at odds with the notion of the spiritual content of cloth. Weiner and Schneider make the point that:

> . . . the reliance of fashion on cutting and tailoring challenges the idea that continuous weaving transmits a spiritual force. In relatively uncommercialized areas of the world, taboos on cutting cloth still make this point (1989: 15).

In the Casa, a *pagne traditionel* would not easily be cut into; there remains a notion, even among tailors, that cloth should be treated with respect and should not be cut more than necessary. This is quite contrary to Soeur Marie Claire's approach, which asserts that the more intricate the pattern—that is the more pieces it is made up of—and the more it is moulded to the body, the superior the garment.[2] The Animists of Samatite do not tend to identify their own hand-made *pagnes* with factory-made fabric and nor would they identify their taboo on cutting into *pagnes* with the pattern cutting activities of Brigitte in the sewing classes in M'lomp. Nevertheless, the continuity which the taboo pertains to and protects, between the visible and invisible worlds as Mark puts it for example, is affected by this cutting up of the material. By dividing and ordering the material, civilized garments are made which divide and order the body. Although it might be exaggerated to say that such garments, on their own, bring about a certain ordered way of thinking about the world, one can point to the role that such garments take on along the path to 'civilization'.

[2] A man's jacket, for example, consists of over 45 separate pieces of fabric.

When you look at the way in which dress in Santiaba engages the body in a person's activities, practical and social, you cannot help realizing how influential clothes can be. In M'lomp, in the case of the Christian's clothes, the influence is also strong, though it is in the opposite direction. They enclose and shut out the body. Rather than galvanizing the body they subdue and encapsulate it. Dress becomes part of a process of 'forgetting' the body and taking it for granted. In the Christian's world it is the abstract knowledge of the head, rather than the body's knowledge that counts. In the passage quoted above, Banerjee and Miller also point to the contrasting effects of the sari and stitched clothing:

> But this requires a constant, though unconscious, responsiveness to the way the sari moves with every gesture that she makes. This is in striking contrast to stitched clothing, which once put on in the morning is largely taken for granted for the rest of the day (2003: 37).

Clothes do not bring about some kind of instant metamorphosis. They are part of a process in which the body gradually withdraws from the 'field of action'. Many of the Christians of M'lomp find jobs, if they are able to, as schoolmasters or in local administration. This means that their work in the fields is limited, or stops altogether, and that they start to demand less of their body's skills and possibilities. They become concerned more with the dexterity and competence of their minds than with that of their bodies and in the world they begin inhabiting the body becomes more of an appendage than an asset.

When the missionaries of the Order of the Holy Ghost arrived in Carabane in 1880 they were surprised to find a community of Afro-Portuguese Christians at the village of Pointe St Georges. These people, who many years before had moved there from Ziguinchor, now based their claim to being Christians solely on their enthusiastic celebration of All Souls Day and on the medals of St Anthony they wore around their necks. Up until the present day, medals and crucifixes worn on the body remain a bone of contention between local people and the sisters. Such tokens may be worn as a sign, but not as a means of protection, the way that Muslims wear their *gris-gris*, the sisters say. This is rather the attitude they have towards dress. The sisters do not consider appearance to have content, but clothes are useful as signs. Though the sisters no longer wear habits in the full sense they still wear white veils on their heads denoting their status. In the civilized world the enclosed body provides an effective

surface for signs. As Hendrickson points out, the body is remarkably persuasive as a ground for symbolic activity, since it provides a situation which is both personal and public.[3] The body becomes "the symbolic stage on which the drama of socialization is enacted" (Turner 1980: 12).

In M'lomp the focus on surface is made evident when people are choosing new clothes, for instance at Christmas or Easter. Among the Christians, the conversation tends to turn on the choice of design: the length of the skirt, the width of the sleeves, the collar. Among Muslims, the key decisions are about the fabric itself—the weight of the material, how it falls, how supple it is and so on. This is because it is the fabric that is going to decide the character of the garment; it is the fabric which, in 'conversation' with the body, determines the import of the new garment. This difference in focus runs parallel to the distinction that can be made between looking at clothes for their semiotic potential, that is to say as signs, or looking at the way in which they influence and move the body. The formative function of dress inevitably provides the basis of a sign. One can easily take the pointed leather slippers, the *babouches* that Muslim men wear with the *grand boubou*, as a sign. It is a form of footwear that Christians seldom wear and when you see a person wearing them in the Casa region you can be more or less sure that he is Muslim. But it is the function of the *babouche* in irresistibly determining that person's demeanour which forms the foundation of the sign; the *babouches* force the wearer to walk in a slow and deliberate manner. This is in striking contrast to the closed leather loafers which are the preferred wear of someone like Albert Badji, a Christian of the 'old school' but which Jacquari Sane, the *chef de village* of Santiaba, would certainly never wear. Such shoes are functional and easy to wear and they demand less of the body's co-ordination and they get little response from it. Such shoes are an important symbol of 'civilized' life in the Casamance: of education, functionality, rationality and the attitudes the Christian world has introduced. But at the same time, as part of the process of 'forgetting' the body and 'taking the body for granted' they are an important factor in introducing this world.

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[3] "Being personal, it is susceptible to individual manipulation. Being public, it has social import" (Hendrickson 1996: 2).

> Every social order systematically takes advantage of the disposition of the body and language to function as depositories of deferred thoughts that can be triggered off at a distance in space and time by the simple effect of re-placing the body in an overall posture which recalls the associated thoughts and feelings, in one of the inductive states of the body which, as actors know, give rise to states of mind (Bourdieu 1990: 69).

> . . . patterns of body use are ingrained through our interactions with objects, such as the way that working at a desk or with a machine imposes and reinforces postural sets which we come to regard as belonging to sedentary white-collar workers and factory workers, respectively. According to this view, collective representations such as those of gender and class are always correlated with patterns of body use generated within the *habitus* (Jackson 1989: 128).

My aim in this study has been to show that it is inadequate to see clothes merely as a set of signs. Recent literature on the social role of the body, for example in the work of Bourdieu and Jackson, has described the way in which collective representations, and the accompanying values and priorities, are woven into bodily dispositions and attitudes. Conventional ways of walking, sitting, standing and gesturing not only reflect but also sustain a community's 'scheme of things'. In this context, authors have suggested various techniques and situations whereby these approved demeanours are developed and maintained: in forms of physical work, in childhood upbringing, in the human inclination to imitate, and in interaction with other people and with objects. This study has illustrated that clothes and dressing need to be included in this list of body techniques. In its encounter with the body, dress remains one of the most important tools that society has at its disposal for regulating the body's demeanour. Its proximity to the body and its place on the body lends it power; its flexibility means it can adapt to all situations; and its ordinariness means that, as a tool, it is often overlooked and therefore all the more penetrating.

For example: Linares, in her accounts of religious conversion in the Basse Casamance (e.g. Linares 1986, 1992), points to the multiple and interrelated processes that prompt and enable people to change their religious beliefs. Ideological change—and in Africa religion remains the dominant ideological basis for a great many communities—does not take place as the "direct unproblematic consequence of the penetration of world market forces or capitalist relations of production" (1992: 7). In the case of the Casamance, she mentions the

new opportunities for trade which the Mandinko offered to the converts to Islam as well as the political opportunities offered to them, through the French and the Mandinko. She points out that it is overly simplistic however to see conversion simply as the result of benefits offered. Certainly, ideological change goes hand in hand with economic change, in particular with changes in the means and methods of production. But in order to effect such changes it is necessary to bring about a change in the ideological infrastructure—symbols and rituals—that anchors the new world in the minds of the converts.

This study suggests that it is not only minds that have to be converted and won over but also bodies. In the Casamance, part of the process of conversion entailed adapting the bodies of the converts to their new religion. This adaptation did not take place as the natural consequence of conversion, but, rather, preceded it. The first missionaries, Muslim and Christian, who arrived in the Basse Casamance region at the end of the nineteenth century, began by dressing the bodies of the local people. These new forms of dress—Western, tailored clothes in the case of the Christians, flowing, North African garments in the case of the Muslims—transformed the appearance of the body and rendered the body an appropriate symbol of the wearers' new religious path. Just as importantly, however, these new forms of dress trained the bodies of the converts, prompting the converts to carry themselves in new and appropriate ways. These new forms of demeanour not only supported and endorsed the new rituals and practices that the missionaries were introducing among the local people; they also endorsed the new ideas about the world, making it possible for the local people to view the world from a new perspective.

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