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Ethnogenesis, Mobility and Politics in the History of West African Canoe Fishermen

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One fundamental element in West Africa's demographic history is the complex process of ethnic fusion and fission through which individuals, groups and communities became both assimilated and differentiated along ever-changing new identities. This process of ethnogenesis, nurtured by the considerable displacement of people through vast expanses of African territory, has been a fundamental element in the emergence of the State and in its ability to function efficiently during the Middle Ages. Fisherfolks have been an integral part of this process despite their exclusion from most historical accounts of that period. From the privileged viewpoint of history, it can even be asserted that this dual process of migration and ethnogenesis is still going on today and must be included into any comprehensive attempt to interpret contemporary migration phenomena in fishing and to deal properly with the issues related to migrant fishermen.

MIGRATIONS OF PEOPLES AND ETHNOGENESIS (400 A.D.-1800 A.D.)

To understand the situation of West African fisheries, it is necessary to keep in mind their distribution along the three major life zones of West Africa and their subsequent position in the dense and intricate political and economic developments of the precolonial era.

The Sudanic Savanna Grasslands

States in West Africa emerged first inland, in the Western Sudan where the Senegal and Niger river complexes provided the axis

around which empire building was made possible.¹ Fishing folks, such as the Bozo, Somono, Soroko and Sorkawa, who dominate the history of inland fishing in the region, played a crucial role in this process.

The Bozo are believed to be the most ancient inhabitants of the interior delta on the western side of the Niger bend. Archaeological evidence found in Jenne-Jeno show that its first occupants (250 B.C.-A.D. 50) made use of iron, cultivated rice and were "heavily reliant on aquatic resources including fish, tortoise, crocodile and waterfowl" (McIntosh & McIntosh, 1981:15). Whether these people were Bozo, born out of the holes of the Delta, as suggested by certain oral traditions, is not clear (Fay, 1989). Between 400 and 900 however, the central Delta underwent intense immigration flows, and the beginning of this "second phase" of occupation should be considered as the latest possible date of Bozo "arrival" in the area.

By the 5th century A.D., the middle Niger was functioning as an important north-south axis of riverine transport, which in fact is congruent with seasonal migrations of Bozo fishermen, from the Jenne region to areas beyond lake Debo, in pursuit of the oil-rich Nile perch (Sundström, 1972). Original masters of all water bodies, the Bozo (Sorogo, Tié and Kelinga) had an early interaction with Nono autochthonous rice producers and exchanged excess production with later (Bamana, Soninke, Rimabe, Pél) immigrants as well (Cissokho, 1966; Tymowski, 1970; Verdeaux & Fay, 1987).

At about the same time, between the 5th and 11th centuries, the Soroko, a skilled group of nomadic fishermen, were then following a long north-west migration route along the eastern side of the Niger bend. According to Boubou Hama², the Soroko were coming

1. "It was the Niger which enabled remote provinces to be brought under control and administered, which gave access to markets and whose banks provided sites for the main towns (...). 'C'est au fleuve que ces territoires doivent leur cohésion politique et économique' writes Tymowski" (Smith 1970). This statement, which refers to Mali (12th-15th A.D.), Songhai (15th-16th A.D.) and the Bamana States of the Middle Niger Valley (17th-19th A.D.), is also true of Tekkur and Ghana which had emerged around the Senegal river by 500 A.D. Contemporary of Mali and Songhai, or emerging from their respective breakdown, a host of smaller states (Kaabunke, Nyomunka, Wolof, Mossi, Haussa...) were also created in the area.

2. From personal notes; reference not available.

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from the vicinity of Niamey while the Sorkawa moved later from Yawiri, another Sorko point of origin in Nigeria.

Benefiting from their large number and their great mobility, the Sorko founded several colonies such as Gao and Kukya, which were to become capitals in the Songhai empire, and went as far as lake Debo where they were stopped by the Bozo. They established their rule over the Do (the first fishermen in the area,³ and the Koromba, Gurmanche and Gabibi agriculturalists, whom they partly assimilated until the emergence of a new entity, the Songhai people, of which they were the nucleus and the dynamic element (Cissokho, 1966, 1975; Stride & Ifeka, 1971; Tymowski, 1970).

The genesis of the Somono—the boat people—is a peculiarity in West Africa as its emergence was directly promoted by the State of Mali, in the context of a growing demand for fish related to population increase (Tymowski, 1970) and of the State's need to organize its political control over the river. The Somono were initially a multi-ethnic grouping (of Bamana, Bobo, Soninke, Dogon) based upon a Bozo nucleus and on servile manpower provided by the State (Diaw, 1983; Fay & Verdeaux, 1987). Later, in the 18th century Bamana State of Segou, they metamorphosed into a closed ethnized caste of fishermen and developed one of the most sophisticated fishermen-State relations in the history of the region (Roberts, 1981; Diaw, 1983).

Fishermen in the Western Sudan had a strategic importance that was reflected by their full participation in the reproduction of the State. Integrated in the tributary economy, they paid taxes, dues and customs in the form of cowries, dried fish, grass for horses, help in the repair of building of State fortifications, as well as canoes, crews and ferry services for the movement of information, material and troops (Tymowski, 1970; Roberts, 1981; Diaw, 1983).

Fishermen were also deeply involved in the trans-Saharan trade. By the 12th century, fish was dried, salted and smoked while Bozo and Sorko fishermen supplied the whole Niger up to the

3. Reflecting the actual sequence of arrival of the major fishing groups in the Niger bend, the system of fishing rights gives Do fishermen the "spiritual authority" over the very "essence" of the aquatic environment, while Sorko fishermen retain property rights on its "content" (particularly over large animals) and Sorkawa, only a usufruct right over the resource (Boubou Hama, from personal notes; reference not available).

Saharan oasis and down to the forest region (Mauny, 1961; Cissokho, 1975). Boats constructed for that purpose had amazing sizes and fabulous load capacities and river ferrying, more attractive than other means of transportation⁴, was a major tool in the trade of salt, cereals, fish, kola nuts, honey, cattle and war slaves.

In return for all their services, fishermen were fostered "through special recruitment and privilege" (Roberts, 1981). They had the exclusive right to navigate and fish the river, were (particularly the Somono) regularly supplied with slaves, benefited from the special protection of the king and were heavily represented in the State administrative and military apparatus. In Songhai, the State had organized an extensive network of ports which were headed by fishermen such as the Goima-Koi in Gao or the Kabara-Farma in Kabara. They were to collect entrance and exit fees, to record the loads and number of boats and to keep track of the State's fleet. The overall system was headed by the Hi-Koi, supreme military commander, and the Hari-Farma, supreme chief of the water (Tymowski, 1967).

Thus, the State sponsored the expansion of a group of fishermen who, in turn, provided goods and services crucial to its continued ability to make war.... The State inserted itself in the Somono mode of production (...) through renewal of the social relations of production and through the extraction of a portion of the social product (Roberts, 1981).

The Senegambia and the Upper Guinea Coast

The peopling of the West Atlantic littoral, which in the Middle Age developed as a dependency of the savanna States, was mainly the result of a continuous dislocation over the centuries, of populations from the interior to the coast.⁵ By the 11th century, this general pattern of migration was well established, as people moved from north and east to west and south, each migration wave coming to superimpose itself over already existing human aggre-

4. The Songhai "kanta" could carry up to 30 tons of goods, i.e. the load capacity of 1,000 men, 200 camels, 300 cattle or a flotilla of 20 regular canoes (Mauny, 1961). Some of these boats had an even greater load capacity of 50 to 80 tons (Tymowski, 1967).

5. According to Rodney (1970), this process might have started as early as the third century A.D.

gates.⁶ The Banun, who probably are the most ancient ethnic formation in the region and who occupied a vast territory stretching from the Cacheu to the Salum rivers, were followed in the area by a host of other groupings (Beafada, Bram, Bijiago, Maniak, Mankan, Joola, Balant, Mandinka). By the 19th century, the three latter groups (and 15th century Tukolor immigrants as well) had taken over all Banun territory and had assimilated them in such a way that the group was considered almost extinct⁷ (Diau, 1985).

North and south of the Casamance/Guinea-Bissau area, similar phenomena were taking place. The Sereer, moving from the Senegal river valley, had reached the Petite Cote and had even pushed further into the Gandun island where they merged with the local population (probably Banun as well as Mande) to form the Nyominka entity. By the 12th century, the Sherbro were present in Sierra Leone as well as the Bullom, who were the single dominant group of that area (Rodney, 1970; Stride & Ifeka, 1971). The Baga, displaced from the Futa Jalon mountains, had reached their present habitat in Guinea.

The end of the 8th–13th centuries' wet periods (Brooks, 1981), and various economic and political developments of the Western Sudan at that time (Diau, 1983), accelerated migrations toward the coast, through the Futa Jalon mountains. This was the case for the Susu⁸, who moved into the Futa Jalon after their defeat at the hand of the Mandinka. They later left for the coast, under the pressure of Fulani pastoralists. It is also during this period that the nature of Mandinka traders' and settlers' infiltrations in the area is transformed by Timagan Traore's conquest and by the subsequent foundation of the Kaabu and Nyomi dependencies of Mali. Other

6. Sereer myths and archaeological evidence show that the whole coastal area from the "Petite Cote" south of Cape Verde to the rivers of Casamance and Guinea Bissau was the site of a common civilisation, "the civilisation of the shell hills" (Gravand 1983).

7. The history of the Beafada, who in the past occupied about three-fourths of the Guinea Bissau area and who are now reduced to hardly 12,000 people concentrated south of the Geba and Corubal rivers, is comparable to that of the Banun. Both show a typical characteristic of ethnic relations on the Atlantic coast, as migrations favoured intense processes of ethnic assimilation, through war, competition as well as long Pacific interactions.

8. Among which were iron smiths looking for suitable species of hardwoods necessary for the iron-making process (Brooks, 1981).

Mande groups such as the Vai and the Kono settled further south in Sierra Leone and Liberia.

The Atlantic was only minimally exploited and navigated until the arrival of the Europeans at the 15th century. Consequently, the social and economic history of the coast is marked by its links with the hinterland and its integration into the trans-Saharan trade network. According to Rodney (1970), salt collected from mangrove leaves, extracted from the soil by percolation or produced by direct evaporation of seawater, was "the most important item fostering contacts between the littoral and the hinterland" and had "the ability to attract people through amazing distances". Dried fish and molluscs were part of the riverine and coastwise trade of kola nuts, malagueta pepper and other forest products along the Petite Cote, the Salum and Gambia rivers and the upper Guinea coast. According to Brooks (1981), even gold, iron and cotton production could have exerted a powerful stimulus for commerce with riverine and coastal societies of the Guinea-Bissau region linked by relay trade to the peoples of the forest.

By the mid-fifteenth century, Beafada mariners had developed a seaborne commerce for kola, pepper and indigo which took them as far as the river Nunez and even further south (Brooks, 1981). As early perhaps as 700 A.D., Nyominka mariners of the Salum islands were trading with Banun of the Gambia and Casamance (Linares De Sapor, 1971). Banun also traded with Sereer and Wolof traders up to Cape Verde "which marked the northernmost point of coastwise navigation whence caravan routes extended northwards through Wolof territory to the Senegal river, to link with trans-Saharan routes" (Brooks, 1981).

Besides navigation, fishing was also a regular activity of coastal populations before the 15th century. It was practised up to 2–3 leagues from the coast while gear and boats were sufficiently diversified to suggest some significant exploitation of fish resources. It is probable, however, that most of the fishing activities were done inland in the fishing-grounds of protected estuaries, lagoons and coastal lakes (Diau, 1983; 1985). During that period, only the Cape Verde and the Petite Cote on the Senegambian littoral seemed to have offered secure conditions sufficiently stimulating for the development of a more intense exploitation of marine resources. For a significant sea-fishing activity to develop,

it is necessary to wait for changes that take place later, from the 17th century on, and which affect the entire coast down to the Gulf of Guinea.

The Gulf of Guinea

The origin of fishing on the coasts of present Ghana has been subject to some confusion as Fante maritime fishermen were being credited by well-known authors for introducing the craft of fishing in the area.⁹ Such a belief is not well founded, since it ignores both the role of pre-Akan people on the "Gold" and "Ivory" coasts and the place of continental fishing which, as elsewhere in the continent, served as the laboratory where fishing technology and knowledge were first tested and elaborated.

Long before the migratory waves of Fante, Askante and other Akan groups reached the area in the 17th century, fishing was already largely practised by indigenous peoples.¹⁰ Archeological evidence shows that in the lagoon swamps of the Ivory Coast, fishing was practised by people living in tiny hamlets bordering the lagoons "since at least the iron age and, probably, since the stone age" (Stride & Ifeka, 1971). These people developed later an original civilisation based on the complementarity of fishing, agriculture and iron-working (Verdeaux, 1981). By 1400, salt, fish and cloth from the coastal region, and kola nuts, gold dust and slaves from the forest area, were integrated in the trans-Saharan trade network. At that time, three branches of this network's two most important routes connected the great markets of Hausaland and Mali to the coastal termini of Elmina, Cape coast and Accra (Adu Boahen, 1965; Stride & Ifeka, 1971).

Coming from the North, the Twi-speaking Akan were still on the northern side (Bono, Banda) of the forest border at the 11th-12th century (Ki-Zerbo, 1978). While the Ashante remained inland, the Fante and some other Akan groups followed the Black Volta opening through the forest and the Akwapim hills and

9. Such as Lawson or Brown (see Diaw, 1983:61).

10. In fact Akan peoples were looking for fish and salt when they first established contacts with Guan and Ga-Adangme peoples (Fyfe, 1965). This gives a further confirmation of the anteriority of fishing not only among iron-age lagoon folks but among pre-Akan immigrants as well.

pushed their migration southward until they reached the coast. There, they met with people such as the Ga who had left Nigeria and were following a westward route along the coast which took them to the Accra plains. Following the same path, several Akan groups went as far as the Ivory Coast. Among them were the Eotile, who settled on the lagoon Aby where they came under the control of later Agni migrants (Perrot, 1989) and the Alladian. Others, such as the Ebré and Attié might have taken another route through the forest (Ki-Zerbo, 1978). Dan people, such as the Kru, Géré, Bété and the Bakwe, came from the West, probably under Mande pressure and formed between the 14th and the 19th centuries the present Neyo-Kru entity after having assimilated the original occupants of the mouth of the Sassandra, the Gnagbia. It is probably under their pressure that the Ajukru were pushed further East (Swartz, 1974).

In congruence with the pattern found in the Western Sudan and on the West Atlantic coast, a complex process of ethnic aggregation and disaggregation, conflict and cultural assimilation of the lagoon peoples was triggered by the arrival of these successive waves of immigrants. Still not achieved today, this process was far from unilateral. In the Ivory Coast, migrant groups have not only taken up fishing under the influence of indigenous communities, they also adopted some of their distinctive socio-cultural features, such as the Afzi system of age classes found neither among Akan nor Kru societies (Verdeaux, 1981). In the Gold Coast, the Ga-Adangme even incorporated the fishing gods of the Guan into their own religion (Stride & Ifeka, 1971).

In the lagoons of ancient Dahomey, fishing history is dominated by two Adja groups: the Xweda (Pedha) and the Xwla (Plah) but counts other Adja fishing people such as the Gun, "people of the water" (Bourgoignie, 1972), the Aizo and even some Fon. The Xweda are generally considered as the first settlers of the country. They were, however, preceded by groups of hunter-fishermen, the Aghe, who are still today the real "owners of the land" (Pliya, 1981).

Further east, in the 28,000 km² of mangrove swamps, creeks and waterways of the Niger Delta, peoples such as the Itsikeri and the Sobo (western delta), the Ibo (central delta), the Ijaw and the Efik (a branch of the Ibibio which moved from the forest to the creeks

around the Calabar river in the eastern delta) also found indigenous inhabitants of the area—"Umuale"—whom they had either chased or absorbed by the 15th century (Stride & Ileka, 1971).

Fishing people have been affected in at least three different ways by the coincidence between the late advent of centralised states¹¹ in the Gulf of Guinea and the opening of the Atlantic trade, which was responsible for chronic inter-state rivalries and the expansion of the slave trade in the 17th and 18th centuries.

While Fante fishermen and Kru mariners seem to have generally benefited from their position within the emerging Atlantic system, fishing folks of ancient Dahomey's lagoons were most negatively affected by these occurrences. In 1727, the Xweda capital, Sabe, was burned to the ground by a conquering Abomey army and its main coastal outlet, Whydah, was captured. This was to provoke a major exodus of Xweda people toward lake Aheme¹² and proved to be the beginning of a long period of persecution accentuated by Abomey's direct contact with the slave trade. Continuously hunted down, raided and dislocated, Xweda were forced¹³ to move always further into the swamp zones where they met other refugees such as the Xwla and even some Fon. In these refuge zones, the populations specialised in fishing and salt production and were unable to form any structured political entity (Pliya, 1981).

Peoples of the delta city-states lay at another extreme of the spectrum. Probably in response to environment conditions, they did not develop centralised states but, instead, a myriad of settlements and villages built around the "house system", i.e. their socio-political division into households and wards. The city-state was a confederation of "houses" controlling a trading region in

11. Benin and Oyo in the 14th century; Abomey, Asante and other Akan states such as Fante and Akwamu in the 15th-17th centuries. In 1629, there were 34 small states clustered in Southern Ghana, among which 28 were Akan states (Adu Boahen, 1965; Stride & Ileka, 1971).
12. Where they might have met Aizo hunter-agriculturalists coming to establish fishing and agriculture settlements on the banks of lake Aheme (Pliya, 1981).
13. In spite of their resistance through ambush, blockades and other forms of naval warfare used at different moments (1726-1727; 1753) in this conflict (see Smith, 1970).

the interior forest belt. It had two main activities, fishing and trading, and was part of the long-distance trade network.

With the development of the slave trade, the content of these trading activities is profoundly modified as delta people become major slave dealers, well organized within the "canoe-house", a fishing, trading and fighting corporation of kinsmen, strangers and slaves. The canoe-house was essential to keep open the strategic waterways linking the coast to the hinterland and became the real foundation of wealth and state power in the delta in that period.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MARITIME FISHING AND MODERN FISHING MIGRATIONS

The development of maritime fishing in West Africa was not the work of early coastal dwellers, who relied primarily on the system of inland waterways, but of new migrant populations which did not reach the coast before the full growth of the Atlantic trade at the 17th century.

The Wolof-speaking Lebu's first contact with the sea took place only at that time, after they were chased from Cayor and reached the Cape Verde and Petite Cote areas in Senegal. In St. Louis, Gendard, as a fishing settlement, was created even later, in the 18th century, by Subalbe and Wolof fishermen from the Senegal river valley. Freetown as a Kru settlement was also founded only in 1790, which is the period when the fame of the Nana-Kru as mariners starts to be recognized on the coast. Until the middle of the 17th century, the Fante Union was still an inland state controlling no more than three coastal outlets. Only thereafter does it become a coastal society through the progressive occupation of pre-existing villages.¹⁴ In the same vein, Anlo-Ewe were supposedly not familiar with the use of boats when they came to settle on the coast, east and west of the Volta river. As regards the Lewu, their first stable boat was introduced in Anlo country in 1702 only, by Aomega Le and a group of migrants coming from Adangme and Ga

14. This is the case of Cape Coast, an Efutu settlement, and of Anomabu created by the Guan, where Fante came to settle around 1662 and 1690, respectively.

towns (Diaw, 1985b; Green, 1988; Chauveau, 1982; Lewis 1977; Boahen, 1965).

With the creation of new coastal towns and increasing exchange flows related to the littoral economy, the role of coastal communities as intermediaries between European traders and the hinterland becomes central; fishing and navigation techniques (bar-passing, rigs and sail) also go through tremendous improvements.¹⁵ The development of the slave trade and increased inter-states rivalry have various impacts on different points of the coast. While fishing and navigation improvements are still developing in the colonial outpost of St. Louis (Get-Ndar) and the Fante coast for instance, a regression of maritime activities is noticed in several parts of the Senegambian (Chauveau, 1982) and Guinea coasts. In Anlo country, the full use of new boat technologies is impeded until at least 1769 by the Ako wars and later conflicts as well (Greene, 1988).

Until the 19th century, continental fishing remains probably the main source of fish production. Fuelled by the colonial drive, the establishment of a capitalist exchange economy, growing urbanisation on the coasts and an increased mobility of peasants towards the new poles of dependent economic growth, dramatic changes start taking place in the maritime fishing industry at the end of the century.

In Benin, the construction of the wharf of Cotonou in 1891 triggers Xwla and Kru migrations (Pliya, 1981). This is also the time when Lebu and Get-Ndar fishermen start coming into the estuary of the Casamance where they introduce new gear such as cast-nets and gill-nets (Diaw, 1985a). During World War II, Get-Ndar fishermen are reported as the main suppliers of the market of Conakry which they leave shortly before the end of the war. In the early 50s, their presence is first attested in Ivory Coast¹⁶ where they find Fante, Ewe and Nzima settlements going back to the 30s (Berron, 1975) and maybe to the beginning of the century (Delaunay, 1987). In the 20s, Anlo-Ewe migrants are also present in Benin (De Surgy,

1969) where they are followed by Ada and Fante fishermen (Pliya, 1981).

Today, Fante and Ewe fishermen cover the whole area from Sierra Leone to Cameroun. Under their influence, former lagoon fishermen such as the Xwla and Xweda are now going as far as Cameroun, Gabon and Congo (Haakonsen, 1989). The ethnic map of the fisheries is getting increasingly heterogeneous as more people enter the fisheries and as internal and international migrations are developing.¹⁷

River fishermen are also part of this process. Since the beginning of the century, Bozo fishermen have been moving toward the coastal regions of Ivory Coast where their presence is related to major crises of the lagoon fisheries, while Somono were going as far north as St. Louis (Gruvel, 1907). Somono are also present in southern Senegal (Casamance) where they have permanently settled among Balante and Mandinka peasants after introducing the drift félé-félé net in the 30s (Diaw, 1985). They were followed in the area by Subalbe (Tukulér) fishermen, who introduced their own version of the shrimp-fishery (Diaw, 1985; De Jonge, 1980; Van Chi, 1970). As a clear indication of their reconversion capacity, Subalbe were found until recently in the expanding marine lobster fisheries of La Guerra in Mauritania (Chaboud & Kebe, 1989) while in Casamance, non-Subalbe Tukulér were overcoming caste barriers to enter the fisheries (Diaw, 1985).

CONCLUSION

The widespread distribution and the high mobility of West Africans throughout the coastal and riverine areas of the region is dependent upon a heterogeneous complex of variables, conjunctural and structural, biological, economic or demographic.¹⁸ As such,

17. For a good summary of today's spread of maritime fishermen in West Africa, see Haakonsen (1989).

18. These include fishing strategies and ecological conditions, regional economic disparities (differences in production costs, market size and prices, infrastructure, monetary exchange rates) as well as micro social and demographic strategies (savings, inheritance, marriage, etc.).

15. See Chauveau 1982 for the Senegambia; Diaw, 1985b; Christensen, 1977; Smith, 1970 for the Gulf of Guinea.

16. Diaw, forthcoming. To be noted is also the later migration of Lebu fishermen (1960), now established at San Pedro.

these migrations are related to two essential forms of movement in fisheries: "regulated fishing migrations" and "labour migrations" (Diaw, 1983). History shows, however, that in the long run, these movements could but be transitional forms of peoples' migrations, a concept which refers to the historical and global mobility of groups, nations or communities across the continent.

This point could prove essential to management politics, as expulsions of fishermen, caught in the midst of inter-state contradictions or as scapegoats in limited electoral calculus, are still taking place in many African countries. Such measures often result in economic recession and perturbations of the fisheries and local economies.¹⁹ They also fail to address a more fundamental issue: the possibility of generating an endogenous and long-lasting development in Africa without establishing integrated policies transcending the limited boundaries of national jurisdictions. The expression "integrated policies" is both an evocation of the concept of African integration (which has almost acquired a mythical resonance after two generations of intellectual debates) and a "clin d'œil" to people concerned with strategic issues related to Africa's development. Two interrelated components are implied by our use of the concept: regional integration and integration of the "informal" economy.

The success of canoe fishing in West Africa (which forecasted extinction and served as the basis of French colonial policies in particular, between the 1850s and 1945), and the vigor of the transnational aspects of its dynamics, cannot be viewed just as some kind of incidental peculiarity. Rather, they could be better understood as an expression of the potential and the relevance of the so-called informal economy (which I prefer to refer to as "the African sector of the African economy"), and as a partial explanation for the failure of three decades of narrow micro-nationalist policies based on an inadequate understanding of important historical experience.

A fetishist perception of the state has traditionally tended to view a whole range of local as well as "trans-border" initiatives and structural relationships (which logics often predate both its

birth and the Berlin Congress) as a threat to its territorial and ideological legitimacy. To call for an integration of policies is thus to call for a progressive—but not necessarily "non-traumatic"—remodeling of economic, administrative and cultural policies along the dynamic lines of concrete social experiences at the local and regional levels.

In operational terms, and with regard to fishing, the concept has thus little to do with issues such as "quotas" or "transnational tenurial rights", born out of the cultural context of capitalist rationality in European and North American fisheries. In our understanding of the West African situation, an integrated policy would necessarily have a regional dimension and integration global issues related to monetary disparities, customs and immigration laws as well as other regional aspects of national policies. Its most fundamental trait, however, should be the incorporation of phenomena such as the "tonines", the share system, "informal" lending arrangements, local tenurial rights, communal organizations (such as those so efficiently run by Fante, Ewe and "Popoh" international migrants), international movements of fishermen, women fish traders and processors, ethnic solidarities, etc., into a strategic frame for the development of the fishery sector.

By shedding some light on the tight interplay between ethnogenesis and mobility within regional politics, history might be of some help in the definition of such a strategy for West African fisheries.

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19. Though neglecting the fisheries, Zachariah & Condé's (1981) study of West African migrations in the 60s and the 70s shows that large-scale immigration has tended to accelerate growth in receiving countries, while expulsions of workers have contributed to economic recession.

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