The Global Horizon

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Published by Leuven University Press

Schielke, Samuli and Knut Graw.
The Global Horizon: Expectations of Migration in Africa and the Middle East.

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Global cultural flows and their local appropriations have come to attract a growing interest in anthropology, and Africa counts as one of the areas where such approaches have been widely developed. At the same time, the issue of migration has been brought dramatically to the foreground, both as a political matter and as something that fuels local discourses and imaginations, be it in the form of actual practices of mobility or of constrained ‘immobility’. How do these two lines of investigation intersect? A common view of migration easily attributes the motivation for migrating to a fascination (a ‘mirage’) with the wonders of the North, as displayed by the glittering images offered on TV, in a contemporary version of the colonial ‘bright lights theory’ (Manchuelle 1997, 4). Such a simplistic view can be readily dismissed, in that it neglects the socioeconomic situations and historical processes that provide the basis for emigration in most countries, thus overemphasizing the cultural terrain of emigration. Furthermore, the way it portrays the migrant as a passive consumer of these flows of images is unsatisfactory. However naïve, it does point to the difficulty of understanding the interplay of global cultural flows penetrating the continent and fluxes of people migrating from Africa to the North.

This problem can be reformulated as a question about the link between ‘cultural extraversion’ and migration. The notion of extraversion was coined by Jean-François Bayart to mean what provides the substratum for the insertion of Africa in world history in the longue durée (Bayart 2000). It reconceptualizes the dependence that is viewed as characterizing the African continent as a ‘mode of action’, meaning that African actors have been deliberately using extraversion strategies for their own
projects, rather than being forcibly drawn into a globalized world. This perspective illuminates how ways of life, material culture, and cultural practices have been creatively borrowed and appropriated.

Studies of migrants and would-be migrants mobilize the concept of extraversion to address the predicament of African urban youth (see notably Fouquet 2007; 2008). This perspective aims at ‘locat[ing] African practices of the self and migratory aspirations on a common scheme of intelligibility: that of extraversion as a mode of subjectivation’ (Fouquet 2007, 104, my translation). In the dialectics between ‘here’ and ‘there’, comparison to an often idealized ‘elsewhere’ is also a way to relate critically to one’s own society.

In this chapter I want to make two points. Firstly, I wish to insist on the practices and technologies which mediate imaginations and expectations; this is a methodological point (discourses alone tell only part of the story) as much as a theoretical point (images by themselves rarely make people act and take decisions). Secondly, I attempt to offer some historical depth to the question of the global horizon by suggesting that the same practices may open distinct horizons at different moments. Given the focus of recent studies on would-be migrants among the urban youth (Fouquet, 2007 and 2008, Vigh 2009), the point of view I adopt here – which is that of villagers in a region characterized until recently by its low international emigration rates – is a way to take a step back. My perspective is thus in line with the purpose of this book as advocated by Graw and Schielke in the introduction, which aims at understanding migration ‘as being part of the larger sociocultural horizon of a given society or person’, rooting these reflections in a social, cultural, economic, and historical context. In this respect, my purpose is to understand how extraversion only partly accounts for the way people deal with global cultural flows. I will develop this line of investigation by turning to data from a previous work on literacy practices in a rural area of Mali.

I focus on personal practices that I consider to be practices of cultural production even though they are undertaken by low-literate writers and rarely display much textual continuity. Among these practices, one is of particular interest: keeping a personal notebook. As I have developed elsewhere (Mbodj-Pouye 2009; forthcoming), this practice derives from the habit of writing a farm notebook, initially sponsored in post-literacy training. It evolved into a more personal practice, outside any institutional setting, giving way to the emergence of individual compendia where farming data and family events, as well as personal and secret information, are written down.

In approaching these practices, I will not attempt to disentangle what strictly counts as ‘cultural’ (notably what pertains to a youth culture identified as urban)
from the rest. Rather, the intricacy of what our analytical categories would easily distinguish as local and global is integral to the data. I will stick to the paths the writers themselves use to introduce some order into this material. I will deal with these literacy practices as instances, among others, of the cultural practices the villagers engage in. I will associate them in the analysis with other domains of cultural practices, such as listening to the radio or watching TV.

This material will firstly be approached as a cultural site where we can point to phenomena of cultural extraversion. Then, the investigation on the process of subjectivation at work will help broaden the perspective to the socio-historical context where literacy provides – or fails to provide – opportunities at home or elsewhere. Finally, returning to a more literal view on mobility, I will interrogate the way some practices of literacy may actually sustain certain forms of migration.

The cultural dimensions of literacy: extraversion in question

The local currency of global forms

I begin with an ethnographic vignette that helps to dismiss a superficial understanding of extraversion.

In the personal notebooks kept by young male villagers, aged approximately 15 to 25, records of international competitions and lists of names of famous football players is one of the favourite topics. At first glance, recording sports results or players’ names seems to testify to an insertion into wider cultural circulations. To what extent is the logic of extraversion central in the practices analysed here? The double-page on Figure 1, from Somassa Coulibaly’s notebook displays the usual heterogeneity of ‘personal’ notebooks. The left-hand page is the continuation of notes copied during an information campaign on HIV, in Bamanan, that occupied the first eight pages of the notebook. This page is the point where the copying ends and the notebook is turned into a personal object. The end of the page is devoted to a list of dated events, essentially family events recorded in French from 1997 to 2003: deaths and births, as well as one marriage, his father’s departure to Mecca, and one notation concerning a television bought for the Africa Cup of Nations football competition organized in Mali in 2002. This list was copied from an earlier version in another notebook.

The right-hand page is devoted almost entirely to the results of the following Africa Cup in Tunis in 2004 (some figures relating to a weight of cotton appear on the right). This page details, in French, the results of the first round of the competi-
tion. Changes in ink suggest that the writing took place at different moments, maybe after each match. The writing is organized in columns displaying the results by pools.

The matches are listened to on the radio or, more recently, watched on the very few televisions present in the village. The results are written down in French, which may be the language the match was reported in, but not necessarily, as local radios also provide comments on the matches broadcast on TV in Bamanan. This choice of French is not specific to these kinds of notations. Somassa Coulibaly, born in 1975, went to the bilingual school, where he acquired the writing skills in Bamanan and French evidenced on this double page. He prefers French for his more personal writings, as appears in his notebooks and as he himself declares during the interview.

Writing down the results of international competitions pertains to a larger set of practices associated with international football, supported by different commodities, such as stickers, that sometimes make their way into the village environment. What does keeping a record of detailed information on this topic mean?

It seems obvious that football culture is a way of cultivating a sense of belonging to a wider environment and inscribing oneself in a global culture (for a range of studies on football in contemporary Africa see Baller and Saavedra 2010). But what are the actual uses of these records? First of all, they provide topics of discussion.

Figure 1: ‘Coupe d’Afrique’.
with friends in the village, in the neighbouring town of Fana, or elsewhere. The notes are described as providing pieces of evidence in the arguments that inevitably arise. Another very often quoted use of the personal record of results is to answer radio-show quizzes. These contests organized by local radio stations ask questions on football, sometimes on past competitions, such as where and when the first Africa Cup was organized. Some notebooks keep records of this past information when it is provided by the radio.4

When referring to these notations, the writers insist on the actual sociability and exchanges permitted by this knowledge. Those exchanges exceed the village boundaries and delineate specific groups of sociability between young men sharing the same preferences. Being competent in football provides some kind of local authority.

This initial approach compels us to be cautious, as obviously interest in global forms can meet local ends. As Richard Hoggart aptly demonstrated in *The Uses of Literacy*, exposure to and consumption of cultural products do not in itself imply adhesion to the values promoted in this production, and the repertoire of attitudes of keeping a distance and being only partially involved should not be underestimated (Hoggart 1957). Even when pieces of information are borrowed, they may be appropriated to local ends in unexpected ways. Thus, the link between the presence of global forms and cultural extraversion demands every time to be empirically established, as by itself this presence does not imply much.

In that sense, I would argue that through cultural work such as the writing of a personal notebook, global cultural products and expressive forms gain local currency. Personal writings appear to be a privileged site for cultural translation.

**The open-ended work of translation**

Translation is an effective way of articulating not only languages but also cultural systems of reference. For instance, to record dates, many writers adopt a double notation of the date in the two calendars in use in the region: the Gregorian calendar, which is the civil calendar officially used in Mali, and the lunar calendar with Bamanan names, which nowadays follows the Islamic calendar and is used as the shared reference at village level.

Moreover, concurringly to extraversion as making ‘global’ forms meeting ‘local’ ends, the writers also proceed the other way round, in providing new forms for ‘local’ bodies of knowledge.5 Magical formulas or spells (*kilisiw*) are one of the main genres in the notebooks, practised by men and women. The process of ‘entextualization’ of this orally transmitted body of knowledge shows that writers borrow from the model of the recipe: the text of the formula is quoted, accompanied by indications
for use. Interestingly, the main channel for becoming acquainted with this model is again the local radio, where broadcasts devoted to local medicinal knowledge bring in analytical forms of describing the uses of herbs. Writing down a formula implies borrowing some of these forms to re-contextualize knowledge acquired in a specific setting in order to provide it with a written form that is more sharable.

Islamic knowledge is also reworked in the notebooks. The writers draw from print booklets in Bamanan, French and Arabic, radio broadcasts, and cassettes. The wider transformations of religious knowledge associated with the uses of new media, and the changing forms of transmission are well documented (Schulz 2003). Writing down prayers or numbers of benedictions to say, collected from different sources, in order to make one’s own compendium is part of these dynamics, as careful attention to the uses of language and the modalities of quotation shows.6

Thus, the idea of extraversion seems too unidirectional to account for these dynamics. Some texts testify to a renewed attention to local culture, reshaped throughout processes of transcription, adaptation to new media and new uses. The logic of extraversion is but one of the cultural processes at work, in a larger dynamic of cultural translation, providing equivalences for meanings, combining distinct sources and appropriating global contents and forms in creative ways.

Since focusing on the content of the writing as testimony to extraversion proves deceptive, I will turn to a more pragmatic perspective on this material, interrogating the significance of the practices rather than engaging in content analysis. In so doing, I share with the studies quoted above an interest in African modes of subjectivation, or ‘African modes of self-writing’, to quote from Mbembe (2002). Approached as a ‘technique of the self’, this practice needs to be set in a wider context where literacy has become a major feature of rural life in the cotton-growing area.

Literacy, locality, and mobility: socio-historical variations

Literacy and mobility as common experiences
In the cotton-growing region of Southern Mali, a conjunction of educative enterprises, notably adult literacy classes in Bamanan conducted by the CMDT (Compagnie Malienne pour le Développement des Textiles), has rooted literacy practices in ordinary experience.7 My main fieldwork site was a village situated near Fana, a small Malian town.

In the Mande area, as throughout West Africa, Islamic uses of literacy in Arabic have entailed the development of written and graphic traditions. More recently,
colonic imposition of writing has also fostered specific uses of writing in French. However, the massive diffusion of writing in the cotton-growing area dates back to the mid-1970s. Functional literacy campaigns in Bamanan, initially organized by the governmental organization in charge of literacy programmes, the DNAFLA (Direction Nationale de l’Alphabétisation Fonctionnelle et de la Linguistique Appliquée), were taken up and broadened in the 1980s by the CMDT. The Company had its own interests in developing literacy classes as it was implementing a major organizational change, which implied delegating many tasks to local villager associations. This process required that some villagers would be literate in Bamanan, and able to keep records and perform a series of accounting, measurements, reading and writing tasks. In the village I worked in, a literacy centre was opened in 1971.

Schooling is the other main channel for acquiring literacy skills. Since the colonial period schooling has affected the village irregularly: during the interwar period two children were recruited for a newly opened school in Fana where they learned to read and write in French, and became the first literates in French in the village. In 1974, a school was opened in a neighbouring village, and in 1979 the village gained its own school, which was one of the first bilingual schools in the country.

These different ways of acquiring literacy involve three languages: adult literacy classes organised by the CMDT are in Bamanan, written in a modified Latin-based alphabet; schooling combines two languages, Bamanan and French; Islamic learning implies the use of Arabic, oral and written. Ethnographic interviews provide a view of the process of becoming literate, which implies studying in one or more of the educational institutional settings, but also learning through informal experiences, such as migrating in urban places where the scope of literacy experiences is wider. I have investigated literacy practices in the village in a wide range of contexts, institutional and professional (the practices linked to the production of cotton organized by the CMDT), private and informal.

In this village, two generations of literates can be identified: during the 1970s, literacy classes in Bamanan were directed at men, mainly householders. After their training, most of them gained access to positions within the association of cotton-producers sponsored by the CMDT. Schooling extended literacy skills to wider segments of the population, with a number of young men and women having access to the sixth grade in the primary school and sometime the seventh grade in Fana (for those who passed the exam to pursue their studies in the town, the drop-out rate during the first year was very high). The few who succeeded in further studies did not come back to live in the village: most of them obtained informal occupations in the cities; some volunteered as community teachers (with very low status). Many
young adults with an intermediary level (having more or less completed primary schooling) of education live in the village. Only a few of them have been co-opted by the village association of cotton-producers. Even without any regular post-literacy training and professional encouragement, some of the others have developed their own uses of literacy.

I will now turn to experiences of mobility in order to articulate dynamics around literacy and migration.

The village I worked in is located 10 kilometres from Fana, where many villagers spend the day on Wednesdays for the weekly market. In that way, mobility characterizes the life of the villagers on a routine basis. More generally, villagers are part of what has been described as a ‘culture of mobility’ characterizing West Africa (De Bruijn, Van Dijk and Focken 2001; Jónsson, this volume). The present focus on international migrations might lead us to overlook regional migrations, especially rural-urban mobility which constitutes a prominent feature of Malian societies (see Dias Barros, this volume).

To provide an overview of migration habits in the village, I rely on data collected through a survey conducted in the village (cf. table 1). This broad approach indicates firstly that most villagers are mobile: only 26% of the adult population has never left the village for a month or more. This global figure masks an important gender disparity as it represents 36% of women and 10% of men.

As for the destinations, Bamako and other locations in Mali have attracted respectively 31% and 35% of the villagers. 25% of them have been outside Mali, in the surrounding African countries (mainly the Ivory Coast, more rarely Guinea, Senegal, and Morocco once). Migration to Europe is basically not practised – until 2004, only one villager was reported to have been to Europe (to Belgium for the second-hand car trade on a short trip). Since then, two young men have left for Spain, starting a new kind of migration.13

Age affects the migration rate very little, testifying to the fact that spending some time out of the village is an experience historically rooted in the village (cf. table 2). Yet destinations and conditions for migration have varied throughout history:15 older villagers went to Senegal and Gambia in the 1930s. The Ivory Coast became more attractive for the following generation. In the 1950s and 1960s, migration to other rural zones was also practised, especially in those areas already involved in cash-crop production and colonial and postcolonial agronomical experiments.

In recent times, migration has tended to focus on urban centres, sometimes as a follow-up to student mobility, sometimes competing with schooling. This is especial-
ly the case for young girls migrating to Bamako in search of domestic employment, which has become more and more attractive in recent times (Lesclingand 2004, 32). More recently, migration patterns have changed with the crisis in the Ivory Coast, and the return of some villagers settled there. Former pupils of the village school interviewed as young adults (25 to 30 years old) often had a rich migration record, including in several locations, mostly urban. This mobility involves periods where migration is limited to the dry season (which is tolerated by the elders) and longer periods (most often disapproved of by the elders). Many expressed their wish to find a way out of the village in order to settle permanently in towns.

I will now attempt to bring together these two experiences of literacy and mobility that, each in its own way, shape villagers’ lives, both of which could count in a broad sense as extraversion. When trying to articulate the reflection on literacy to the common experience of mobility, we encounter a classical line of investigation, as migration has been identified as one of the social correlates to literacy (Scribner and Cole 1981). This association between literacy and migration in West Africa has recently been reasserted (Schmitz and Humery 2008). The direction of the correlation is not always clear, however: does migratory experience foster the acquisition of literacy skills and practices or is it literacy which helps the migratory project and its effective realization? Another set of questions arises when one considers the level at which the causality would operate; if migration and singularly urban experiences facilitated the acquisition of literacy: is it as a place where specific skills and knowledge are acquired and experimented with, or as a site where literacy appears valuable? Among the range of literacy practices migrants engage in, the role of letter-writing in maintaining ties with their place of origin and in sustaining diasporic networks is well-known, though sometimes also carried out through brokers when people lack literacy or language skills (Charpy and Hassane 2004). As we shall see, the local practices described here also bear an imprint of the culture of mobility that characterizes this area.

Writing in a notebook and the ‘production of locality’

Keeping a personal notebook as Somassa Coulibaly does, is a common practice for literate individuals of different ages and backgrounds in the village. Very often the notebook is not initially dedicated to personal writing. It may have been received during an agricultural training course run by the CMDT or an NGO. On such occasions, the organizer gives out blank exercise-books to the audience. At the end of the training, each participant will have conscientiously filled in a part of the notebook by copying down the statements written on the blackboard by the teacher. This notebook will then be taken home and be used for one’s own purposes. Some
intensive writers end up buying notebooks for their own use.

I will consider here the notebook kept by Makan Camara, born in 1967. He was one of the first pupils to complete primary schooling in the bilingual school. He passed the exam to pursue his schooling in Fana, but left after a few months. He went to the Ivory Coast for several months, and then settled in the village, where he was recruited by the village association as a monitor for the literacy classes in Bamanan.19

During our discussion, he went over his notebook for me, and allowed me to photograph most of the pages. On six pages, he had recorded different kinds of events dating from 1996 to 2001. The notebook displays a specific form of organization, with the following topics being covered on distinct pages:

– page 1: record of the death of his father in 1996 (reproducing the form of the obituary notice addressed to the radio), and table of the donations for the funeral;
– page 2: agricultural notations, and again the death of his father, 1996;
– page 3: other family events (four births and one marriage, 1996 to 2001);
– page 4: distant events (the death of Pepe Callé, a Congolese musician; the death of a Malian Islamic preacher; 1998; see Figure 2);
– page 5: village events (the death of the village chief; the inauguration of a mosque; 1998);
– page 6: personal notations (the day when he bought a radio and other personal items; an unidentified death notation).

Figure 2: Recording distant events.
This overview reflects the general topics in the notebooks: domestic and farming notes form the main bulk of the writing (here farming appears marginally, but domestic records are dominant). The use of languages in this notebook gives a good idea of the way personal writings mix different languages and scripts. Though code-switching is pervasive and precludes any easy assignation of language, French dominates. This is a common feature of the notebooks kept by biliterates, where a strong preference for French is obvious, as I have already mentioned in the case of Somassa.\textsuperscript{20} Again, the importance of the radio is notable.

Makan Camara’s practice is remarkable for the way he manages time and space. He makes his notes in a strikingly organized manner, considering that the writing spans more than six years. He has ‘opened’ several pages at the same time, and written down each event on the relevant page, following an order he himself has determined. This order corresponds to the distinction between the three social spaces to which he belongs: the household, the village, a wider public space.

The other point which this case highlights is that the writing of events is often mediated, notably by the radio: not just the distant events of page 4, but also the death of his father which appears in the solemn form of the obituary as sent to the local radio. For one of the village events (the inauguration of the mosque), the presence of a radio reporter from Fana is recorded, as if the importance of the event – locally self-evident – could be enhanced by its recognition as an event for a wider audience.

Family events are recorded in a sober and matter-of-fact manner, which roughly follows the model of the official births register. The fact that personal writing borrows from institutional models is congruent with a forging of the self that follows the lines of the assigned identities, mainly that of a household head (\textit{dutigi}) and a member of the agricultural association. Both the CMDT and the administration direct most of their injunctions to these male individuals, and in a way their domestic writings bring home and extend the written devices deployed by these institutions into their management of their own farms, families, and lives.

Yet, this form of writing is supplemented by records of other events: from the village, and even outside. This testifies that he uses the notebook to sketch out a wider chronical of the different arenas he inscribes himself in. But domestic events constitute the core of this notebook, and give this spatial sense of belonging a local centre.

\textit{Being literate in the village: changing patterns of social opportunities}

Obviously, this form of writing relies on effective participation in local life, and depends on the status of household head, or at least requires that the writer have
some responsibilities in family and farming. As I mentioned earlier, the first literates in the village were often household heads and became involved in the management of the village association. For them, the double dimension of professional use of writing at the village level and domestic use provides a space to display and exercise their skills. Even those who were not in this position gained specific power from being the first literates in their families. They belong to a generation that clearly took advantage of the organizational changes in the CMDT in the mid-1970s and early 1980s. Literacy proved to be a way to gain access to valued forms of mobility, such as when being chosen by the village as a representative for training sessions held by the CMDT in Fana or other locations. Perspectives of return were opened, and these first literates developed strategies which gave value to the experience gained in the cities, as several narratives of migration and successful return and insertion reveal.

Those who became literate in the mid-1980s and early 1990s (the first promotions of villagers who had been to school) had some local opportunities. Some of them gained positions in the village association, taking over from the first literates. With the development of syndicates, NGOs and other forms of civil associations in the 1990s, others got a chance to value their literacy skills in French and Bamanan as local representative of these projects. Since the late 1990s the crisis in cotton production has limited economic possibilities, and the perspective of privatizing the CMDT has accelerated its disinvestment in ‘non-productive’ activities, such as literacy and post-literacy training. For the younger literates, there are very few opportunities to value these skills in the village, and often their literacy practices are not even used at the family level, as there are older literate family members who are already in charge of domestic writing. Local narratives tend to highlight the successes of those who manage to settle in Fana or Bamako and send money home regularly.

Thus, literacy takes on new meanings in a socioeconomic context where its localizing potential has eroded.

Mobile objects and practices of mobility

Literacy has always been associated with mobility. In the village, early records of migration mention letters sent to and from the village (for instance a villager who went to The Gambia for further Islamic studies in the 1930s was called back home by a letter in Arabic). Letters may be sent in advance to prepare for the departure, and they, along with personal messages, are one of the main vectors of communication between villagers and their relatives established elsewhere.\textsuperscript{21}
When focusing on writing in the village, we can identify specific practices associated with mobility, such as recording addresses in notebooks or keeping handwritten travel indications and maps. Indeed, the city is often described as a ‘graphic’ environment: villagers stress the importance of graphic artefacts, such as signs and numbers, for self-orientation while travelling. Urban life also fosters important changes in the literacy practices, with a development in the use of French (in writing as well as in oral communication), and above all a diversification of literacy uses and commodities.

As mobile objects, notebooks might be taken by the villagers on their journeys, and some of them bear witness to the mobility of the writers and the literacy experiences provided by urban life. This can be seen from the small notebook belonging to Moussa Coulibaly during his stays in Bamako and Ségou. Born in 1977, he completed primary school in the village. After leaving school, he practised seasonal migration for some years. His marriage was not approved of by his family, and he lived for some years in Koutiala with his wife where he worked in a truck-repairing garage. Finally he was called home by his father, and he returned to the village in 2001.

As the youngest son of an important family, he suffers from control by his numerous older brothers. As he is not the first literate in the family, he is not in charge of important family records, though he sometimes contributes; for instance he records the weight of cotton collected individually by family members, so that each member can earn his portion of the cash. He also writes a weekly shopping-list of goods he is asked to buy at the market in Fana for other family members. He writes down the credits taken for the little shop he manages on behalf of one of his brothers. He keeps several notebooks where these notations (credits, family cotton records) are mixed with prayers copied in Arabic, incantations collected from friends, and football results. Since he returned, he has moved several times for a couple of months. On his journeys, he takes two small notebooks with him.

Some notations are directly associated with the migratory process: addresses and phone numbers give a view of his journeys. In this case, as has been pointed out in recent studies, the migratory process diverges from older networks of solidarity (Boesen and Marfaing 2007, 14). Recording phone numbers and addresses is part of a process to prepare for migration, but also functions as a personal aide-mémoire for future mobility. In this vein, Moussa also records in a personal way itineraries for shorter journeys to specific places (in a form close to oral forms and reminiscent of classical itineraries in Arabic: ‘from this place to this other, and then from this place to this other’). A handwritten copy of his birth certificate also appears, as a replica of the identification papers he also carries with him when travelling.
But this practice is not only an actual support for geographical mobility; it also serves as a record of the experience of migration. On one page, he records his daily earnings as a manual labourer in Ségou, in a factory (see figure 3). Recording the losses and gains was quoted by other migrants as a way to make sense of the adventure. Other notes give a sense of migration as a much wider cultural experience. During his trip to Ségou, he also wrote down the titles of songs he wanted to put together on a cassette, a radio show on child education that he particularly appreciated and other souvenirs.

Figure 3: A travel notebook.

Conclusion

A set of local literacy practices has emerged since the 1970s in the CMDT region. At the outset, these personal and domestic practices, as well as the status of being literate, were distinctive. They provided opportunities for the first generations of literates to gain positions of power and authority at the village level. For some, they enhanced specific and valued forms of mobility. They provided opportunities for return for migrants who valued both their skills and their experience. For the following generations, social opportunities associated with literacy declined. They developed practices that were both more self-oriented and open to arenas wider than the village level and the locally supported network of literacy activities. Their mobility appears
to be less controlled by older generations, and perspectives of return more volatile. In this context, the same array of literacy practices is developed to support individual trajectories involving migration and to enhance possible insertions into wider arenas.

Keeping a personal notebook, considered as a practice of the self, provides a view on a variety of attitudes to locality and mobility. The logic of extraversion appears to be only one of the dimensions of processes of cultural translation that can also be directed to better insertion in changing local economies of knowledge. If the practice cannot as such be identified as something that triggers migration, when the project emerges, notebooks and booklets may become a space where the aspirations take form, provide actual support to mobility, and even offer a record of this experience.

**Table 1  Past migrations (Residents over 15)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Migration and destination</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bamako</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other locations, Mali</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside Mali</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Surveyed: 631 / No reply= 47 / Respondents: 584 / Answers: 731
Percentages are calculated on the basis of surveyed population.

**Table 2  Variation of destinations over the time (Residents over 15)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% Lines</th>
<th>Migrations</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Bamako</th>
<th>Other locations, Mali</th>
<th>Outside Mali</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (years)</td>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>100</td>
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<td>70 et plus</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Italics indicate that the statistics rests on number inferior to 30.
References


Notes

1 I wish to thank Thomas Fouquet for his careful reading of a previous version of this chapter.

2 Understandably, the fact that Mali organized the Africa Cup of Nations (Coupe d’Afrique des Nations) in 2002 was recorded more widely, even by senior writers, as a national event.

3 Names and private information (such as telephone numbers) have been blurred on the photographs, and pseudonyms are used throughout this chapter.

4 Local radios are at the centre of a wide array of practices, such as direct intervention through letter-writing or live phone-calls, song-requests, recording music or radio broadcasts. See
Schulz 2000 for an overview of local radios and their audiences, and on female youth culture Schulz 2002.

5 Of course, this knowledge is itself characterized by forms of mobility of great extension. Secrets are very often gained through migration or from foreigners (see the description by McNaughton of the way the magical and medicinal lore of blacksmiths is acquired, 1988). My use of the term ‘local’ refers here to the fact that this knowledge is given a local character by the writers, who refer to it as ‘Bamanan’.

6 I pursue this analysis of the transformation of Islamic knowledge in relation to print culture and writing practices in an on-going collaboration with Francesco Zappa.

7 The results of these classes are controversial: see Dombrowsky, Dumestre and Simonis 1993 for a critical evaluation around Koutiala, a Minyanka-speaking region where literacy in Bamanan poses specific linguistic difficulties. I conducted my research in the Northern part of the CMDT region in a Bamanan-speaking village.

8 Written culture in Africa is an emergent field of interest for historians and anthropologists. For a study of the imposition of writing under colonial rule in Ghana see Hawkins 2002. Writing, even imposed, has at once been subjected to cultural dynamics of appropriation (Barber 2006).

9 Though French remains the only official language of Mali, several ‘national languages’ (currently 13) have been acknowledged as useful for literacy classes, schooling and uses in the media. However the bilingual school, especially at its beginning, was strongly oriented towards the acquisition of French.

10 This broad panorama can be narrowed down with the use of statistical data collected through a survey that I conducted in every household of the village. The literacy rate obtained coincides with the national figure at the time: 19% of the adult residents can read and write a letter, in any language (9% of the women, and 30% of the men). The language distribution runs as follows: 18% of the adults state they can read and write a letter in Bamanan, 9% in French, and less than 1% (4 people) in Arabic.

11 I rely on interviews, notably with the former students of literacy classes in the village as well as with the first pupils to graduate from the bilingual school. For this last group, I conducted interviews in Fana and Bamako with those settled there. I rely also on observations and on a corpus of 301 photographs of pages of notebooks kept by 23 writers in the village. Though letter-writing is almost always the first use of literacy mentioned by villagers, I have been able to collect or observe very few letters, in comparison to other personal writings.

12 In the survey, I defined ‘migration’ quite loosely as having spent at least one month outside the village – contra for instance ‘spending at least 3 months out of the village’ in a much more detailed and large survey quoted above (Lesclingand 2004). The detailed answers regarding the length of stay show that, for all destinations, most of the stays are over one year.
13 Though I do not know the individual stories of these two men, it is tempting to see in this new development a consequence of the pauperization of the area, due to the crisis in the cotton market and the disorganization of the CMDT. It seems that the region will no longer be exempt from the phenomenon of international migration.

14 The high percentage of youths who have not moved is due to the fact that youths who have migrated are not covered by the sample; the population considered here is the resident population, and students or economic migrant are already out of the village but not yet back, and do not appear in these figures. In other words, these figures capture past migrations, so they make sense for those who have moved and returned to the village.

15 A full outline of the local history of migration is beyond the scope of this chapter. The elements provided here are drawn from interviews and informal discussions.

16 The first woman to have been in Bamako by herself as an unmarried woman was born in 1967, so feminine migration to Bamako can be dated back to the beginning of the 1980s. For an analysis of the negotiations around female migration and the way it becomes integral to local culture (in a context where it developed much earlier) see the contribution by Michael Lambert on the Jola (Lambert 2007).

17 Very few are already heads of households (dutigiw) themselves. One of them, who left his uncle’s household, alternates periods of several years in the village and periods of the same length in neighbouring cities (Ségou, Koutiala). His case is quite exceptional though – he has withdrawn his farm from the village association of cotton-producers, and grows only food-producing crops. Migration, especially when it exceeds the dry-season, is incompatible with being the head of a farm.

18 I rely on the elaboration by Appadurai on the concept of locality as ‘a complex phenomenological quality’ which is ‘primarily relational and contextual rather than ... scalar or spatial’ (Appadurai 1996, 178). He contrasts it with the term ‘neighborhood’ which refers to ‘the actually existing social forms in which locality, as a dimension or value, is variably realized’ (Appadurai 1996, 179). I follow his line of argument here, as far as production of locality is defined as a historically-determined process that the nation-state attempted to shape to its advantage by developing its own disciplinary modes of localization (Appadurai 1996, 189-191).

19 A full-length transcription and a more detailed analysis of this notebook appear in (Mbodj-Pouye 2008).

20 A sociolinguistic analysis of the writings helps to unfold this apparent paradox: see (Mbodj-Pouye and Van den Avenne 2007).

21 During my fieldwork there were no phones in the village. When I returned in 2007 and 2009, mobile phone coverage had extended to the village, so the communication practices described here have changed drastically.