

## *To Garden, to Market: gendered meanings of work on an African urban periphery [1]*

SUSANNE FREIDBERG, *Department of Geography, Dartmouth College, USA*

**ABSTRACT** *This article traces the historical origins of a localized gender division of labor found in two villages on the edge of the city of Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso. Through social-historical analysis, this article demonstrates that gender divisions of labor are not simply constructed in particular places; they are constructs located near or far from other places, and thus influenced by multidimensional interactions between those places. Specifically, this article shows how the villages' location on the periphery of an important regional city has shaped their experience of European colonialism, religious change and market expansion in ways that have given particular meanings to certain kinds of work in commercial gardening. More generally, this article shows how a focus on the historical meanings of work can provide insights into local variations in gender divisions of labor.*

### **Introduction**

The villages of Sakaby and Dogona lie just north of the city of Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, on opposite sides of the river Houet. In many ways they resemble villages that have become part of urban hinterland regions across contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa. Some of the houses are made of mud and thatch, others of brick and tin. Next to many of the houses stand granaries, filled with millet from the villagers' own fields. Kept inside walled courtyards are mopeds and farm tools, and an assortment of goods bound for the urban market, such as sacks of maize, bundles of firewood and basins of vegetables—lettuce, onions, French green beans—grown in the gardens lining the banks of the nearby river.

While commercial vegetable gardening is a typical feature of many African urban hinterland landscapes [2], these particular gardens are tended only by men and boys. Most of the daily tasks undertaken in these gardens are repetitive, arduous and low-tech—exactly the kind of tasks so often defined as 'women's work,' except that women here do not do them. Moreover, from morning through midday during the vegetable-growing season, women are nowhere near the gardens and are scarce in the village as well. Most are in town selling their husbands' produce or conducting their own trades, and the men must await their return to receive their earnings as well as, often, the midday meal. Some men complain that their wives come late, suspecting they stop to drink millet beer along the way.

Why do only men work in the gardens? Local responses to this question vary. The most common answer among both women and men is that gardening is physically too difficult for women. Yet women in villages several kilometers away do tend gardens, and

*Correspondence:* Susanne Freidberg, Department of Geography, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH03755 USA.

women throughout West Africa regularly perform all kinds of heavy labor. A few women point out that they have no rights to riverside land. Many insist they would not want a garden plot anyway, because it is a slow and unreliable way to make money. A few men refer to Islamic norms; others mention their wives' noble ancestry, implying they are too proud for such dirty, stooping work. Others simply shrug it off to local custom. 'It's like that here,' they say, 'the women here just do not garden.' Could it be that the women do not garden here because the men, as elsewhere in colonial-era Africa, appropriated the most lucrative economic activities (Leacock & Etienne, 1980; Robertson & Berger, 1986)? Certainly, men's superior claim to land, labor and agricultural extension in the years after World War II would have made it easier for them to take up gardening as a commercial occupation. But this does not explain why gardening *tasks* (such as watering and weeding) came be defined as exclusively men's work, rather than work done by women for men. Nor is it clear that gardening was in fact more lucrative than the commercial activities women took up during the same period. Indeed, over the past several years, it has become a progressively less remunerative occupation, and many men in Sakaby and Dogona now earn less from gardening than women can earn as produce wholesalers or beer brewers.

For several decades in Sakaby and Dogona, the gardens have been central not only to villagers' livelihoods but also to local understandings of men's work, women's work, and the rights and duties of marriage. The following discussion draws on this history in order to explore the broader question of how gender roles, relations and identity are shaped by the changing meanings and practices of work in specific geographic and historical contexts.

At the broadest level, this line of inquiry is a familiar one. Feminist labor history, for example, has explored how the gender categories formed around factory work are shaped and reshaped by the events and relationships of the household and local public culture as well as by those of the shop floor and international economy (Berg, 1987; Canning, 1996, Horowitz, 1997). In Europe and North America, feminist agrarian studies research has analyzed the survival of the family farm in light of rural women's changing work roles (Whatmore, 1991, Sachs, 1996) while in Africa, it has documented how colonial labor regimes and agricultural development programs, implemented with little regard for existing divisions of labor and property rights, have transformed gender roles and relations in dramatic and often unexpected ways (Carney & Watts, 1990). Indeed, one recent example of this research examines the unintended consequences of ostensibly 'gender-sensitive' West African market gardening projects (Schroeder, 1999).

This article, however, tells a story about the gendering of work—and the ongoing reworking of gender—in a particular kind of place. Like urban hinterland villages throughout Africa, Sakaby and Dogona have experienced dramatic social, economic and environmental change over the past century. Equally important, they have been exposed to a wide range of 'foreign' cultural practices and beliefs, some of which they have incorporated into their own. By examining the relationship between this historical experience and the gendering of market gardening work, this article shows how contemporary divisions of labor in Africa's urban hinterlands are neither remotely 'traditional' nor simple inventions of colonial labor regimes, but rather, the products of rich and complicated local histories. This article also makes a larger point about the complexity of gender construction. I argue that gender divisions of labor are not simply constructed in particular places (McDowell, 1993); they are constructs *located* near or far from other places, and thus influenced by interactions between those places (Massey, 1994a). Moreover, interactions such as trade and migration should be recognized as

multidimensional—that is, they bring ideas as well as goods, and practices as well as people. By analyzing how a set of such interactions have shaped the meanings and practices of work in two urban hinterland villages, I present an approach to understanding local variations in regional and sectoral gender divisions of labor.

The body of this article is based on ethnographic and archival fieldwork conducted in the Bobo-Dioulasso area in 1993–94 [3]. I want to begin, however, with a brief discussion of two distinct research traditions which have informed this project and which, I believe, could benefit from some of the analytical insights of feminist geography. The first focuses on gender divisions of labor in African agrarian societies; the second examines the dynamics of change in Africa's urban hinterlands.

### **Times and Places for Work**

Since the publication of Esther Boserup's *Women's Role in Economic Development* in 1970, African agriculture has proven an especially fruitful realm for the study of gender and work. Boserup argued that food farming was more 'female' in Africa than elsewhere because, first, historically low population densities never spurred the technical and socio-economic developments associated with agricultural intensification (i.e. plough agriculture and private property, both seen to encourage greater male participation in food production). In addition, she noted how colonial labor regimes pulled male labor further out of food production, into export agriculture and off-farm employment (Boserup, 1970).

Arguably, the book's most valuable legacy was the critical research and analysis it provoked. Ethnographers and other fieldworkers faced two immediate methodological challenges. One was to *deconstruct* 'farming' into units of analysis appropriate for understanding the dynamics (and broader significance) of variation and change in gender divisions of labor. Another was to *situate* on-farm tasks within a wide range of other workaday activities, each with their own economic and cultural value (Sachs, 1996).

Numerous ethnographic and historical works collectively demonstrated how gendered work roles have been more historically contingent and geographically varied than Boserup's model of an undifferentiated 'female farming belt' suggested (i.e. Afonja, 1986; for a review, see Moore, 1988, ch. 3). They also showed how the institution of non-pooled household budgeting ('separate purses'), common in much of sub-Saharan Africa, has historically shaped the meanings and practices of men's and women's agrarian work in ways not captured by anthropologists' evolutionary models of the sexual division of labor (Whitehead, 1984; Guyer, 1988a; 1988b; Roberts, 1989).

These advances, however, left certain questions unanswered. Although the now-sizable ethnographic literature on contemporary African agrarian societies has allowed for tentative generalizations about what kinds of crops or tasks are *commonly* defined as 'women's' versus 'men's,' it has proven more difficult to generalize about the dynamics of historical change in gender divisions of labor. This is partly due to the dearth of reliable historical records, and partly to the sheer diversity of cultural practices associated with particular tasks and crops in different places (on rice, for example, see Carney, 2000).

Faced with these challenges, a number of Africanist researchers have explored historical changes in gendered work through oral and written autobiographies and revisits to earlier studies and field sites. Within this body of literature, Jane Guyer's research (1988b, 1991) speaks perhaps most directly to geographers' recent efforts to understand how actors' identities are formed and transformed through social relations

spanning multiple scales of space and time. Guyer examines changing gender divisions of labor in African agrarian societies through a focus on the rhythmic structures of work. Changes in the *timing* and *periodicity* of daily, seasonal and occasional activities represent not only general historical tendencies (i.e. agricultural intensification) but also gendered shifts in the material value and power relations of work. For instance, the introduction of a new tax may, at least initially, justify male ‘household heads’ recruitment of wives for cash crop production, thus giving women less time for other more personally remunerative or satisfying activities. At the same time, however, this shift may also undermine the legitimacy of husbands’ other expectations, such as the provision of a hot meal every night.

Such changes, of course, often lead to intra-household conflict and/or the renegotiation of the rights and duties in question. Guyer’s research on colonial-era Cameroon (1991), for example, shows how the introduction of cocoa in the 1930s transformed the late-nineteenth century Beti farming system, in which land cleared by men was subsequently worked on by men, women, or both sexes, depending on the crop and the stage of the cultivating/fallow cycle (Guyer, 1991). In brief, men began planting cocoa as a permanent forest crop on formerly rotated fields, so they no longer produced food crops on those fields or regularly cleared new land. Women continued to cultivate groundnuts and cassava on their own fields—this work was considered a ‘key task’—but they compensated for the loss of men’s contribution to household food supplies by planting twice rather than once a year (1991, p. 270). Women thus became the principal household food producers, fitting the Boserup model. But they also adjusted their daily and seasonal work schedules in order to improve their access to men’s cocoa income, i.e. by selling them cooked foods, home-distilled liquor and bottled beer. At the same time, many women became less willing to help men with their own crops, since the reciprocity inherent in the old agricultural cycle was no longer assured. Later in the colonial period, when the nearby capital city experienced a post-war economic and demographic boom, many women once again adapted their planting cycles and crop choices, in order to take advantage of strong markets for staple foodstuffs.

This Cameroon case study shows very clearly how the Beti agricultural gender division of labor evident by the late colonial period was hardly ‘primordial,’ but rather the product of relatively recent shifts in women’s and men’s work rhythms. Guyer’s analysis also links these temporal shifts in the gender division of labor to social and spatial processes, at both the household and regional levels. The social processes include the ongoing renegotiation of rights and responsibilities within the ‘conjugal contract’ (Whitehead, 1984), as well as changes in women’s relative status brought about by late-colonial and post-independence economic growth and legislative reforms [4]. The spatial processes include changes in the village-level geography of women’s daily work (see also Schroeder, 1999) as well as macro-level developments: urban growth, the extension of transportation networks, and the increasing flow of goods, information and people between city and countryside.

The options for altering the types and temporal rhythms of work, in other words, are very clearly shaped by these spatial processes and by the transformations they bring to particular places and locations. Guyer’s research in both Cameroon and in southern Nigeria, for example, is set in urban hinterland regions (Guyer, 1997). These sites, like hinterland regions throughout Africa, have historically been characterized by intensive, market-oriented agricultural production (relative to more remote rural areas) and especially rapid twentieth-century economic, environmental and demographic change (Swindell, 1988; Mortimore, 1993; Freidberg, 2001). In these regions,

gender and intra-generational divisions of labor have been affected not only by changing conditions in neighboring urban labor and produce markets (Berry, 1993) but also, in many cases, by the increasing scarcity of land and other natural resources needed to sustain agrarian livelihoods (Turner *et al.*, 1993).

The linkages between urbanization, agricultural intensification and changes in household-level divisions of labor have been quite well documented (Tiffen *et al.*, 1994; Guyer, 1997). Most of this research, however, has been rooted in agrarian studies' analytical traditions, namely political economy, rural cultural ecology, and, more recently, feminist 'household economics' (Folbre, 1988; Hart, 1992). In general, it has not analyzed urban cultural dynamics; it has not considered how urban-based beliefs and practices—promulgated by traders, colonizers, migrants and missionaries—have also shaped 'hinterland' gender construction in particular ways.

Yet, the historiography of African cities makes clear that hinterland communities have long been exposed to urban culture (Coquery-Vidrovitch, 1991). In pre-colonial West and coastal East Africa, for example, such communities were introduced (though not necessarily converted) to Islam through trade and tribute relations with urban merchants and political elites (Levtzion & Fisher, 1987; Middleton, 1992). During the early colonial era, regions around administrative capitals, ports and mining towns were typically subjected not only to the most rigorous tax collection and labor recruitment campaigns, but also the most intensive Christian missionary evangelical campaigns (de Benoist, 1987). The latter tended to target hinterland communities not only because they were close to the missions themselves but also because they were considered particularly vulnerable to the incursions of Islam (Audouin & Deniel, 1978). Later, the same regions became preferred 'retirement zones' for African war veterans, who brought not only their pensions—which they invested in homes, commercial farming, or trade—but also ideas and practices they had learned during service abroad (Saul, 1986). In short, even if the livelihoods and landscapes of African urban hinterland communities appear 'traditional' relative to those of the city, their traditions are products of extraordinarily 'extroverted' histories (Massey, 1994a).

In order to understand how these histories have informed gender divisions of labor and gender identity more generally, we need to ask a broader set of questions, aimed at tracing ideological as well as material 'flows' between city and hinterland. These kinds of questions, of course, are already familiar to feminist geographers working in the industrialized world (Massey, 1994b; Hanson & Pratt, 1995; Pratt, 1997; MacKenzie, 1999). Taken as a whole, this research demonstrates the value of analyzing locally-specific gender constructions in light of historical processes operating at different scales but always with specific spatial trajectories and consequences.

In the context of this case study, this would mean asking: how have particular urban-based communication networks and power structures influenced the ways different members of hinterland communities have thought about and negotiated gender roles in different realms of daily life? How have these networks and structures also attached particular social and symbolic meanings to certain kinds of tasks and occupations? What ideas, laws and policies have most influenced localized constructions of meaning—about both gender and work—and why?

The final 'why' is perhaps the most difficult to answer, but I include it to emphasize that while people's interpretations of particular cultural practices and ideas are by no means predetermined, they do still need to be *located*. In other words, exactly how Islamic teachings (for example) inform gender identities and gendered practices in a particular place is an empirical question. But the analysis of empirical findings must consider how,

in that place, specific events, social institutions and daily practices have shaped people's understandings of Islam at different historical moments (Callaway & Creevey, 1994; Bernal, 1994, 1997). Such an analysis recognizes the possibility of 'hybrid' gender identities and 'mimetic' practices, informed by interactions within and between diverse social groups as well as multiple belief systems (Pratt, 1999; Saul, 1997). It also recognizes that local gender divisions of labor are not necessarily determined by any single cultural or material logic.

The following account aims to illustrate these points. It traces the construction of a particular gender division of labor in two villages where the meanings, practices and conditions of work have been shaped by a history of close urban contact. The narrative focuses on a series of overlapping historical influences: namely, the regional spread of Islam; the colonial administration's use of forced labor; the evangelical and economic programs of the Catholic Church, and finally, dramatic post-World War II urbanization and market expansion. By the end it should be clear that no one event or ideological framework determined how residents of Sakaby and Dogona defined gender roles around market gardening. Rather, faced with changing social, economic and political conditions, women and men drew selectively on a range of experiences, resources and cultural practices to negotiate meanings and claim rights to new forms of livelihood.

### **Commerce, Cultivation, and Cultural Pluralism in the Pre-colonial Southern Volta Region**

Sakaby, Dogona and the neighboring city of Bobo-Dioulasso all lie in a savanna region once traversed by trans-Saharan and East-West trade routes. As early as the sixteenth century, Bobo-Dioulasso (then known as Sya) served as an important market and stopover for merchants transporting gold and kola nuts from the southern forest zones and salt from the northern desert (Wettere-Verhasselt, 1969; Diallo, 1990). The earliest known inhabitants of this region, the Bobo, had relatively little to do with this long-distance commerce, but they probably exchanged agricultural foodstuffs for goods such as salt.

Although the Bobo claimed 'founders' rights to the land, they came to share it with Mande-speaking gold traders, who began settling in the sixteenth century. The Bobo have historically welcomed foreigners into their communities, in part for their ability to act as neutral arbitrators in village disputes (Le Moal, 1980). They called these Mande settlers the *Zara*, meaning 'those who travel and trade.' Like most long-distance merchants of the era, the Zara probably observed at least certain Islamic practices. But trade routes subsequently shifted, leaving the region more commercially and culturally isolated. By the seventeenth century, most Zara settlers, while often maintaining some sort of commercial activity, had adopted both the agricultural and religious practices of the Bobo (Diallo, 1990).

The two kinds of practices were in fact closely intertwined; the Bobo called themselves the *san-san*, or 'the cultivating people,' and many of their holidays and rituals were organized around the millet season (Saul, 1991). Information about the pre-colonial agricultural division of labor is scarce, but oral traditions indicate that both men and women participated in rainy season (May-September) grain production. Men cleared the fields and women seeded them, but most other tasks were shared. Men's and women's agricultural labor, however, did not carry the same meaning. Men were (and in principle still are) considered responsible for the provision of household grain supplies, and skillful

work in the grain fields was a source of status. The Bobo respected the man who increased the land's productivity through careful weeding and soil care (Saul, 1991).

Millet cultivation was a communal activity, overseen by male patrilineage chiefs, who were also responsible for distributing the harvest to the households of their wives and adult sons. Women and junior men, however, had rights to whatever they produced on their individual plots (*zakane*). Unlike the communal millet fields (*foruba*), some of these plots were cultivated year-round. In Sakaby and Dogona, for example, young men planted tobacco and sorghum (for brewing beer) on the banks of the river Houet. Their work on individual plots not only produced crops much appreciated within the village, it also demonstrated strength, the ability to provide for a family, even occult power (Saul, 1992).

For Bobo women, the ethnographic record indicates that farming has historically been a less important source of status than child-rearing, but individual production did provide ingredients for the 'sauce' which accompanies the daily millet porridge. Although the sauce accounts for only a minor proportion of the daily calorie supply, it is considered an important measure of a woman's cooking skills. Women elders emphasize, however, that in the days before 'European' vegetables and manufactured flavorings, sauces contained relatively few ingredients—i.e. salt, oil, *soumbala* (a pungent flavoring made from seeds of the *neré* tree) and vegetables such as peppers, tomatoes and greens. Prior to the expansion of men's market-gardening, women grew most of the vegetables themselves, either in 'kitchen gardens' or around the edges of the millet fields (Cremer, 1924) [5]. They also gathered wild plants with their sisters and co-wives (Saul, 1989). Cooperative work arrangements of this sort traditionally helped Bobo women accomplish a variety of tasks.

Although Bobo women bartered vegetables and other foodstuffs with each other and with passers-by (Sanou & Sanou, 1994), they did not typically practice itinerant or market place trade. Le Moal's monograph on the Bobo emphasizes that trade was simply not part of the Bobo cultural repertoire (Le Moal, 1980). But this repertoire was probably shaped by the fact that Bobo communities were for generations subject to slave raiding and other forms of violence, as the region was colonized by the Kong Dioula empire (based in the northern Ivory Coast) in the mid-eighteenth century (Sanou & Sanou, 1994). Bobo villages built during the era of Dioula colonialism were large and fortress-like; outside their walls village girls and women (the preferred domestic slaves) had to be careful where they went.

The Kong Dioula established a centralized state in the Bobo-Dioulasso region, and with it, new social hierarchies and categories. Most local inhabitants became tribute-paying subjects, but the nineteenth century also saw the emergence of a Zara 'ruling' family, whose members practiced warfare and trade (Saul, 1997). References to 'royal' descent have since become part of the Zara oral tradition, and often an explanation for contemporary work roles. Some Zara men in Sakaby and Dogona, for example, claim their wives are the descendants of princes, and thus unsuited for agricultural labor.

The Dioula also built mosques, but not until the 1920s, under French colonial rule, did many Zara begin to reclaim Islam as part of their identity. By then, Islam had taken on a range of local meanings (Saul, personal communication, 1999). For the families of the Zara 'canton chiefs' (the colonial appointees responsible for tax collection and labor recruitment), Islam reinforced their status as a political elite. It also represented opposition to the Catholic missionaries, who from their early days in Bobo-Dioulasso were highly critical of the canton chiefs' exercise of authority (De Montjoye, 1980; Kounda, 1997). For Zara men who might have engaged in seasonal warfare prior to

French conquest and ‘pacification,’ Islamic scholarship and religious observance offered an alternative route to recognition and respect (Quimby, 1979). For merchants, Islam provided a link to African trade networks, at a time when African commerce in general was highly restricted. In short, ‘Islamization’ occurred for a variety of reasons in the Bobo-Dioulasso area, and conversion had different consequences for different people. Overall, however, it did not result in significant spatial or social segregation between the converts and the Bobo. In Sakaby and Dogona, Zara families continued to live among, marry, and share many of the daily practices of their Bobo neighbors.

How did the spread of Islam transform local constructions of gender and work roles? Evidence of immediate, concrete changes is largely anecdotal; for example, older Zara women in the village of Sakaby claim that their mothers brewed *dolo* (sorghum beer)—an activity which they, as Muslim women today, cannot even consider. Indeed, now all the *dolo*-makers in the village are Bobo. On the other hand, the adoption of Islam did not, in general, lead to Zara women’s seclusion or veiling, or to any major changes in their roles in millet production (Roth, 1996).

Over the longer term, the spatial *separation* of men’s and women’s daily activities became a normative ideal, though how much it was actually realized varied between town and village settings as well as between households of different sizes and means (Roth, 1996). This ideal, like other manifestations of Muslim orthodoxy, reflected ongoing changes in the social role of Islam. During the late colonial period, a number of Zara men and women used their earnings from commercial farming, trade and civil or military service to travel to Mecca, thereby fulfilling one of their basic duties as Muslims. They won respect for making this long and costly voyage, as it showed both devotion and worldly success. But the pilgrims also encountered and, in some cases, adopted practices associated with the typically more orthodox Islam of the Middle East and North Africa. Again, monetary wealth helped: it enabled some Muslim patriarchs in the peri-urban villages, for example, to hire laborers, and thus minimize their wives’ visible presence in the fields—another widely-recognized Islamic ideal. In this way, certain practices associated with Islam acquired a secular prestige even in villages where only part of the population was Muslim, such as Sakaby and Dogona.

Very few farming households in these villages withdrew women entirely from agricultural production; they typically continued to seed the millet and help with the harvest. Yet these days, men in Sakaby and Dogona commonly invoke Islamic norms to explain why they would not want their wives to work in their gardens. These explanations, I would argue, reflect the men’s concern not so much about their wives’ ‘public’ appearances as about their own. In other words, they are making statements about their own socio-economic status, as commercial gardeners who do not need to call on female household labor. To understand how work in the gardens took on these symbolic connotations, we must examine the conditions under which the crops and labor processes associated with this work were introduced.

### **The Early Colonial Era: feeding cities by force [6]**

In 1895, the French claimed the semi-arid territory that became Upper Volta to secure a labor supply for infrastructure projects and export agriculture elsewhere in the French West African Empire (AOF) (Englebert, 1996; Roberts, 1996). But the colonial administration had more ambitious plans for the hinterlands of Bobo-Dioulasso. The region’s relatively fertile, well-watered land had the potential to feed not only the town and its military base but also neighboring towns.

In the early 1920s, therefore, the colonial agricultural ministry recruited local laborers to build a dam on the Houet, just upstream from Sakaby and Dogona. It then turned part of Sakaby's riverside land into a large vegetable garden, known as the 'public garden.' The colonial agricultural ministry's early annual reports expressed confidence that the local peasants, already accustomed to tending local vegetables in 'kitchen gardens,' would learn quickly the skills of European-style horticulture (Rapport Agricole, 1932). And apparently, they did: the 'public garden' harvests yielded produce ranging from strawberries and green peas to potatoes by the ton.

But the villagers of Sakaby—and Dogona, just across the river—did not work in the public garden by choice. Especially during the World Wars, the project of feeding the tens of thousands of African and French soldiers based in the Bobo-Dioulasso military camp placed huge demands on inhabitants of the surrounding countryside. Faced with both cash and in-kind taxes, village households had to intensify agricultural production even as many of their members were recruited for labor service. Despite AOF laws specifying that only adult males perform compulsory work, women and children were regularly conscripted to pound grains, carry loads, and work on construction projects around Bobo-Dioulasso.

The Sakaby public garden was one of the work sites where villagers young and old, male and female, were all drafted for daily weeding and watering. According to elders' accounts, the garden supervisor, a colonial appointee from Mali, 'beat people as though he was going to kill them.' The elders also recall day-to-day meanness and hardship:

We couldn't even bring food to the garden. Certain authorities, just to be cruel, would knock over our plates of food. They made us work hard all day and at the same time didn't let us eat ... We were mobilized with our wives, from morning until night, and at the end we earned absolutely nothing.

Individual humiliation and corporal punishment were common techniques of colonial discipline. Men who failed to pay their taxes, for example, would be placed in the stocks until someone else came up with the money. Women shelling peanuts for the military camp were forced to spit at the end of the workday, and if their saliva contained any nut fragments, they were beaten. But the Sakaby public garden differed from most other forced labor sites in that it was located within the village itself, in view of people's homes, and on land valued both for its fertility and its proximity to sacred sites in and along the river Houet. It represented, therefore, a particularly odious form of colonial invasion, and a source of collective shame not easily forgotten.

The public garden also differed from other labor sites in that it served as a training ground in a specialized, employable skill, at least for men. Having learned how to grow temperate-climate vegetable crops, some village men found paid work in local European expatriates' private gardens. The women who worked in the garden also gained experience, but women in general were very rarely hired for any kind of paid employment, not even as domestics. In that sense, European gender norms informed the economic value of gardening skills from an early date.

In addition to garden employment, men in Sakaby and Dogona began earning income as independent producers on their own riverside plots. The agricultural ministry supplied vegetable seeds and technical advice with the understanding that the harvests would be turned over to colonial authorities; no sales on the open market were permitted. But once villagers discovered that Europeans in town would pay handsomely for certain kinds of scarce fresh produce, they began selling potatoes secretly, with the help of town-based women traders.

The era of the public garden was a short one, relative to the region's history of invasion and colonization. Forced labor and restrictions on local trade were officially abolished throughout the AOF in 1946. But for the villagers of Sakaby and Dogona, the years of compulsory service had at least two important consequences. First, it provided them with a local 'comparative advantage' in the immediate post-war years, when demand for fresh vegetables was strong and growing rapidly both in Bobo-Dioulasso and neighboring cities. African veterans, civil servants, and European expatriates willingly paid premium prices for lettuce and French beans, and for a few years the gardeners in Sakaby and Dogona enjoyed an uncrowded market.

Second, the experience of forced labor in the garden imbued the most frequent, tedious and unskilled tasks—notably watering, which must be performed two or even three times daily—with lasting connotations of drudgery and servitude. Men in Sakaby and Dogona take pride in their technical knowledge as gardeners, but invariably describe watering as the most tiring and tiresome aspect of their work. Some even refer to it as a contemporary form of forced labor. But if men cannot delegate this work to their sons and cannot afford hired labor or motorized pumps, they do it themselves. They do not delegate watering to their wives or other female household members, even though this commonly happened only a generation ago. The gender division of labor in market gardening, in other words, has changed quite rapidly in Sakaby and Dogona. The following sections examine how this change was shaped by these villages' participation in urban-based markets and missionary activity.

### **The Mid-colonial Era: missionaries and matrimony**

The Catholic Church opened a mission in Bobo-Dioulasso in 1927 (De Benoist, 1987). Although the missionaries (known as the 'White Fathers') found the region's population generally less receptive to Christianity than the Mossi peoples in central Upper Volta, the villages just outside Bobo-Dioulasso were different. The youth of these villages converted early and in large numbers, and often against the wishes of their parents. The missionaries' relatively greater success among the Bobo in villages such as Sakaby and Dogona owed partly to frequent contact: they regularly visited villagers in their homes and fields, and invited villagers to the mission to attend weekly Mass, catechism classes and holiday celebrations (De Montjoye, 1980).

But young adults in the peri-urban villages were also perhaps more receptive to the new religion because it offered allies and weapons against oppression which, from their vantage point, was particularly apparent. In other words, they saw the sharp contrasts between their own subjugation—both to the colonial administration's rules and those of the village elders—and the liberties and material prosperity enjoyed by Europeans and elite African townspeople. The Bobo-Dioulasso White Fathers generally learned the Bobo language, and the local youth did not hesitate to tell them how they felt about forced labor and corrupt canton chiefs (De Montjoye, 1980). The White Fathers subsequently attempted to portray themselves as agents of freedom, even at the risk of angering local administrators. In Sakaby and Dogona, this proved an effective evangelical strategy, at least amongst the youth. As one elderly Sakaby man recalled:

Their coming was ill-perceived by general opinion. But we, the youth, we converted, and we welcomed the missionaries' presence in the village. Their arrival helped lessen abuses against the villagers. When someone was handcuffed for not paying taxes, there was a kind of solidarity. We all chipped in

to pay the tax and free him. Eventually even the missionaries opposed the handcuffing.

This welcome enabled the missionaries to exercise considerable influence in the peri-urban villages, which they referred to as the ‘core’ of their evangelical territory (De Montjoye, 1980, p. 40). Their goals went well beyond simple conversion; rather, they believed that the future of Catholicism in the region depended on the Bobo’s adoption of monogamy and the European peasant farming practices. Their campaigns on these fronts ultimately shaped the gender division of labor in market gardening in Sakaby and Dogona, though not how the missionaries intended. Missionary work introduced new ideas about conjugal rights and duties but, as a perceived threat to elders’ domestic and spiritual authority, it also sparked intra-village conflicts. These conflicts contributed to the breakdown of customary forms of extra-household cooperation and the emergence of fragile new labor processes and gender roles, organized around the nuclear family household.

In Sakaby and Dogona, these roles—especially as they applied to market gardening—in turn came into question after World War II, when opportunities in marketplace and regional trade led not only youth, but also women, to challenge patriarchal authority. Ironically, even while conflicts over garden work appear to have contributed to an upsurge of polygamy and marital tensions in these villages, Bobo women invoked ‘Christian’ gender norms to work their way *out* of the gardens.

These norms were impressed upon Bobo men and women by Catholic missionaries who, like their counterparts elsewhere in French West Africa, actively opposed the custom of arranged marriages. The Bobo-Dioulasso White Fathers called on the colonial administration to advance the ‘liberation of women’ by outlawing ‘forced matrimony’ (De Benoist, 1987); they also offered refuge to young women who wanted to marry fellow Christians rather than their arranged fiancés, who were often much older. Such women might live for months at the Mission, waiting for their families to relent. The missionaries kept them occupied with the domestic arts and virtues of Christian wifehood: attending catechism classes, learning to knit and sew, and working in the mission laundry and kitchen. In the villages, meanwhile, opposition to missionary intervention in marital affairs occasionally turned violent, as when family members intercepted nuns attempting to escort girls to the mission (De Montjoye, 1980).

Local French officials initially refused to intervene in local marital affairs, in order not to upset the village elders. But in 1932, a new administration issued a memorandum permitting couples to have officially-recognized Church weddings even against their elders’ wishes—provided the woman first swore that she had ‘completely forsworn the customs of her ancestors in order to embrace the Catholic religion’ (Catholic Mission, 1936). This condition was intended to impress upon young women that Christian marriage was a sacred and irrevocable commitment. In later years it became clear that neither Christian women nor men saw their marriage choice in that light. But at the time it represented a serious affront to parental authority, leaving some newly-wed couples estranged from kin and neighbors, and thus cut off from important sources of moral and economic support.

The first generation of Sakaby Christians received an ample dose of missionary counsel regarding their duties as husbands and wives. As one elderly couple recalls:

Wife: Before the marriage, they gave advice to couples. The told the woman to obey her husband and do what he wanted. And the man, they told him to do what his wife could not physically do.

Husband: They told you to have mutual respect.

Another woman remembered:

In the catechism they spoke of these things: that a man must not make his wife work too much, that he must help her, that she is less strong than him.

This emphasis on women's obedience and men's superior physical strength differed little from the advice young Bobo might have received prior to a customary marriage. What differed much more were the conditions in which the young Christians found themselves trying to fulfill spousal duties. Living as couples with young children—rather than in large, extended family households, with multiple adults in the same compound—they had relatively few people whom they could turn to for help with day-to-day tasks and expenses. Young wives especially felt the strain; one Sakaby woman remembers, they had to 'be everything' for their husbands.

From the 1930s through the 1950s, to 'be everything' included, in at least some households, helping to weed and water the husband's vegetable garden. Oral accounts, although often contradictory, indicate that the extent and frequency of wives' garden work depended at least partly on household size and age structure [7]. Nonetheless, it is important to recognize that wives' garden help was no more 'traditional' in these villages than any other aspect of European-style vegetable gardening (an activity still usually called by its French name, *marachage*). Like the crops themselves, gardening tasks were introduced in the colonial public garden, and there they were performed, under compulsion, by both women and men.

But colonial compulsion also created the conditions in which men in Sakaby and Dogona, at least for a while, were able to recruit wives to help in their own gardens. The colonial regime designated responsibility for taxes to male 'household heads,' who in turn made heavy demands on household dependants. Young men could avoid these demands by fleeing south to the British-ruled Gold Coast (now Ghana), joining the military, or finding paid employment in town. But social norms combined with tight restrictions on local economic activity gave women in Sakaby and Dogona less room for maneuver. In other words, although the Catholic Church provided some women with an alternative to *arranged* marriage, colonial law and economic policies gave them very few alternatives to the nominal security and social legitimacy offered by marriage of any kind. This lack of alternatives constrained wives' bargaining power within the conjugal household. In short, the extraordinary demands and constraints imposed on peri-urban villages created social and economic conditions conducive not only to the missionary's evangelical campaigns, but also to the development of new household structures and labor processes. These conditions, however, changed dramatically after World War II.

### **The Late Colonial Era: the women go to town**

On April 11 1946, in response to growing nationalist movements in its African colonies, the French republic officially abolished forced labor (Englebert, 1996). For villagers in Sakaby and Dogona, the *liberation* brought changes more immediate and profound than political independence in 1960. Two were especially significant: first, work in the public garden ended, as did restrictions on local food trading. Second, the War's end marked the beginning of a demographic and economic 'boom' in Bobo-Dioulasso. As elsewhere in post-war West Africa, the French Government's investments in urban infrastructure and social services both responded to and encouraged unprecedented rates of rural-urban migration (Venard, 1986). Upper Volta's veterans and retired civil servants played

an especially important role in the post-war transformation of Bobo-Dioulasso's regional economy, as many invested their pensions in urban real estate and transport companies, trade, and commercial farming (Saul, 1986).

This boom translated into increased demand for garden vegetables, both 'common' (i.e. tomatoes, cabbage and onions) and 'European' varieties (such as green beans, green peas, and lettuce). In Sakaby and Dogona, dry season commercial gardening became a source of prosperity and status for many men. But it also became a source of intra-household tension, as garden tasks began to conflict with women's efforts to take advantage of growing urban demand for other kinds of goods and services. The expansion of market relations, I believe, figured importantly in the eventual renegotiation of the household division of labor in market gardening, towards one in which men and their sons tended the gardens, and women, sometimes with their daughters' help, took the produce to market. But longtime contact with urban-based traders and missionaries set the stage for this shift, by providing examples of different conceptions of gender roles and relations in and beyond the household.

It should be emphasized that the missionaries influenced social norms less than they had hoped. Their evangelical work became much more difficult after the *liberation*, as Bobo elders reasserted their authority over the younger generation. In the immediate post-war years, the numbers of young men (many of them back from labor service abroad) participating in customary initiation ceremonies increased, while school enrollment and attendance of catechism classes fell sharply (De Montjoye, 1980).

The immediate post-war era also saw increasing challenges to the sanctity of Christian marriages. The ritual abduction of brides—a standard part of a customary Bobo marriage—was extended to married Christian women. Even more troubling to the missionaries, Bobo women themselves began to abandon their Catholic spouses. Having earlier crusaded for the 'liberation' of women, the missionaries now called for greater discipline:

A woman may abuse her liberty and act on caprice if there is not some order or another imposed on her. Her liberty gives her rights, but also imposes duties. These obligations she can best understand under the light of Christianity ... however even then she has not acquired the personality which permits her to act for herself in all cases. She is still a morally weak being (Tounouma Parish, 1946–47).

One of the missions' key strategies for recovering its influence in the Bobo countryside centered on the promotion of 'modern' peasant agriculture, through the example of specially-trained and equipped 'family farmers.' Selected graduates of catechism school, provided with a small house and some livestock, were expected to 'teach and persuade [neighboring villagers] of the primordial role of natural fertilizer [and] dry season market-gardening'; in short, they were expected to provide proof of 'peasant evolution' (Tounouma Parish, 1950–51). The missionaries chose only married catechists to be future family farmers, since the wives' 'little tasks in the kitchen' and their 'understanding of their husbands' situation' were an essential part of the overall example. If all went well, the missionaries predicted in 1950, '[The catechists]' material situation would be much improved, and the Mission could finally play an excellent, appropriate role in the evolution of the peasant masses' (Tounouma Parish, 1950–51).

The 'family farm' program illustrates how efforts to reshape household gender relations and production processes were central to the missionaries' evangelical strategies. But although the program contributed modestly to the spread of market gardening in the

Bobo-Dioulasso hinterlands, the example of the catechist-farmers hardly brought about a major transformation in Bobo farming or, for that matter, marital relations. In other words, the dissemination of Christian gender norms through Church-supported rural development programs was by no means automatic.

By contrast, the expanding urban market drove changes not simply in labor processes but also in the temporal rhythms and locations of both women's and men's daily work. For the men of Sakaby and Dogona — now free from other labor obligations during the gardening season, and free to sell their produce openly—the late 1940s and 1950s marked what some called the 'honeymoon' era of their gardening careers. They spent their earnings on bicycles, mopeds and clothing, and built houses with tin roofs. At a time when many young men aspired to civil service posts, at least some men in Sakaby and Dogona considered commercial gardening preferable in that it was not only profitable, but also respected and personally satisfying.

It was also encouraged by the colonial administration. Eager to stimulate local food production for the urban market, the provincial government offered loans for *maraichage* and other forms of commercial food farming. It opened a *Grand Marché* in the city center in 1951, and built several other neighborhood markets over the next decade. The city also sponsored produce fairs, complete with prizes for the gardeners with the choicest vegetables. Like agricultural extension programs more generally, all these incentives were aimed at men.

But even without government encouragement, by the early 1950s women from Sakaby and Dogona were engaging in a variety of urban-based commercial activities. Their increasing participation in urban commerce reflects changes not simply in market demand but also, and more fundamentally, in the spatial and social conditions shaping village women's occupational opportunities (Hanson & Pratt, 1995). Partly because the trip to town was no longer considered dangerous and partly because of the longtime example of Zara women traders, the urban market had become a socially acceptable workplace for Bobo women.

Indeed, although men from the peri-urban villages usually marketed their own 'European' vegetables (such as radishes and green peas) to restaurants and expatriate households, they increasingly relied on their wives to help sell common-variety vegetables such as cabbage and tomatoes. The revenue, it was understood, belonged to the men, since they had use-rights to the garden land. But a woman who sold her husbands' produce in town typically used a portion of the daily earnings to buy 'sauce' ingredients, such as oil, spices and vegetables not grown at home. Since the sauce was a woman's responsibility anyway, this purchase amounted to a form of payment from the gardener to his wife—one that the wife had considerable control over, since she handled the money first. By contrast, when a woman helped her husband in his garden, *he* decided on the compensation.

In addition to selling their husbands' produce, Bobo village women sold fuel wood, *shea* butter and wild plant foods, all of which were in high demand in the city. Trade in these goods required little or no initial capital investment and relatively little extra time, since many women had to gather wild products and go to market anyway, as part of their duties as mothers and wives. Such trades also did not involve much competition from Zara Muslim women, for whom foraging was generally considered an even less appropriate activity than farming. Some Bobo women from Sakaby and Dogona also took up brewing millet beer (*dolo*) for the urban market, which prior to the spread of Islam had been dominated by Zara townswomen. In short, village women's efforts to respond to new market conditions while still meeting domestic obligations helped create

the kind of ‘new social space’ Suzanne Mackenzie observed among homeworkers in British Columbia (Mackenzie, 1999). Within this social space of the market place—where importantly, village women worked at a new distance from their menfolk—there developed new ideas about gendered rights and responsibilities, and new challenges to household power relations.

Like men, women used their earnings to buy personal items (clothing especially) and to meet obligations to their parents and other natal kin. But women also needed a regular source of income in order to fulfill their responsibilities as mothers and wives. For example, the availability of imported foodstuffs such as sugar, tea, coffee, wheat flour and dried milk, as well as a wide range of ‘European’ vegetables, had helped to transform local meal and culinary standards (Freidberg, forthcoming). Milk and sugar, added to tea or porridge, became desirable parts of breakfast, as did French-style bread; a proper sauce now contained an assortment of vegetables, plus purchased spices and ideally meat or dried fish. Other relatively new expenses for women included fees for grain milling, medical care, and often their children’s schooling.

The key point here is that during the post-war era of rapid urban growth and relative prosperity, the regional economy offered women in peri-urban villages new opportunities in small-scale commerce. But to take advantage of these opportunities they needed time in town, which meant they needed to be able to fulfill at least some of their domestic provisioning responsibilities in town through the market. For this they needed access to cash. Under these conditions, selling a husband’s vegetables offered a woman distinct advantages over growing them, because it allowed the woman much more direct control over the revenue. In principle, the daily earnings belonged to him; in practice, she might pocket as much as she thought she deserved.

Women’s effort to relocate part of their daily work is one important reason, I believe, why they eventually withdrew their labor from the gardens. This occurred in a number of ways, over a time period of approximately three decades, starting in the 1950s. Some women stopped working in the garden when they got old or sick, or their sons grew strong enough to replace them. Others stopped at a younger age—i.e. after they had their first child. In such instances, the gardeners probably had alternative sources of labor. But in other households, according to a number of elderly informants, women simply refused to water any more. None of the women admitted that they themselves had done this; rather, they only said that ‘some women’ did so.

According to one informant, a woman might appeal to the issue of physical strength, saying to her husband, ‘You are tired. I too am tired. *You* are the stronger one, and yet you want *me* to go water?’ Although this seems like a minor expression of disobedience, it had consequences. As one elderly woman observed, ‘if you refuse to work with your husband, it’s obvious that he’s going to keep everything he earns for himself.’ Another said that refusal might lead a husband to take a second wife, both ‘as a solution to the problem of labor in the garden,’ and as a rebuke, because he felt that ‘you were not fully engaged with him.’ The men might have planned to take second wives anyway, but this comment reveals how deeply disputes over garden labor affected certain couples’ marital relations. Such disputes may well have led, in some cases, to divorce—but neither men nor women were willing to discuss this subject in any detail.

## Conclusion

In Sakaby and Dogona, stories about women who refused to help their husbands emerged only after a series of long conversations with a small number of older women.

The most common historical explanation for why gardening is ‘men’s work’ makes no mention of these stories. Rather, it dwells on environmental changes—in particular, the drop in the local water table and severe riverbank erosion, both partly results of urbanization—that have made garden-watering more time consuming and physically demanding (Freidberg, forthcoming 2001).

Although these changes in the gardeners’ water supply have been marked, they do not by themselves explain the current gender division of labor. By most accounts, change in the river levels became noticeable only in the 1960s, yet women were already refusing to work in the gardens in the 1950s. Today people in Sakaby and Dogona may well believe that women are not physically suited for hauling water out of the river, but this was certainly not the original or only reason why women stopped this particular kind of work.

Rather, the redefinition of what is *physically* ‘men’s work’ or ‘women’s work’ must be understood in the context of changing economic conditions, power relations and social norms both within and beyond the household. This article has discussed a series of experiences and events which have shaped the meaning of gendered work, both specifically (i.e. imparting symbolic or social significance to particular tasks) and in the more general sense of defining gender roles.

The association of garden watering with forced labor, for example, has endured. In some parts of Africa, populations subjected to compulsory cultivation during the colonial era subsequently rejected, at least temporarily, the crops and farming techniques forced upon them. Villagers in Sakaby and Dogona continued gardening after 1946, despite the memories of beatings and humiliation, not only because it was their most reliable source of income, but also because for men, at least, market gardening offered far more than tedium—especially if they could delegate the watering to someone else. During those ‘honeymoon’ years, they considered it a challenging and profitable occupation. The meanings they assigned to gardening reflected not only favorable market conditions but also long-standing Bobo norms valuing men’s agricultural skills, and the contemporary status granted to producers of top-price, ‘prizewinning’ vegetables.

For women, however, market gardening meant something entirely different. Some may have benefited indirectly, as the wives of wealthy and respected gardeners. But many found weeding and hauling water no more rewarding than it had been for their mothers during the years of the compulsory labor regime.

Yet the era of forced labor also brought women a wider range of normative resources. The Catholic Church’s gender ideologies hardly ‘liberated’ women in any broad sense, but the missionaries of Bobo-Dioulasso did their best to convince villagers that adoption of the ‘European’ household model would help them achieve not just salvation but also material prosperity and ‘modern’ social status (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1992). Within this model, the missionaries espoused obedience as a wifely virtue, but also emphasized that a man ‘must not make the wife work too much ... [for] she is less solid than him.’ The Catholic Church did not necessarily introduce the notion of the ‘weaker sex’ to the Bobo people, but it did figure importantly in their discourse on Christian marriage and gender relations. Whenever possible, women used this discourse to their advantage—as when a woman told her husband, ‘*You* are the stronger one, and yet you want *me* to go water?’

Finally, urban-based Islam also shaped the gender division of labor in market gardening, and not only in Muslim households. By hiring labor in order to minimize their wives’ presence in the gardens and fields, wealthy Zara Muslim village gardeners helped make the spatial segregation of men’s and women’s roles in market gardening an indicator of status. In addition, the fact that these same men permitted their wives and

daughters to engage in commerce showed Bobo men that women's trading was not necessarily morally suspect. The Zara's example arguably made it more acceptable for Bobo women to spend all day at market, and to expand their commercial contacts and activities.

In short, in Sakaby and Dogona, both the villagers' *perspective* on regional economic, environmental, social and cultural changes and the ways they were able to *participate* in them were very much shaped by the fact that they lived on the edge of a city. The gendered meanings they have assigned to market gardening are products of this local, yet extroverted, history. Elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, the gendering of garden work has taken a quite different course. In fact, in some areas *men* do not want to be seen anywhere near a watering can (Schroeder, 1999).

Such local particularities, however, do not invalidate efforts to understand broader geographic patterns and historical tendencies in gender divisions of labor. Rather, the challenge is to trace how gendered norms and practices—in any kind of work, anywhere—have emerged out of the local articulation of broader historical forces. This article examined a small locality, remote from the regional economies most often studied by feminist geographers. But the gendered meanings of work here, as in many small places, have a complex history, informed by (among other things) the overlapping influences of Islam, colonial labor and trade policies, missionary enterprise, and the expansion of market relations. This case study does not predict what division of labor we would find in other villages engaged in similar activities, but it does suggest that the study of gendered work could benefit from an approach to history both more holistic and more explicitly geographic.

## NOTES

- [1] The Fulbright Foundation Institute for International Education, the National Science Foundation Geography and Regional Science Program, the University of California-Berkeley Provost's Fund, and the Rocca Family Foundation Fellowship for Advanced African Studies provided funding for this research. I would also like to thank Fatimata To and Jeremie Coulibaly, for their assistance in the field; the residents of Sakaby and Dogona, for their time and patience; Mahir Saul, for his thoughtful comments; and two anonymous reviewers, for their detailed and constructive suggestions.
- [2] See, for example, Swindell, 1988; Vennetier, 1989; Mortimore, 1993. The urban *hinterland* (Michael Mortimore's 'close-settled' zone) generally refers to a region of varying size where economic activity is oriented towards the urban market, and average population density is usually considerably higher than average density in more remote areas. This region encompasses a narrower *peri-urban* zone, extending about as far from the city as it is feasible to travel in a day by foot or donkey. Some peri-urban settlements are relatively new products of urban 'sprawl'; others, like Sakaby and Dogona, are at least as old as the city itself.
- [3] This year-long field research project aimed to trace the social history of market gardening in Bobo-Dioulasso and its immediate hinterlands, and to understand how changing meanings of work in both the gardening villages and the market places were related to broader political economic, social and environmental changes. In Sakaby and Dogona, therefore, I began with a survey of 180 market gardening households (defined here as units of residence and at least partially shared consumption), from which I selected a sample of 50 households, chosen to represent the diversity of the villages' garden operations. Over a period of 4 months, I interviewed all the members of each household (except pre-adolescent children) who participated in the production or marketing of vegetables. Normally, I and my Dioula-speaking translator interviewed individuals in private, though occasionally men wanted to listen to or participate in interviews with their wives. I also collected several oral histories from village elders. Later, in two different urban market places, I interviewed a total of 83 women vegetable traders. Finally, I examined colonial era records kept in three different archives: the colonial government archives of L'Afrique Occidentale Francaise, in Dakar, Senegal; the Bobo-Dioulasso municipal archives, and the archives of the Catholic Mission of Bobo-Dioulasso.

- [4] These reforms strengthened men's inheritance claims but also improved women's legal rights to the land they kept in cultivation (Guyer, 1991, p. 271).
- [5] In more rural areas, Bobo women still cultivate a range of leafy greens as well as legumes such as groundpeas, both for home use and local markets. But they also commonly buy non-local vegetables, brought from the Bobo-Dioulasso wholesale market by women traders. In Sakaby and Dogona, only a handful of the women interviewed reported growing anything on their own.
- [6] Unless otherwise noted, descriptions of events based in Sakaby and Dogona are based on the oral accounts of elders in these villages.
- [7] The extraordinary difficulty I encountered in collecting precise information on this subject was in itself instructive. Some older women described their work in their husbands' gardens in considerable detail, while others claimed that women had never, ever done garden work. One of the former group—a longtime widow—explained that some of her peers would not admit that they had done this work because, given the contemporary belief that men should not need women's garden help, it would 'shame' their husbands.

## REFERENCES

- AFONJA, SIMI (1986) Changing modes of production and the sexual division of labor among the Yoruba, in: ELEANOR LEACOCK & HELEN SAFA (Eds) *Women's Work: development and the division of labor by gender*, pp. 122–135 (South Hadley, MA, Bergin & Hadley).
- AUDOUIN, JEAN & DENIEL, RAYMOND (1978) *L'Islam en Haute Volta à l'Époque Coloniale* (Paris, L'Harmattan).
- BERG, MAXINE (1987) Women's work, mechanisation and the early phases of industrialization in England, in: PATRICK JOYCE (Ed.) *The Historical Meanings of Work* (New York, Cambridge University Press).
- BERNAL, VICTORIA (1994) Gender, culture and capitalism; women and the remaking of Islamic 'tradition' in a Sudanese village, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 36, pp. 36–67.
- BERNAL, VICTORIA (1997) Islam, transnational culture, and modernity in rural Sudan, in: MARIA GROSZ-NGATE & OMARI H. KOKOLE (Eds) *Gendered Encounters: challenging cultural boundaries and social hierarchies in Africa* (New York, Routledge).
- BERRY, SARA (1993) *No Condition is Permanent: the social dynamics of agrarian change in subSaharan Africa* (Madison, WI, University of Wisconsin).
- BOSERUP, ESTER (1970) *Women's Role in Economic Development* (London, George Allen & Unwin).
- CALLAWAY, BARBARA & CREEVEY, LUCY E. (1994) *The Heritage of Islam: women, religion, and politics in West Africa* (Boulder, CO, Lynne Rienner).
- CANNING, KATHLEEN (1996) *Languages of Labor and Gender: female factory work in Germany, 1850–1914* (Ithaca, NY, Cornell).
- CARNEY, JUDY (2000) The African origins of Carolina rice culture, *Ecumene*, 7, pp. 125–149.
- CARNEY, JUDY & WATTS, MICHAEL (1990) Manufacturing dissent: work, gender and the politics of meaning in a peasant society, *Africa*, 60, pp. 207–241.
- CATHOLIC MISSION (1936) *Diares* (Bobo-Dioulasso: Catholic Mission of Bobo-Dioulasso).
- COMAROFF, JEAN & COMAROFF, JOHN (1992) Home-made hegemony: modernity, domesticity and colonialism in South Africa, in: KAREN TRANBERG HANSEN (Ed.) *African Encounters with Domesticity*, pp. 37–74 (New Brunswick, NJ, Rutgers University Press).
- COQUERY-VIDROVITCH, CATHERINE (1991) The process of urbanization in Africa (from the origins to the beginning of independence), *African Studies Review*, 34, pp. 1–98.
- CREMER, JEAN (1924) *Les Bobo: la vie sociale* (Paris, Paul Geuthner).
- DE BENOIST, JOSEPH-ROGER (1987) *Eglise et Pouvoir Colonial au Soudan Français: les relations entre les administrateurs et les missionnaires catholiques dans la Boucle du Niger, de 1885 à 1945* (Paris, Karthala).
- DE MONTJOYE, EMMANUELLE (1980) *L'Évangile au Pays Bobo*. (Bobo-Dioulasso, Service de Publications, Diocese de Bobo-Dioulasso).
- DIALLO, HAMIDOU (1990) Introduction à l'étude de l'histoire de l'Islam dans l'ouest du Burkina Faso, *Islam et Sociétés au Sud du Sahara*, 4, pp. 33–45.
- ENGBLEBERT, PIERRE (1996) *Burkina Faso: unsteady statehood in West Africa* (Boulder, CO, Westview Press).
- FOLBRE, NANCY (1988) The black four of hearts: toward a new paradigm of household economics, in: DAISY DWYER & JUDITH BRUCE (Eds) *A Home Divided: women and income in the Third World*, pp. 248–261 (Palo Alto, CA, Stanford).
- FREIDBERG, SUSANNE (2001) Gardening on the edge: the social relations of unsustainability on an African urban periphery, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 91, 3.

- FREIDBERG, SUSANNE (forthcoming) French beans for the masses: a modern historical geography of food in Burkina Faso, *Food and Foodways*.
- GUYER, JANE (1988a) Dynamic approaches to domestic budgeting: cases and methods from Africa, in: DAISY DWYER & JUDITH BRUCE (Eds) *A Home Divided: women and income in the Third World*, pp. 155–171 (Palo Alto, CA, Stanford).
- GUYER, JANE (1988b) The multiplication of labor: historical methods in the study of gender and agricultural change in modern Africa, *Current Anthropology*, 29, pp. 247–272.
- GUYER, JANE (1991) Female farming in anthropology and African history, in Micaela Di Leonardo (Ed.) *Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge: feminist anthropology in the postmodern era*, pp. 255–277 (Berkeley, CA, University of California).
- GUYER, JANE (1997) *An African Niche Economy: farming to feed Ibadan, 1968–88* (London, Edinburgh University Press).
- HANSON, SUSAN & PRATT, GERALDINE (1995) *Gender, Work and Space* (New York, Routledge).
- HART, GILLIAN (1992) Imagined unities: constructions of ‘the household’ in economic theory, in: SUTTI ORTIZ & SUSAN LEES (Eds) *Understanding Economic Process*, pp. 111–129 (Lanham, MD, University Press of America).
- HOROWITZ, RICHARD (1997) ‘Where men will not work’: gender, power, space, and the sexual division of labor in America’s meatpacking industry, 1890–1990, *Technology and Culture*, 38, pp. 187–213.
- KOUANDA, ASSIMI (1997) Marabouts et missionnaires catholiques au Burkina à l’époque coloniale (1900–1947), in: DAVID ROBINSON & JEAN-LOUIS TRIAUD (Eds) *Le Temps de Marabouts*, pp. 33–52 (Paris, Karthala).
- LE MOAL, GUY (1980) *Les Bobo: nature et fonction des masques* (Paris, Orstom).
- LEACOCK, ELEANOR & ETIENNE, MONA (Eds) (1980) *Women and Colonization* (New York, Praeger).
- LEVITZION, NEHEMIA & FISHER, HUMPHREY (1987) *Rural and Urban Islam in West Africa* (Boulder, CO, Lynn Rienner).
- MACKENZIE, SUZANNE (1999) Restructuring the relations of work and life: women as environmental actors, feminism as geographic analysis, *Gender, Place and Culture*, 6, pp. 417–430.
- MASSEY, DOREEN (1994a) Double articulation: a place in the world, in: ANGELIKA BAMMER (Ed.) *Displacements: cultural identities in question*, pp. 110–121 (Bloomington, Indiana).
- MASSEY, DOREEN (1994b) *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minneapolis, MN, University of Minnesota).
- MCDOWELL, LINDA (1993) Space, place and gender relations. Part I. Feminist empiricism and the geography of social relations, *Progress in Human Geography*, 17, pp. 157–179.
- MIDDLETON, JOHN (1992) *The World of the Swahili: an African mercantile civilization* (New Haven, CT, Yale).
- MOORE, HENRIETTA (1988) *Feminism and Anthropology* (Minneapolis, MN, University of Minnesota Press).
- MORTIMORE, MICHAEL (1993) The intensification of peri-urban agriculture: the Kano close-settled zone, 1964–1986, in: BILLY LEE TURNER, GORAN HYDEN & ROBERT KATES (Eds) *Population Growth and Agricultural Change in Africa*, pp. 358–400 (Gainesville, FL, University Press of Florida).
- PRATT, GERALDINE (1997) Stereotypes and ambivalence: nanny agent’s stereotypes of domestic workers in Vancouver, BC, *Gender, Place and Culture*, 4, pp. 159–177.
- PRATT, GERALDINE (1999) Geographies of identity and difference: marking boundaries, in: DOREEN MASSEY, JOHN ALLEN & PHILIP SARRE (Eds) *Human Geography Today*, pp. 151–167 (Malden, MA, Blackwell).
- QUIMBO, LUCY (1979) Islam, sex roles, and modernisation in Bobo-Dioulasso, in: BENNETA JULES-ROSETTE (Ed.) *The New Religions of Africa*, pp. 203–218 (Norwood, NJ, Ablex).
- RAPPORT AGRICOLE (1932) Cote d’Ivoire Rapport Agricole Annuel (Dakar, Archives of the AOF).
- ROBERTS, PENELOPE (1989) The sexual politics of labor in Western Nigeria and Hausa Niger, in: KATE YOUNG (Ed.) *Serving Two Masters: Third World women in development*, pp. 27–44 (Ahmedabad, Allied Publishers).
- ROBERTS, RICHARD L. (1996) *Two Worlds of Cotton: colonialism and the regional economy in the French Soudan, 1800–1946* (Palo Alto, CA, Stanford).
- ROBERTSON, CLAIRE & BERGER, IRIS (1986) *Women and Class in Africa* (New York, Africana/Holmes & Meier).
- ROTH, CLAUDIA (1996) *La Séparation des Sexes chez les Z̄ara au Burkina Faso* (Paris, L’Harmattan).
- SACHS, CAROL (1996) *Gendered Fields: rural women, agriculture, and environment* (Boulder, CO, Westview Press).
- SANOU, DOTI BRUNO & SANOU, ALICE (1994) *Odonymes et Noms de Places de Bobo-Dioulasso* (Bobo-Dioulasso, Imprimerie de la Savane).
- SAUL, MAHIR (1986) Development of the grain market and merchants in Burkina Faso, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 24, pp. 127–153.
- SAUL, MAHIR (1989) Expenditure and intra-household patterns among the southern Bobo of Burkina Faso, in: HENRY RUTZ & BENJAMIN ORLOVE (Eds) *The Social Economy of Consumption*, pp. 349–378 (Lanham, MD, University of America Press).
- SAUL, MAHIR (1991) Farm production in Baré, Burkina Faso: the technical and cultural framework of diversity, in: G. DUPRÉ (Ed.) *Savoirs Paysans et Développement* (Paris, ORSTOM/Karthala).

- SAUL, MAHIR (1992) Matrilineal inheritance and post-colonial prosperity in southern Bobo country, *Man*, 27, pp. 341–362.
- SAUL, MAHIR (1997) Islam et appropriation mimétique comme ressource historique de la religion bobo, *Journal des Africanistes*, 67, pp. 7–24.
- SCHROEDER, RICHARD (1999) *Shady Practices: agroforestry and gender politics in the Gambia* (Berkeley, CA, University of California).
- SWINDELL, KEITH (1988) Agrarian change and peri-urban fringes in tropical Africa, in: DOUGLAS RIMMER (Ed.) *Rural Transformation in Tropical Africa*, pp. 98–115 (London, Belhaven).
- TIFFEN, MARY, GICHUKI, FRANCIS & MORTIMORE, MICHAEL (1994) *More People, Less Erosion: environmental recovery in Kenya* (Chichester, John Wiley).
- TOUNOUMA PARISH (1946–47) *Rapport Annuel* (Bobo-Dioulasso, Archives of the Catholic Mission)
- TOUNOUMA PARISH (1950–51) *Rapport Annuel* (Bobo-Dioulasso: Archives of the Catholic Mission).
- TURNER, BILLY LEE, HYDEN, GORAN & KATES, ROBERT (Eds) (1993) *Population Growth and Agricultural Change in Africa* (Gainesville, FL, University Press of Florida).
- VENARD, JEAN-LOUIS (1986) *Intervention Française dans le Secteur Urbain en Afrique Noire Francophone* (Paris, Economica).
- VENNETIER, PIERRE (Ed.) (1989) *La Péri-urbanisation dans les pays tropicaux* (Talence, France, Centre d'études de géographie tropicale).
- WETTERE-VERHASSELT, YOLA VAN (1969) Bobo-Dioulasso: le développement d'une ville d'Afrique occidentale, *Cahiers d'Outre Mer*, 85, pp. 88–94.
- WHATMORE, SARA (1991) *Farming Women: gender, work and family enterprise* (Basingstoke, Macmillan).
- WHITEHEAD, ANNE (1984) 'I'm hungry, mum': the politics of domestic budgeting, in: KATE YOUNG, CAROL WOLKOWITZ & ROSALYN McCULLAGH (Eds) *Of Marriage and the Market*, pp. 93–116 (London, CSE Books).