Cultures of travel: Fulbe pastoralists in central Mali and Pentecostalism in Ghana

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Population mobility has always been regarded as a special and temporary phenomenon. However, in many instances mobility is the normal state, while sedentarity is the extraordinary situation. This is illustrated with two examples of so-called 'cultures of travel'. The first about the Fulbe in Mali demonstrates the ways in which mobility has historically been embedded in Sahelian cultures under conditions that are marginal from both an ecological and an economic point of view. It illustrates how people develop economic and cultural strategies marked by a high degree of opportunism. Their society is, in fact, organized around mobility. The second case, that of Ghanaian Pentecostalism, shows how a specific form of culture acts to bring about a particular form of mobility. Unlike the Fulbe, it is not the whole society that moves but persons who are mobile for individual and personal reasons. It is an example of how people construct and, almost literally, produce cultural forms and means for dealing with everyday problems of mobility, and success and failure in this domain.

Introduction

The study of population mobility in its different forms has started to receive increasing attention. Migration has always been an important topic for geographers, economists of development and development studies but within anthropology the subject used to receive much less attention from anthropologists concentrating on small, territorialized communities. Only fairly recently have scholars such as Appadurai (1991 and 1995), Clifford (1992), Hastrup & Olwig (1997), to name but a few, taken up the challenge of studying the cultural aspects of population mobility. Notions like 'travelling cultures' (Clifford 1992), 'the production of locality' (Appadurai 1995), 'global ethnoscapes' (Appadurai 1991) found their way into the anthropological vocabulary on the wave of the post-modernist shift towards Cultural Studies that took place a decade ago. Large-scale population movements in the form of labour migration, refugee movements,
asylum seeking, international and intercontinental travel and tourism have led anthropologists and sociologists into new theoretical and empirical fields.

The exploration of new forms of mobility has encouraged anthropologists to re-examine the foundations of their discipline. According to Hastrup & Olwig (1997: 1), cultures were conceptualised as separate and unique entities corresponding to particular locations: "The erection of cultural distinctions and borders is thus closely related to the anthropological practice of understanding culture from an internal local point of view (emphasis added). In his essay on 'travelling cultures', Clifford (1992: 101) proposed an alternative ‘[...] why not focus on any culture’s farthest range of travel while also looking at its centres, its villages, its intensive field sites? How do groups negotiate themselves in external relationships, and how is a culture also a site of travel for others? How are spaces traversed from outside? How is one group’s core another’s periphery?’"

Clifford reserved his notion of travel for contemporary forms of travel and excluded involuntary forms of movement like the slave trade and contract labour, modern involuntary travellers like refugees and asylum seekers, and economic travellers like labour migrants. Travel in his view carries with it a special kind of culture, such as that of nineteenth-century British intellectuals and explorers travelling through Europe (especially Italy) and to such remote places as the source of the Nile. In its contemporary form, it seems to refer to movement in a seemingly border-free cosmopolitan world consisting of hotel lounges, airports and the like. This idea of travel applies to those with specific bourgeois class and gender positions and is distinct from other forms of mobility such as labour migration.

This chapter discusses how population mobility in Africa is frequently a cultural phenomenon and is culturally mediated, and how contemporary and past forms of population mobility have given rise to cultural forms and ways of relating to others. The question is not so much whether travelling cultures exist but how they are produced and respond to, mediate and mitigate social, economic, political and ecological conditions in Africa and beyond. Population mobility and the associated travelling culture are decisively influenced by conditions on the ground that force people to move. In Africa some people have developed travel as the very basis of their existence.

The problem with the study of population mobility is that it has always been regarded as a special and temporary phenomenon (Hastrup & Olwig 1997: 6) and that the natural state of people and the world was conceived of in terms of stability and coherence (Davis 1992; Hastrup 1993). Gypsies and nomads, obvious exceptions to this view, were treated as a special and temporary phenomenon (Hastrup & Olwig 1997: 6) and that mobility in time and space and the processes of de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation, and the disordering and ordering which it involves (cf. Hastrup & Olwig 1997: 7).

The case studies discussed in this chapter deal with various aspects of mobility, showing not only two forms of mobility but also two kinds of mobility of forms. The case of the Fulbe involves the mobility of a whole culture, a specific form from one location to another embedded in a myriad of forms of mobility. It demonstrates the ways in which mobility has historically been embedded in Sahelian cultures. The specificity of the conditions in areas that are marginal from both an ecological and economic point of view means that people develop economic and cultural strategies marked by a high degree of opportunism. The whole society is, in fact, organised around these opportunistic strategies. The second case, that of Ghanaian Pentecostalism, is different. A specific form of culture acts to bring about a particular form of mobility. Moreover, it is not a whole culture or a whole population that is on the move but persons who are mobile for individual and personal reasons. Mobility among Ghanaian Pentecostalists is not yet part and parcel of daily life as it is for the Fulbe but it presents a fascinating example of how people construct and, almost literally, produce cultural forms and means for dealing with everyday problems of mobility, and success and failure in this domain.

In both cases mobility has acquired a momentum in itself, in which something has emerged that may be labelled a culture of travel. A field of practices, institutions, and ideas and reflections related to mobility and travelling, which has acquired a specific dynamism of its own, has arisen out of interaction with conditions 'on the ground'. The most striking aspect of these cultural fields is that they are closely related to others. In the Ghanaian case, the links between mobile and Pentecostal churches, and evangelical Christianity in general, are indispensable for an understanding of particular forms of migration from Ghana. In the case of the Fulbe, the phenomena discussed are part of a larger cultural and historical repertoire that extends back in time and is shared by Fulbe society and most of semi-arid West Africa.

A culture of travel: The Fulbe of Mali, a nomadic cattle-rearing people

Diversity in Fulbe society

The Fulbe are an example of a pre-modern travelling culture. Although questions surround their unity and origins, they have spread over much of Sub-Saharan Africa between Senegal and Ethiopia and the Sahara and the West-African coast, creating an archipelago of "islands of Fulbe ness" (Botte & Schmitz 1994). During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, their political control extended over pagan populations in Senegal, Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Cameroon. As a result, a string of and cultural boundaries that social science supposes to exist. Mobility is often associated with disorder and suffering with poverty, political and military conflicts or ecological disaster frequently the reason for population movements. These subjects have long been neglected in social science (Davis 1992; Hastrup 1993). Our notions of culture and of social order need to be redirected. In this way a new perspective may emerge on mobility in time and space and the processes of de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation, and the disordering and ordering which it involves (cf. Hastrup & Olwig 1997: 7).
Empires and emirates emerged along the Sahel (Schmitz 1994; Ba & Daget 1984; Robinson 1985; Diallo 1999; Burnham & Last 1994). Other groups of Fulbe who felt uncomfortable within these theocratic states moved north to the northern Sahel to escape political control (Dupire 1962). Fulbe who are descended from pilgrims traveling to Mecca are known as Islamic scholars in Sudan (Abu-Manga 1999; Delmet 1994). They moved into towns in Sierra Leone as traders (Bah 1998).

More recently, other forms of population mobility have emerged. Over the last few decades numerous livestock-keeping Fulbe have moved southward in search of new pastures (Bernardet 1984; Blench 1994; Diallo this volume). This movement accelerated under the impact of drought and economic problems in the Sahel proper, and political problems in Guinea and Mauritania forced some Fulbe to settle as refugees in Senegal (Tanoh 1971; Sautoir 1994).

In the literature this mobility has become linked to the fact that they are a cattle-keeping people and therefore moving to feed their livestock. This stereotype is based on the Fulbe’s self-image and the ethnic stereotypes held by their neighbours. In reality, this mobility based on a pastoral economy relates to only one of this society’s many social groups. However, the cattle-rearing Fulbe have come to represent the Fulbe identity and have found their way as such into coffee-table books produced by Western photographers (Beckwith & van Offelen 1983; Mols 2000) and magazines like National Geographic.

It is the mobility and the associated political (and sexual) freedom that attracts these relative outsiders but the role of mobility goes much deeper than this and permeates the ways in which people relate to each other and the shape their social life has taken. Fulbe society is divided into a number of social groups, some of which are sedentary, while others lead a more mobile way of life. The political elite (the chiefly lineages), Islamic clergy, artisans and a group of courtiers are an almost sedentary lifestyle though they have a history of mobility. Mobility is a way of life of a cattle-rearing people that has developed into something else over the course of history. Traditionally the nomadic pastoralists, who make up the majority of this people, had a mobile way of life. The keeping of cattle and the cattle themselves symbolise mobility but are not synonymous with it or with Fulbe identity. Other elements of Fulbe identity such as Islam are also related to forms of travel. This case study considers the various aspects of mobility in their contemporary as well as their historical forms.

The Hayre

The Hayre is located in the Sahel, the semi-arid belt extending across Africa from Senegal to the Indian Ocean. The area experiences low annual rainfall (300-600 mm per annum) that is extremely unpredictable in both time and space. This variability accounts for wide variations in the crop and livestock production that forms the basis of the livelihood of the population.

The Hayre (‘rock’ or ‘mountain’ in Fulfulde, the Fulbe language) derives its name from the mountains and the plateau that dominate the landscape in the centre of the Niger Bend (see Map 5I). The region further consists of an area of sandy soils and fixed dunes called Seeno where good pastures can be found, and an area with clayey soils called Ferro that is overgrown with dense forest alternating with strips of bare earth.

The research on which this section is based took place in central Mali in the districts2 of Douentza and Bandagara and in south Mali in Kouta District. It considered the mobility of the Fulbe, how they express mobility in their lives but also in a geographical sense the interactions of the people with their Sahelian ecological environment. Given the climatic conditions, resource availability is extremely varied in time and space. Mobility in a variety of forms is a necessary strategy for dealing with this variability. Mobility is a way of life of a cattle-rearing people that has developed into something else over the course of history. Traditionally the nomadic pastoralists, who form the majority of these people, had a mobile way of life. The keeping of cattle and the cattle themselves symbolise mobility but are not synonymous with it or with Fulbe identity. Other elements of Fulbe identity such as Islam are also related to forms of travel. This case study considers the various aspects of mobility in their contemporary as well as their historical forms.

2 In Mali a district is called cercle, literally ‘circle’
tamed in their territories where they maintained some measure of control. At the other end of the spectrum, sedentary groups of cultivators also started to move and occupy large areas of the pasturage of the mobile livestock-keeping population.

When viewed from afar, the region appears to portray a picture of continuous movement of people and animals and the constant replacement of fields. With increases in political centralisation, the character of movements changed. Some lines moved out of the area, others have come in. Some move faster than others, some lines split up, disperse or even vanish. Others are re-created every year, yet more are created only once, some are circular, others go back and forth to the place of origin.

These lines may involve people moving from one field to another, and people moving with cattle or flocks of small ruminants, sometimes from one village or a camp to another, sometimes just searching for the best pastures while drifting over large areas. One sees the clearing of new fields, the abandonment of old fields and the number of livestock fluctuating. These fluctuations are in turn another source of movement. One sees dispossessed families and individuals move out of an area looking for a better existence elsewhere, and older people moving to large agricultural villages to live off charity. Others stay put and enlarge their fields to create a new existence in cereal cultivation.

Of course the landscape, the background against which these movements take place, is not just a combination of physical objects. It is a deeply humanised landscape providing the people moving in it with the coordinates for orienting their movements. Property relations direct people in a specific direction, for example to reoccupy an old field of their grandfather’s somewhere or to water their cattle at their relatives’ well. Social and political relations promote and impede travel to specific locations. Hostility prevents people from moving to specific areas and they go to villages where people used to receive them in the past, and with whom they maintain host-stranger relationships (De Bruijn et al. 1997). Possibilities for exchanging livestock products such as milk, butter and sour milk for cereals make them reconsider their routes. When a period of drought occurs, all their schemes have to be re-arranged and different vistas have to be explored to escape from the negative effects.

However, ecological conditions are not the only reason for movement. Young boys were and still are sent away with Islamic scholars to study the Koran, surviving by begging in villages or camps. Adolescent boys travel on their own, going from one learned man to another to further their studies. More recently, adolescent boys and young men have started to wander all over West Africa looking for work and adventure and to escape from the harsh reality of existence in the Hayre. Those who stay behind have to cope without their contribution to the family’s existence (De Bruijn 2001).

Perceptions of mobility
Reflections on these movements of the people indicate that all have different reasons for being mobile but for most, movement is the natural thing to do. It is embedded in their social organisation and forms part of their Sahelian identity. Historical accounts, songs and oral histories are all imbued with mobility. The main Fulbe narrator living in the Hayre started his introduction to the history of his people with a story about migration.
The very first chiefs of the Fulbe in this area came from elsewhere as hunters with their horses and dogs. They settled, but never permanently, and became leaders of a group of wandering nomads in the region. They assured their survival and hegemony by raiding other wandering groups such as the Tuareg but probably also other Fulbe groups.

This narrative about the origin of Fulbe society in this area stresses that these people are not from one place and their strength is their geographical mobility that ensures their subsistence. At the same time, the existence of this narrative gives the people a feeling of belonging, of being of the same stock, of having created a society. Today this feeling of belonging reaches far into Burkina Faso and into the south of Mali where the Hayre is still recognised as the point of origin by many and everyone sharing this feeling is part of their group. The mobility in the narrative supplements the movement of 'them' as a people.

The story explains why some groups are more mobile than others. The cattle-rearing groups are most mobile because of the wishes and needs of the cattle. Herders have to be mobile to explore the best pastures, to gain access to water in the dry season, and also to reach markets. Other social groups like the political and religious elite and former slaves are less mobile and administer the country and provide religious services. The slaves are put to work on the land to produce the cereals that serve as the basic food of the noblemen. Differences in mobility are thus based on a political and historical division of labour but there is also a strong cultural dimension. Mammal labour is regarded as degrading by the noblemen and herdsmen (see De Bruijn & Van Dijk 1994).

Narrative additionally depicts other ethnic groups in the region, like the Dogon, as being more sedentary. However, a closer look at their strategy shows they are also mobile and move within the year from inner to outer fields, and over the years over large distances from their cultivation hamlets. They are also experts in seasonal migration. Nevertheless, they consider themselves different to the herding groups, as sedentary and having less of an ideology of movement than the elite and former slaves of the Fulbe.

From past to contemporary forms of mobility

Over the course of the twentieth century, Dogon from the Bandiagara Plateau and villages on the escarpment migrated to the Seeno Plain, occupying large areas of the pastures used by the Fulbe herdsmen (Gallais 1975; Martineili 1995). Some, in their turn, moved onto the Bandiagara Plateau and established villages and camps there (H. van Dijk 2001). Many Fulbe and Dogon moved out of the area to look for a better life elsewhere. After major periods of drought at the beginning of the twentieth century, rainfall was more abundant in the 1950s and 1960s. People moved less and were able to live relatively prosperous lives for some decades.

The situation changed dramatically with the droughts of the 1970s and 1980s, which led to a profound crisis for the inhabitants of the Hayre, as existing production systems were not able to absorb these climate changes. The droughts of the 1980s in particular gave rise to new forms of mobility in all groups of Fulbe society as large numbers of Fulbe lost the livestock that served as the basis for their livelihood. Some families split up, while others were able to maintain some form of internal cohesion and carve out a new existence. The stories of a couple of Fulbe families who ventured into new areas to look for fresh opportunities to herd the few remaining livestock or to find employment in livestock keeping, trade or other economic activities illustrate some of the responses to the crisis.

Research carried out all over Mali, on the Bandiagara Plateau, along the border with Burkina Faso and in the cotton-growing area around Koutiala, showed that there were Fulbe families camping outside the official villages in the bush, sometimes just one or two families per village territory, at other times a whole camp was established in the bush. At one site, representatives from other status groups in Fulbe society could be found (artisans and former slaves) performing the same tasks as in their area of origin (see Van Steenbrugge 2001).

Moving along one of the lines representing mobility to the south of the Seeno is the Forest of Bay, south of Bankass and Koro in the border area between Mali and Burkina Faso. It consists partly of a flood plain and each year, if the rains are good, it is flooded by the Volta River. Fulbe have been using the Forest of Bay as a dry-season grazing reserve for a long time and have even settled permanently in villages there. Other population groups, mainly Samo and some Dogon, also live in the surrounding areas.

The line connecting the Hayre and the Forest of Bay reappears each year but it has not yet become as important as after the drought of the 1980s. The line is not straight and the people moving along it do not all belong to one group. They come from different camps and families and move at different times in various years. When they arrive in Bay, they do not camp at the same place nor do they stay in one place for a long time. They know and have contact with each other and sometimes set up camp together. Their stories differ in the reasons for mobility, in their wandering history and in their wealth. When considering each individual migration history, the general picture crumbles and becomes a very fine net of lines between the Hayre and Bay.

The first story is of two brothers from Yirma. They left Yirma accompanied by two other brothers and their father when they only had two cows left. Their father, with their older brother, camped somewhere on the Seeno, north of Bay, the youngest brother lived somewhere else. All herd cattle belonging to the sedentary cultivating population. Initially they took refuge in Burkina Faso but had to leave because of Burkina government tax demands. They settled temporarily on the Seeno where the older of the two brothers said he had been on his way home even though he had a problem with his knee and foot, both of which were so swollen that he could not walk. They have many goats and a few cows. But will they ever return? He did not plan to travel any further back to Yirma. He does not know if it is possible to have a reasonable life there and he appears disinterested because ultimately he will just continue wandering.

The other brother and his wife have more contact with the people in Yirma. They do not consider returning because in Bay there is more space and they seem to be doing pretty well. They offered us visitors sugar and tea and they were all well fed. This woman's land also gave them the opportunity to escape all kind of rules imposed upon them by a government they do not consider their own.

In the third hut lived an old woman. She followed her son who has been wandering for years because his future near Booni was not promising. His elderly mother had no
one other than her son to take care of her so she travelled with him. Her presence is a burden for her son, making him immobile, so he said.

In the evening many other Fulbe appear from an apparently empty land to greet the white visitors coming from their ‘home’ area and to hear the latest news. They arrived from across the border or from the Forest of Bay. All these people are migrants from the Hayre, the Sennor or further north. They reported that many of the people who had come with them had moved on to the south. Bay was becoming overcrowded, as we discovered ourselves the next day when we continued our journey. The road was full of cattle and pastures were being heavily exploited.

The people travelling still further to the south do not go in a straight line either. They travel from place to place, sometimes visiting acquaintances but in most cases creating acquaintances by inviting themselves or by creating ties with a family residing in the place where they hope to settle. All the people we interviewed knew people, sometimes close family, who had moved with them and who had gone further. They were looking for better pastures, for a herd to watch, or for adventure. Virtually no one went back to where they had come from, though the majority are still in contact with those who stayed behind, but to varying degrees. After the drought of the 1980s a new network of Fulbe developed extending far into south Mali and over the border into Burkina Faso and Côte d’Ivoire, a web of people.

Most of these people disappear administratively. They are invisible for the Malian government and do not appear in statistics. If they cross the border they are immigrants that is not theirs, creating their own web of people with its own rules, its own sense of law and order, in short, its own mobile, travelling culture.

**Mobility and identity**

Taking the perspective of mobility in this area of central Mali leads one along different tracks away from villages and towns to people who are not directly visible, who do not live in ‘localities’. It illustrates another aspect of their lives and of the lives of the presumed sedentary people: they live in and with their mobility. Daily talk is about being mobile, and relations with others are all placed in the perspective of mobility. In fact we have a mobile culture, a travelling culture. Their hotel lounges and airports, to paraphrase Clifford, are local and regional markets or watering points for the livestock. They do not communicate by mobile phone or e-mail but through an immense network of kinmen, acquaintances, hosts and traders who transmit messages in code.

This is clear among the cattle-keeping Fulbe but also other Sahelian people seem to be adopting a mobile lifestyle, a mobility which is central to their lives. The basis of this lifestyle is ‘la condition sahélienne’ as Gallais (1975) put it, the innate necessity to move in an environment so unreliable and patchy in resources as the Sahel. However, in the course of history it is not only adaptation to a climate or a certain geography, it has become more to include other domains such as religion, trade and youth culture. It has indeed become a pre-modern, non-cosmopolitan, non-bourgeois, non-consumerist, travelling culture with its own narratives, ideology, and social organisation.

This mobility is definitively not only a coping strategy to deal with the diminishing or increasing availability of natural resources, as an answer to the insecurities of the dry-land environment in terms of rainfall and biomass production. It is also a socially and culturally constructed phenomenon, with its own raison d’être. Some people do migrate; others stay around the whole year. The question has to be raised as to why some migrate while others do not. Is this again only an adaptation to the same environmental and contextual factors or are there cultural and social or even political reasons for doing so?

A consequence of their mobility is that they are regarded everywhere as ‘the other’ or ‘the stranger’. They are always the people who come from far away. Also in areas where they have been politically dominant, their hegemony has been relatively short, as is stressed in oral traditions. There too, they are regarded as the ‘strangers’ in relation to the original population that they ruled. In the Hayre, they were the last to arrive. In disputes over land that are increasingly taking place, they are often on the losing end nowadays because they cannot claim the right of first occupancy. In areas where they were the first they often have problems maintaining control over land because of the low intensity of the use of the land, their mobile way of life and the associated flexible rights that they define over land and pastures.

As a consequence, the Fulbe do not relate their identity to a specific territory in the same way their sedentary cultivating neighbours do. They define themselves by referring to a common ideology in which livestock, Islam and their way of life are the main components. Depending on the context, they may stress different aspects of their components. In disputes over land that are increasingly taking place, they are often on the losing end nowadays because they cannot claim the right of first occupancy. In areas where they were the first they often have problems maintaining control over land because of the low intensity of the use of the land, their mobile way of life and the associated flexible rights that they define over land and pastures.

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where ‘citizenship’ presupposes an attachment to a place and to a state, religious forms may crosscut that and create a kind of moral domain in which people move about. In this culture, spirits, gods and deities and their forms of worship are considered unhindered by states and localities and attempts to bind people to certain places. This specifically applies to the spread of a new form of Christianity, Pentecostalism, and the way it has come to appeal to Ghanaian migrants worldwide.

From migration to multi-locality: The Ghanaian Pentecostal diaspora and its subject

In Ghana, on the road leading from the coast to Kumasi, the age-old capital of the Asante Empire, is what superficially looks like any other remote rural village. On both sides of the tarmac road are huts, some in much better shape than others, and people seem to be busy with their daily chores. This image of a mundane, quiet and rural life is, however, deceptive. The first indication of something special about this place is a small building bearing a sign saying ‘Reception’. Adjacent to it there is another small building with a sign that reads ‘International Calls’. The more perceptive may even have noticed that the place has a peculiar name, ‘Adomfa’, a ‘Blessing Taken’, a locality where powers of supernatural origin are at work.

It is the Adomfa Residential Prayer Camp belonging to the largest of the Pentecostal churches in Ghana, the Church of Pentecost. It is led by the 75-year-old prophetess and deaconess, Grace Mensah Adu and is the oldest of all the prayer camps in the country. Since its inception in the early 1960s it has attracted thousands of visitors. The prophetess’s prayers are considered so powerful that they help to resolve a wide range of illnesses, problems, conflicts and misfortune. Many people come to consult the prophetess and attend her prayer-healing sessions. In November 1997, the registration books of the camp showed that over 70,000 people had visited over the previous years. Some just stay for one day, feeling assured that the prayer-healing sessions have alleviated their problems, while others stay in one of the many houses for weeks or months before they have to travel abroad, from partaking in the international domain. Prayers and fasting at another camp had provided him with a ‘breakthrough’ a couple of years ago allowing him to travel successfully to Amsterdam using a false passport and overstaying the tourist visa that he had obtained through bribery.

Before then, he had held some powers in his family that were responsible for him being unsuccessful in emigrating. Those prayers of some years ago had effectively dealt with the powers although when he arrived in Amsterdam, he was not entirely sure whether all these occult powers that came from within his family had been broken (obubu). He decided to join one of the satellite groups in the Netherlands that had emerged from these Pentecostal prayer camps. They have been developing as independent Ghanaian Pentecostal churches in such places as Amsterdam, The Hague, Hamburg and London.

The prayers helped for a while and he was not visited at night by visions of the occult, he got a couple of odd jobs and even began a relationship with a Dutch girl. But then his troubles returned and he felt forces from his family mounting against him. His illegal stay in Amsterdam began to become troublesome, his partner walked out on him and he felt a serious threat of spiritual weakening which ultimately would jeopardise his entire position in the Netherlands. If the Dutch police arrested him and forcibly repatriated him to Ghana, he would face serious social disgrace. It would demonstrate that he had not made it or lived up to the expectations of the family to provide for them in a material sense. In addition, however, it would also show a failure to keep afflicting forces under control, powers that in the spiritual realm cause misfortune and mishap. David therefore decided that it was time to seek spiritual help at a prayer camp where
the right kind of charismatic powers were available, and for that he needed to return to Ghana.

Upon arrival he went straight to Adomfa and felt that through prayers and fasting another breaking of those powers that were ‘pulling him down’ would soon be effectuated. His mother had also visited a prayer camp on several occasions since her son had not been able to remit money to her. She had been praying for a ‘financial breakthrough’ on his and her behalf while he was still in the Netherlands. "Perhaps I will need two more weeks of fasting to get back to Amsterdam," he said.

**Mobility and identity in ideological spaces**

What can be seen from examples like this is that migration and mobility are deeply cultural and secondly that geographical spaces are just one of many that can be conceived of, as spaces in which people move about. Pentecostalism, an immensely popular form of Christianity, appears to create its own specific ideological space, very transnational and at the same time very multi-local. Multi-local here means that the creation of the Pentecostal ideological space is produced not only in Ghana but also at many other locations around the world at the same time.

Building on the experiences of the prayer camps, a more modern form of Pentecostalism has emerged in Ghana in recent years, characterised by the establishment of hundreds of churches particularly in the urban areas (Gifford 1998; Meyer 1998; R. van Dijk 1997 and 1999). Many young, upwardly mobile urbanites and those of the emerging urban middle classes are attracted to these new churches, some of which have in the meantime grown into mega-churches with many thousands of members. Their moral views have become highly influential in the public domain, mainly because of their access to the modern media. They are considered a political force of tremendous importance.

All of these churches have in common a zest for establishing branches in as many places outside Ghana as possible (R. van Dijk 2001a): By adding words such as ‘international’, ‘global’ and ‘world’ to their names they indicate to everybody their presence in the field of transnational relations and intercontinental migration. Nearly 40 of these Pentecostal churches have emerged in the Ghanaian migrant community in the Netherlands, particularly in Amsterdam, the Hague and Rotterdam where a total of 30,000-40,000 Ghanaian migrants live (Ter Haar 1998; R. van Dijk 2001a and forthcoming). One of the striking facts is that these are not only satellite churches from Ghana but that a number of them are Ghanaian Pentecostal churches that have emerged on Dutch soil and are spreading from the Netherlands to Ghana and other parts of the world.

In other words, there is a multi-local production of Ghanaian Pentecostalism worldwide, albeit not in a singular, uniform format. There are important differences in the way for instance the prayer camps operate in Ghana as compared to these newer Pentecostal churches in the Diaspora (R. van Dijk 1997). Each of these forms appears to contribute in its own way to the notion of a worldwide Pentecostal ideological space which the Ghanaian migrants can easily tap into at the many places they tend to travel to. For many migrants the notion of spiritual coverage—a spiritual blanket—is considered crucial, as the case of David shows. Any member of a Pentecostal church, whether in Ghana or in the West, is at the same time a member of a larger transnational community. At the prayer camps, the ritual practice the aspiring migrants go through prepares them spiritually for detachment from their families and their wider social environment.

The theories of deterrence and fasting are meant to break the spiritual ties connected to the family in the first place, ties that when they take the form of occult powers obstruct the person from migrating to the West. As these practices foster the experience of ‘de-localising’ the person, detaching him or her from local cultural bondage, Pentecostalism appeals to many as it helps to restructure kinship relations and obligations, specifically ‘at home’. Pentecostal prayers and fasting are meant to keep the powers from the family at bay, and thus create a spiritual opportunity for bringing kinship obligations under the control of its individual members. Pentecostal ideology rejects the power of the ancestors and tends to confront family authority head-on as part of creating a modern identity and a sense of modern ‘individuality’.

In addition, and most appealingly to migrants, Pentecostalism actively reformulates the compulsory gift-giving system, which in Ghana is considered crucial to the maintenance of kinship relations (R. van Dijk 1999). Gifts (remittances) to the family are proclaimed as morally vital (Rouse 1991 and 1995). Many young, upwardly mobile urbanites are attracted to these new churches, some of which have in the meantime grown into mega-churches with many thousands of members. Their moral views have become highly influential in the public domain, mainly because of their access to the modern media. They are considered a political force of tremendous importance.

All of these churches have in common a zest for establishing branches in as many places outside Ghana as possible (R. van Dijk 2001a): By adding words such as ‘international’, ‘global’ and ‘world’ to their names they indicate to everybody their presence in the field of transnational relations and intercontinental migration. Nearly 40 of these Pentecostal churches have emerged in the Ghanaian migrant community in the Netherlands, particularly in Amsterdam, the Hague and Rotterdam where a total of 30,000-40,000 Ghanaian migrants live (Ter Haar 1998; R. van Dijk 2001a and forthcoming). One of the striking facts is that these are not only satellite churches from Ghana but that a number of them are Ghanaian Pentecostal churches that have emerged on Dutch soil and are spreading from the Netherlands to Ghana and other parts of the world.

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moral creeds (no alcohol, no smoking or drugs, no ancestral veneration etc.) that a person may gain access to all it can offer in practical terms of help and support.

Whereas in prayer camps in Ghana, such as the one described above, people go through a ritual process with the intention of cutting away ties and bonds with the family and the control that is exerted over them through the ancestral domain, the Ghanaian Pentecostal groups in the Netherlands ensure the person is not ‘localised’. Integration in Dutch society is not their hallmark. The creation of images of ‘Dutch citizenship’ to be followed by all is not the intention of their rituals or proclamation. Furthermore, church leadership often holds highly critical views of public morality in the Netherlands and tends to declare the country a wild place with omnipresent dangers.

In a specific way, therefore, this mobility of form establishes a ‘de-local’ identity: an identity whereby the meaning of being a Ghanaian Pentecostal is to create a certain distance from Dutch society while at the same being able to hold Ghanaian cultural traditions (for instance relating to ancestral worship) at bay as well. In other words, by becoming Pentecostal and by joining a Pentecostal community in the places where one has migrated to, such as the Netherlands, one remains neither ‘fully’ Ghanaian nor becomes totally Dutch.

Ghanaian Pentecostal groups have been established in many parts of the world, from England to Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, the United States, Israel and even Japan. There is much interchange between these groups in terms of travelling preachers and musical performers, trade in specific cloths and clothes, intermarriage and support in times of difficulty (funerals for example). The continuous contact and exchange from place to place between the Ghanaian Pentecostal churches also creates a high level of uniformity in the ways meetings and rituals are conducted, the content of the messages preached to audiences and the format of the various organisations within these communities. This enables migrants to travel from place to place and church to church without difficulty in joining in and relating to what may be going on locally.

Discussion of the ‘identity work’ of these Pentecostal groups has left one question unanswered. To what extent is mobility, in this case a mobility of a form i.e. that of Ghanaian Pentecostalism, to be regarded as exceptional? Is it something that from the perspective of a sedentary type of life appears as out-of-the-ordinary, as a reaction or a form of adaptation available to migrants who have arrived in an estranging environment? Or is it to be regarded as something that is representing certain cultural forms that, like Fulbe nomadism, are characterised and determined by mobility?

**Mobility of form versus sedentarity**

In Ghana there is a saying that if a bird sits on a branch of a tree for too long it can expect a stone to be thrown at its head, meaning that if a person does not look for opportunities elsewhere, his or her environment will hit hard. Mobility is on everybody’s mind and one of society’s ideals is to become a ‘bin-to’, that is somebody who has been to Europe and has come back with something worthwhile for the family as a whole. Many families aspire to having relatives abroad and many often have family members residing in a number of countries outside Africa. For important events in life, ranging from sending children to school, the organisation of the customary and costly memorial or wedding ceremonies or the care of the elderly, families have become increasingly dependent on organising, in fluid and mouldable ways, their relations with the High God (beyond the horizon or literally ‘beyond the maize’). This has created a ‘multispatial livelihood’ (see Foeken & Owuor, this volume) and has not only become international but intercontinental. The intercontinental movement of people, particularly to Western Europe, follows, to a greater extent, earlier forms of massive movement both within and beyond Ghana’s present-day borders. It is not difficult to point to a range of religious and cosmological notions and repertoires that have played a role in the historical and cultural processes that have played a role in the establishment of mobility in colonial and post-colonial times.

From the early nineteenth century onwards, the Ashanti kings established a highly centralised state by conquering neighbouring groups and subverting them under their feudal system of power (McCaskie 1995; Chazan 1988). Even before the colonial era, political centres became a well-defined and distinct domain of thought and action, separate from other sectors of public life. The epithet of power was the golden stool of the Ashante-ken, a stool symbolising the religiously sanctified power of the king given to him by the High God of Onyame. Within this centralised political system, ideas of ‘citizenship’ and the High God of Onyame were important. Within this centralised political system, ideas of ‘citizenship’ and the High God of Onyame were important. Within this centralised political system, ideas of ‘citizenship’ and the High God of Onyame were important. Within this centralised political system, ideas of ‘citizenship’ and the High God of Onyame were important. Within this centralised political system, ideas of ‘citizenship’ and the High God of Onyame were important. Within this centralised political system, ideas of ‘citizenship’ and the High God of Onyame were important. Within this centralised political system, ideas of ‘citizenship’ and the High God of Onyame were important. Within this centralised political system, ideas of ‘citizenship’ and the High God of Onyame were important. Within this centralised political system, ideas of ‘citizenship’ and the High God of Onyame were important. Within this centralised political system, ideas of ‘citizenship’ and the High God of Onyame were important. Within this centralised political system, ideas of ‘citizenship’ and the High God of Onyame were important. Within this centralised political system, ideas of ‘citizenship’ and the High God of Onyame were important. Within this centralised political system, ideas of ‘citizenship’ and the High God of Onyame were important. Within this centralised political system, ideas of ‘citizenship’ and the High God of Onyame were important. Within this centralised political system, ideas of ‘citizenship’ and the High God of Onyame were important. Within this centralised political system, ideas of ‘citizenship’ and the High God of Onyame were important. Within this centralised political system, ideas of ‘citizenship’ and the High God of Onyame were important. Within this centralised political system, ideas of ‘citizenship’ and the High God of Onyame were important. Within this centralised political system, ideas of ‘citizenship’ and the High God of Onyame were important. Within this centralised political system, ideas of ‘citizenship’ and the High God of Onyame were important.
Perhaps not exclusive to the Akan polity in West Africa, which persisted throughout the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. At this time, a massive labour migration from the northern Sahelian areas to the south began to take place. Most of the northerners settled in the zongo areas. This southbound migration was related to the fact that, in the fertile southern areas, cocoa production had increased under the influence of expanding colonial trade. More labour was needed for gold mining and in the urbanising areas along the coast where trade and commerce were becoming increasingly important. Under the influence of this migration, the former zongo were growing steadily and the nature of the relationship with strangers and their concomitant religiously protected crossing changed.

Werbner (1989) highlighted the remarkable interrelationship between the various forms of strangerhood and the rise of the zongo on the one hand and the influx of specific personal security cults and a variety of shrines that became part of the southbound traffic of people into the Asante and Akan rural and urban areas on the other. These cults accompanied and guided the traveller by providing ritually protected corridors and a cosmology that incorporated the local and the ancestral into the regional. Along with the import of people and labour from the north into Asante came shrines, materna sacra, substances, cultural codes and ritual activities. Certain cults, with shrines in the north such as the Tallis Boggar Cult or the Tigare anti-witchcraft cult from Wa, established satellite shrines in the south or developed travelling shrines to speak to the migration movement.

While these types of cults developed and safeguarded the crossing of strangers into other cultural domains, the Ashanti and Akan fascination with powerful protection originating from elsewhere had a tremendous influence on the shrines within their domain. Although the strangers of the zongo were perceived in terms of great social distance, their religious expansion, their cosmological powers of the travelling shrines and their ability to venture into the bush and travel safely resonated deeply in Asante life. Asante shrines began to cross to other cultural areas replacing, as Werbner showed (1989: 238), those of the northerners. Hence, the possibilities for religiously protected travelling and trading also expanded for the southern groups and covered a region far greater than ever before.

A second development that enhanced the notion of a wider world of travel and opportunity reaching the heartland of Asante was the arrival of Christianity. As with the northern personal security cults, strangers brought this religious form to Asante. Wide-spread fascination started to emerge with a new window out onto a larger world. Christian missionary education, health care and the possession of all sorts of Western objects not only produced awe and respect but also a desire to become part of that world (Goody 1977; Meyer 1995 and 1999). As Hefner (1993) pointed out, conversion also meant a cultural conversion into a different world. The strong western ‘missionisation’ after the late 1880s by the established Christian churches (Roman Catholic, Basel Mission, and Methodists, but also missionary Pentecostal churches from England and the United States) brought new visions of modernity, of an enticing world where new skills could be acquired and fortunes made. As early as 1900, these religions facilitated access to a wider world for increasing numbers of Ghanaians and encouraged many to migrate to the United States and the UK, often in search of education.

Local appropriations of Christianity took the form of independent prophet-healing churches, which began to appear in large numbers in the 1930s and 1940s (see Wyllie 1980; Meyer 1995). Hundreds of churches emerged, often combining syncretically elements from Christianity with local cosmological notions and practices especially those concerning healing. These churches spread rapidly through the activities of itinerant prophets and healers, and seemed to cater to the needs of the rural-to-urban migrant. Many settled in the fast-developing cities of Kumasi, Accra and Cape Coast. In a deeper sense, these prophet-healing churches formed a continuation and transformation of the religious powers that originate from elsewhere (namely Christianity) and the way in which they could be incorporated.

The rise of charismatic Pentecostalism highlights yet another development in the relationship between religion and mobility. This form of Pentecostalism did not develop at all in the context of regional mobility and the growth of cities, but emerged at a time when transnational travel and migration were becoming significant in the post-colonial years. Around independence in 1958, Ghana became part of cross-border flows of labour migration in and out of the country. Due to increasing cocoa production, large groups of migrants from neighbouring countries, such as the mining and trading, large groups of migrants from neighbouring countries, such as the Yoruba from Nigeria, arrived in Ghana. As Peil (1979) and Sudarkasa (1979) showed, the word ‘alien’ was not in common usage in Ghana until the proclamation of the Compliance Order in November 1969. In the face of a declining economy, it set in motion a massive expulsion of aliens, many of Nigerian origin, from post-colonial Ghanaian society.

Ghana’s economy started to decline rapidly in the 1970s causing Ghanaians, and Ashanti in particular, to migrate in ever-greater numbers to neighbouring countries, specifically Nigeria. In their turn, these Ghanaian migrants soon found themselves harassed and expelled in large numbers from Nigeria in 1983. Aggravated by this expulsion of more than a million Ghanaian labour migrants from Nigeria, many young men
saw very limited chances of finding paid employment in Ghana’s urban centres. The rural sectors had equally lost their appeal as well as their absorption power due to sharp declines in world-market export commodity prices (especially that of cocoa). A steep increase in intercontinental migration occurred. There are, for example, many Ghanaian migrants who arrived in the Netherlands after 1983, after having tried their luck in Nigeria before deciding to leave for Europe.

Thus, the rise of Pentecostalism from this time onward comes as no surprise. Its prosperity gospel promised access to opportunities, to wealth and God’s benediction for the true believer. With an emphasis on style, clothes, religious entrepreneurship, money donations and the like, many hundreds of churches not only focused on rising consumerism in Ghanaian society but also on some deeper cultural notions of what can be expected of religious forms. Extending to new areas, holding ‘crusades’ in villages and even jumping on the bandwagon of globalisation meant that this religious form signalled a message of being able to open up profitable opportunities to all those who were willing to follow its creed. Some Pentecostal churches in Ghana resulted directly from the return migration from Nigeria as they appear to have Nigerian origins and in some cases even Nigerian leadership (for instance the well-known Deeper Life Ministries). Many churches established ‘deliveryministries’ focusing on restoring prosperity through spiritual means for those who felt their success in life blocked by forces beyond their control. In the context of the Pentecostal prayer camps described above, international travel and the crossing of state borders became a matter of spiritual protection as well.

The point made in this overview is, first of all, that since pre-colonial times an intimate relationship has existed between mobility and religious forms. Secondly, this relationship is still present in Pentecostalism today despite the transformations that have taken place in religious forms since the occurrence of personal security cults, and despite the differences in geographical scale that have emerged in the domain of mobility. The third point is that these forms of religion have always appeared to be able to crosscut political boundaries and identity formations. Ranging from the erstwhile security cults of travelling shrines that crossed the boundaries set by the Akan centralised polity to the new transnational Pentecostal churches, all these cases show a dialectic relationship existing with ‘citizenship’ in political terms. These religious forms appear to bear an element of strangerhood – as exemplified in the travel shrines of the security cults, the itinerant prophets of the healing churches and the transnational orientation of the Pentecostal churches – that creates a distance if not tense relationship with political power. Much of the political power of chieftaincy, of the colonial rulers or the post-colonial state was focused on regulating flows of people and of creating a citizenship that could be known and controlled, such as the mass expulsion of ‘aliens’ demonstrated.

It must be emphasised that in the post-colonial situation the new Pentecostal churches were not particularly concerned with contributing to citizenship in a political sense. There was not so much a discourse of belonging to a certain place or a certain country. Instead a problematic and ambiguous relationship frequently developed with political authorities whereby during the Rawlings regime some churches came closer to his power while others preferred to develop a position of being critical moral watchdogs. They stressed the need to christianise the nation and make it part of a larger modern polity to the new transnational Pentecostal churches, all these cases show a dialectic relationship existing with ‘citizenship’ in political terms. These religious forms appear to bear an element of strangerhood – as exemplified in the travel shrines of the security cults, the itinerant prophets of the healing churches and the transnational orientation of the Pentecostal churches – that creates a distance if not tense relationship with political power. Much of the political power of chieftaincy, of the colonial rulers or the post-colonial state was focused on regulating flows of people and of creating a citizenship that could be known and controlled, such as the mass expulsion of ‘aliens’ demonstrated.

In other words, these religious forms, in their mobility, provided and in the case of the Diaspora as well the Ghanaian Pentecostal Community, churches cannot be perceived to be interested in promoting Dutch citizenship or in establishing fixed identities within stable communities. Instead, interest lies with the individual, with identities independent of any fixed allegiance. Instead, interest lies with the individual, with identities independent of any fixed allegiance. This ideology perceives religious mobility and political sedentarity as a duality that runs through the body social at the same time. This thinking is not without significance in a context where the Dutch government has increased its efforts to curb migration from Africa and has placed a range of measures to check identities and record them in every possible detail, a range of measures that check identities and record them in every possible detail, a range of measures to check identities and record them in every possible detail.

5 Menna Otabil, founder and leader of the influential International Central Gospel Church in Accra became particularly well known for this.
these opportunities elsewhere, beyond the boundaries often set by the polity that, for instance, Ghanaian Pentecostalism now encounters in the Dutch state.

To conclude this section, the Fulbe case demonstrated that sedentarity and locality cannot necessarily be assumed to be the paradigmatic point of departure for exploring mobility. This section has aimed to show that mobility must be explored on its own terms. A change of perspective may apply to an entire culture such as the Fulbe but may also be fruitfully applied to the exploration of an aspect of a culture; in this case not an entire culture but elements of a culture, namely certain highly mobile religious forms, have been explored in their mobile characteristics. In so far as these can be distinguished from other aspects of culture (an epistemological point that is left untouched in the context of this contribution), the analytical point here is that a perspective that assumes and operates from sedentary notions will not ensure a total understanding of Ghanaian Pentecostalism. It is not about creating locality, settlement, citizenship or anything else to which other forms of power in Ghanaian society cater. Pentecostalism is about mobility, of being 'moved by the Spirit' in ecstasy, of creating 'breakthroughs' so that successful travelling can commence for its followers and so on. In this perspective another saying by which Pentecostals refer to their churches is apt: asore ye kro which means 'the church is soul, but a wandering soul altogether'.

Concluding remarks

These two case studies show the importance of mobility and the complexity of related phenomena. Population movements have always been and are still important vehicles for self-promotion, survival and, in case of the Fulbe, part of their self-definition. As the Ghanaian case shows, people sometimes create ideological spaces to constitute some form of identity that produces and allows for mobility. Even though in both cases these aspects of identity do not directly enhance their situation in material terms, they nevertheless provide people with a social network, a sense of belonging, which indeed may act as a social and ideological environment of a 'normal' sedentary form.

So far, the inherent socio-cultural features of these kinds of 'societies' have often escaped social scientists. Anthropologists have typically frozen their objects of study in villages, tribes, territories, reproducing the paradigm of the North-Atlantic mode of organisation so closely intertwined with the hegemonic colonial and post-colonial state. Geographers have been much more sensitive to geographical mobility but have mostly dealt with its economic and spatial aspects and not with its social and cultural forms.

The two example cases presented here stimulate new ways of thinking about mobility leading back to the central concern set out at the beginning of the chapter about how to develop new ways towards a cultural understanding of moving people. This is also a plea for empirical research. As the case studies have shown, it is only through the richness of ethnographic detail derived from research in multi-sited settings that the real dynamics of mobile cultures and people are revealed. Some have said that to look for data is also to look for oneself. While that may be true, it is even more relevant in the sense that the issue of mobility has become so intimately integrated in our own way of life that looking for another while moving may offer new insights and new ways of seeing at ourselves.

In addition, perhaps an even more pressing issue is at stake. Moving people have indeed become a problem in the sense that refugee movements in Africa – because of civil wars, ethnic strife, struggles for hegemony, and control over natural and mineral resources – are causing enormous hardship. This has become an unsettling predicament that must be dealt with, not only technically but also as a social issue. Regardless of local forms of mobility that may have been in existence long before considerations of international intervention of any sort were at stake, the problematic nature of mobility is defined for them but often without a close reading of how problems are being experienced and expressed.

Both cases show the consistent failure of the North-Atlantic mode of organisation to contain people within the established boundaries set for them. Little is known about the economic, social and cultural dynamics of these transnational and trans-African 'societies'. How do people remain connected and together, when administrative power structures, tax regimes and identity cards are put to use to fragment their (and our) world into distinct political, social and cultural spaces?

What is then the connection between the strategies of an individual traveller linked to a globalising religious form on the one hand and those of nomadic bovine identity on the other? They meet each other where the constructions of travel and movement are concerned. Meanings, emotions, decisions and motivations for movement and travel are not to be assumed and cannot be cast in a discourse of rupture alone. The extent to which persons themselves perceive travel and movement as a form of continuity is a problem in the case of Ghanaian Pentecostalism. For the Fulbe, a lack of space in which to manoeuvre, the weight of state regulations and the occupation of their pastoral territories are important incentives to move. They have to continue moving if they do not want to become permanently immobilised. In both cases it is clear that people resist being contained by and attached to specific localities.

Questions concerning the relation between the individual, the group and larger wholes in much broader geographical perspectives need to be posed. We are challenged to delve into the traveller's mind, as well as those of the people who stay behind. People do not think in the bipolar models we scientists have developed. The decisions they take every day determine whether they move or not. As such, understanding and analysing cultures of travel can only be done, we argue, from a processual perspective, one which underscores the need to apply concepts and methods that are as dynamic as societal life is in many parts of Africa.


