Trade and Traders. The Making of the Cattle Market in Benin
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This chapter provides a general West African perspective on the forthcoming analysis of the cattle trade and cattle traders in Benin. It makes a distinction between the concepts of trade and traders. Sections 2.1 and 2.2 cover the level of individual and groups of traders, while Section 2.3 considers the structural level of trade. On the basis of a literature survey, we respectively deal with the ideological conditions that determine the objectives and strategies of traders (2.1), the way in which they organise their trade (2.2) as well as the patterns of trade (2.3). As such, the organisation of the chapter corresponds to the structure of the framework of Grégoire & Labazée (cf. Section 1.2) which provided the basis for our conceptual scheme. The findings presented below have served as valuable input for the organisation of our research on the cattle trade and cattle traders in Benin. Apart from providing a focus on relevant issues and enabling us to formulate pertinent questions for fieldwork, they have contributed to a better understanding of the processes observed in Benin where cattle traders have never operated in isolation from the West African setting.

Whereas the section on trade patterns will exclusively focus on cattle trade, the sections on ideological conditions and trade organisation utilise a broader perspective when necessary. The literature review provided valuable insights into issues such as the identity, accumulation paths and networks of traders who do business in commodities other than cattle. Nevertheless, it was not feasible to include all types of traders operating throughout the wide variety of West African trade sectors.1 The scope of the present chapter was therefore geographically and thematically confined to long-distance traders who operate at

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1 This restriction means that in the present chapter several types of trade and groups of traders are omitted. These include the non-food trade, the transoceanic export and import trade from and towards West Africa (cf. Van der Laan 1997), most of the local trade at village markets (cf. Bohannan & Dalton 1962, Hodder & Ukwu 1969, Hill 1971), most of the trade groups based in the West African forest zones (cf. Meillassoux 1971), and most of the Lebanese, French, Syrian and Indian diaspora traders (cf. Bournedouha 1995).

Throughout West Africa, the number of women engaged in the cattle trade is negligible. Within the livestock and meat sector as a whole, women are particularly active as urban retailers of goats and imported frozen meat and they are primarily responsible for the commercialisation of local milk and milk products as well. Women rarely operate in the long-distance trade as it has been defined for the purpose of the present study.
West African markets, predominantly dealing in local commodities and pertaining to an ethnic group from the areas which are commonly designated as the Sudano-Guinean and Sahelian climate belts. This focus appeared to be the most relevant for an analysis of the strategies and trade organisation of cattle traders in Benin.

2.1 The ideological setting of trade

The significance of incorporating so-called ideological factors in the analysis of trade and traders has been proven by the results of several studies quoted in the previous chapter. In the conceptual framework presented in Section 1.3, the ideological conditions of trade were captured in the concepts of ethnicity, identity and religion. The present section investigates the extent to which these factors have determined the objectives and (accumulation) strategies of West African traders.

The moral economy of trade

The title of the present section has been borrowed from Grégoire & Labazée (1993) who identified the ideological setting of trade as one of the three levels of investigation in their framework for the analysis of trade and traders. Another denominator for the ideological conditions that surround trade is the concept of the 'moral economy of trade' elaborated by Evers & Schrader (1994). The moral economy of trade can be interpreted as a trader specific elaboration of Scott's moral economy, which was dealt with in Section 1.2. The 'moral economy school' put forward the so-called trader's dilemma which attempts to explain the ideological position of a trader in rural peasant societies. Although most of the empirical evidence and analyses presented by Evers & Schrader concern trade and markets in South-east Asia, their remarks certainly bear relevance to the West African case being discussed here. The following brief discussion of the trader's dilemma and possible 'solutions' provides the right theoretical perspective to understand the role of ethnicity, identity and religion in West African trade.

The trader's dilemma......

Evers & Schraders (1994) argue that in some cultures traders have been confronted with a difficult dilemma. In short, the trader's dilemma represents the position of a trader whose objective of selling commodities at a profit is impeded by a moral code which inhibits personal capital accumulation or so-called crematistic behaviour, and requires immediate redistribution of profits. Arguing along similar lines, Coquery-Vidrovitch & Lovejoy designated this phenomenon as 'the destruction of surplus' (1985, 14) in rural or peasant societies. The dilemma, then, consists in the apparent contradiction between the moral obligation to share profits with other members of the community on the one hand, and the necessity to make profits and accumulate capital on the other. The moral obligation is

2 The choice for the Sudano-Guinean and Sahelian climate zones as the point of reference was guided by the significance of these zones for livestock production in West Africa. The large majority of West African cattle traders originate from these zones.

In the present study, long-distance trade is defined as the southbound trade between the Sudano-Guinean and Sahelian climate zones on the one hand, and the coastal towns on the other.
linked to the fact that in most peasant societies, risk-averse behaviour emphasises mutual assistance and subsistence security for every member (Scott 1976). This puts considerable pressure on those who surpass the subsistence level and accumulate a financial surplus through commercial activity. This pressure could accordingly be materialised in demands for credit, help and unpaid services.

..... and the solutions to it
There are several theoretical solutions to the trader's dilemma. Evers & Schrader summarise a number of possible ways out of the predicament which boil down to the observation that '. . . trade requires solidarity among the traders and social and cultural distance from customers . .' (1994, 10). The most obvious solution is to cease any trade activity. Since this constitutes an assertion which is difficult to verify, the focus will be on solutions that have been applied in situations where trade activity has been maintained. First, a large number of traders have continued to trade with the society they belong to, solving the dilemma by deliberately keeping the quantity of their trade to a minimum. Profit margins of petty trading are then too meagre for large-scale distribution. Second, an important solution has been found in migration. Migration has led to the establishment of trading minorities in host societies. In order to morally justify their profit-raising activities (ibid., 11), the community of migrated traders (the diaspora) attempts to maintain a cultural and social distance from members of the host society. This strategy could be qualified as the 'diaspora solution'. The diaspora option for which cultural distinctiveness is a key word, is closely related to another solution to the dilemma which can be summarised as 'ethnic demarcation' of traders from other members of the society. Just as the diaspora solution, this option clearly aims at the depersonalisation of economic relations by creating distance via a separate identity. The ethnic demarcation of traders is possible in various ways and stresses the identity of the trader group as separate from outsiders.

The establishment of cultural distinctiveness and of ethnic trading minorities (diaspora) are two distinct phenomena in explaining the origins and features of long-distance trade in West Africa. It will be argued that in addition to an escape (solution) from the dilemma, the occurrence of trading diaspora and the rise of specific ethnic trading groups can equally be interpreted as a strategy to protect a trade monopoly or as a strategy to facilitate long-distance trade (Cohen 1971). To substantiate this argument, a brief overview is presented of the pre-colonial evolution of long-distance trade in West Africa in relation to the parallel rise of ethnic trading groups. The structural changes in the West African economy from around the end of the colonial era resulted in the breakdown of the trade monopolies of these specific ethnic groups. It will be shown that new identity markers were envisaged to establish the distinctiveness of traders in general and that of subgroups of traders in particular. We will also address the role of identity in relation to the patterns of accumulation of West African traders, explaining that through the accumulation of economic, social and symbolic capital, traders derive an identity which can be 'mobilised' to the benefit of their trade activities.

Prior to the discussion of the role of ethnicity and identity in West African trade, a few remarks will be made on these much-debated concepts.

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3 For a detailed discussion of trading diaspora around the world such as the Jews in Europe, the Chinese in South-east Asia or the Armenians in Syria, and their relations with the host society, see Bonacich (1973) who uses the term 'middleman minorities' (ibid., 583).
Perspectives on ethnicity and identity

Over the past decades, the concept of ethnicity has been extensively debated. Originally, the prevailing idea was that an ethnic group developed its cultural and social traits in 'relative isolation' from other groups (Barth 1969, 11).

In his famous volume entitled *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, Barth was among the first to challenge this vision, arguing that ethnic boundaries are not as static or stable as previously presumed (*ibid.*, 9-39). On the contrary, he showed that ethnic identity is emphasised, if not created, when different groups interact. According to him, ethnic identity exists thanks to the differences between groups. Furthermore, Barth's approach handed out a new notion which would become of great significance to the discussion on ethnicity, i.e. 'ascription' (*ibid.*, 14). Ascription refers to the 'self-definitional' aspects of ethnic identity as opposed to the supposedly objective features of an ethnic group (Schilder & Van Binsbergen 1993). Whereas the latter encompass historically 'provable' or 'real' features such as the sharing of language, descent, religion or history, the aspect of self-definition refers to the existence of a group consciousness which can be defined as a subjectively experienced identity that sets off 'us' against 'them', in other words, the feeling of belonging to a particular group (Schipper 1995). The notion of ethnic identity as consisting of either one, came to represent the debate between the so-called 'primordialist school' as opposed to the 'instrumentalist school' (Baud et al. 1994). The advocates of the instrumentalist school have questioned the alleged existence of (objective) primordial features of ethnic groups. Several studies have been put forward to demonstrate that ethnic identity, instead of 'having always been there', is basically a construction.

From an instrumentalist perception on ethnicity, some scholars have emphasised the mobilising role of the elite. In short, they attribute the existence of an ethnic identity to the organisational capacity of the elite in constructing not only a common history or cultural heritage but also a vision of the future. Amselle, for instance, has characterised ethnic groups as ideological tools, created by colonial rulers and the local political elite, which were eventually 'appropriated' by the population (Amselle 1990). Here, ethnicity represents an ideological construction in order to achieve a political goal, namely the consolidation of a power base. This position, which considers ethnicity as an 'imposed' phenomenon, has been criticised on several fronts. First of all, it was stated that ethnicity is, at least partially, a cultural reality which exists independently of outside manipulation (the 'primordialist' point of view). Secondly, it was argued that although ethnicity constituted a specific vehicle for colonial control, it was not exclusively used by the elite but just as much by other groups who competed for scarce resources (Osaghae 1991). When this argument is stretched, the time dimension which characterised the original position, i.e. that ethnic groups are colonial creations, remains no longer valid. Consequently, ethnicity appears to be a dynamic concept which manifests itself according to the issues at stake (either political, economic or social). A final critical remark concerns the overemphasis on political and collective expressions of ethnicity. Baud *et al.* (1994, 7-12) reject the idea which exclusively relates ethnicity to 'collective action' at the level of society and argue that ethnic identity can be an important factor for individuals or groups as well. They link the ethnicity discussion to recent theoretical insights with regard to societal change as the result of interaction between actor and structure (Long 1992; cf. Section 1.2).

In this respect, Schilder & Van Binsbergen point to a '.. persisting core of ethnic consciousness, [with which] manipulation (for the sake of political interests) is only possible up to a point ..' (1993, 11). See also Osaghae (1991, 45).
and advocate the following approach to ethnicity which takes this interplay into account (Baud et al. 1993, 8-12). The point of departure assumes that the strategic behaviour of the individual or groups of actors invariably modifies the structural features of society. As a 'guide' to strategic action, which is strategic in the sense of 'aiming at access to resources', the actors use existing frameworks or institutions which set the rules of the game. The outcome or success of this strategic behaviour is partly determined by the capacity to act collectively. Hence, the construction or mobilisation of a collective identity confers a sense of communality and legitimacy to the actors and their strategic action. For the construction of a group identity, elements are drawn from the latent pool of structural features (culture). However, these elements are not necessarily 'primordial' since they do not represent a centuries-old ethnic basis but a set of socially determined rules of behaviour, symbols, practices and meanings which are continuously being shaped, selected or (re)constructed. The notion of group, finally, is a dynamic one, since its identity and composition depend on the issues at stake as well as on group identification from inside and from outside.

A history of trader identity in West Africa

The role of identity in West African trade is intricately related to the development of long-distance trade. The origins of long-distance trade can be traced back to the pre-colonial era, when, around the 14th and 15th centuries, commercial activity is estimated to have started to surpass the locally bound barter trade (Lovejoy 1980). Its initial growth was based on the comparative advantages of the various agro-ecological zones, among which the Sahara, the Savannah and the forest zone are commonly distinguished (Arhin 1979; Hopkins 1973; Coquery-Vidrovitch 1976). Between these zones, commodities such as salt, dried fish, textiles, cereals, livestock and kola nuts were exchanged. To a large extent, the production of each of these commodities was restricted to a particular region. While salt originated from the Sahara, specifically around the area of lake Chad, kola nuts were grown in the forest zones of today's Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. Livestock were raised throughout the Savannah and dried fish was prepared in large quantities along the Niger river, particularly in the delta situated in what today constitutes Mali. Slaves were captured in the more populous parts of the Savannah and Sahelian belts for transport across the Sahara towards North Africa until the middle of the 18th century (Grégoire 1994). And until the 19th century slaves were transported from the forest zones to the coast and then across the Atlantic Ocean.

Due to the considerable distances that had to be covered and limitations with regard to transport, trade between climate zones had a relay character. For instance, a Sahara-based Touareg trader would preferably exchange his salt, plus a variety of North African items procured from the trans-Saharan trade, on the edge of the desert because his camels could not tolerate the Savannah climate (Meillassoux 1971). His client might well be a Savannah-based Haoussa trader who provided him with commodities such as textiles, cereals or slaves destined for North African slave markets. The Haoussa trader would then move on southwards to the markets of the forest zone in Asante area, for example, using donkeys or horses for transport. Upon arrival, the salt as well as other commodities from his home area would be exchanged for kola nuts, gold and European commodities. According to Boutillier (1969) and Amselle (1977), the exchange points typically coincided with ethnic boundaries, i.e. they were situated in between the home territories of distinct ethnic groups.
As long-distance trade intensified during the 16th and 17th centuries, it required a higher degree of occupational specialisation and a division of labour since it was no longer compatible with agricultural or pastoral activities (Meillassoux 1971). A more pronounced division of labour emerged in which 'trader' became a distinct profession. At the same time, its organisation equally matured with the establishment of ethnic trade networks. From around the 18th century, the most extensive and influential trade networks were those established by trader members of the Haoussa and Dyula and to a lesser extent Yarse and Wangara ethnic groups. The web of long-distance trade routes dominated by the Haoussa (eastern West Africa) and Dyula (western West Africa) trade networks is represented in Map 2.1.

Map 2.1  Long-distance trade patterns in West Africa around the 18th and 19th centuries

Source: Adapted from Hopkins (1973)

The dominant features of trade networks were the commercial or trading diaspora (Lovejoy 1980; Adamu 1978). The trading diaspora was made up of members of a particular ethnic group involved in long-distance trade, who would settle at the markets where the itinerant traders of the same ethnic group sold their commodities. As such, they constituted a foreign community or trading minority at the markets situated in areas of other ethnic groups with whom commodities were exchanged. The diaspora members' main purpose was to offer vital trade functions to itinerant traders such as lodging, translation, market information, credit facilities and the maintenance of business relations (Lovejoy 1980). They were the landlords and brokers for the passing traders and facilitated the sale of their

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5 The name Wangara refers to a group of Manding-speaking traders from present-day Mali (Launay 1982, 2). The Wangara established a trading community in the Borgou region of Benin as early as 1400 (Brégand 1998). This community would later constitute the eastern link of the Asante kingdom with Haoussa land. The Wangara specialised in trading salt and gold which they exchanged for kola nuts and slaves (Adamu 1978; Baier 1980; Lovejoy 1980). The trade networks of both the Dyula and Yarse traders can be traced back to the Wangara ethnic group (Launay 1982).

6 Cohen has defined the trading diaspora as '.. a nation of socially interdependent, but spatially dispersed communities ..' (1971, 267).
merchandise. As such, Curtin (1984, 2) called them 'cross-cultural brokers' who occupied an intermediary position between members of distinct ethnic groups.

The Haoussa networks and diaspora, which flourished during the 18th and 19th centuries, were the most extensive and influential. The caravans of itinerant Haoussa traders went back and forth between their home area in today's northern Nigeria and Asante land in what is now southern Ghana. A major Haoussa community used to live near the Salaga market, the main commercial centre of the Asante area (cf. Map 2.1). From Haoussa land the itinerant traders brought their own manufactured items as well as salt, textiles and horses obtained from the Sahara traders (Adamu 1978). The most important items bought at the Asante markets consisted of kola nuts, gold and slaves. During the 19th century the long-distance trade in kola nuts between Salaga (Asante) and Kano (Nigeria) flourished, mainly because the trade in slaves had decreased (Brégand 1998).

The homogeneous ethnic identity of the trade networks (itinerant traders and their concomitant trading diaspora) bound members together and made the spatial organisation along ethnic lines a functional one (Cohen 1971). At the same time, it created a useful distance between the ethnic trade network and the people of the 'host society' (Curtin 1984). Since profit making at the expense of others is an inherent but uncomfortable feature of trading, a 'slightly distant contact' was preferable (ibid., 38). This is in line with Evers's (1994) remarks on the usefulness of cultural distinctiveness as a deliberate strategy. In addition to this ethnic identity, the trade diaspora disposed of an autonomous political and social structure and was physically separated, i.e. diaspora members were either living in separate merchant towns or in special neighbourhoods called zongos (Schildkrout 1978) which not only preserved a distance but strengthened the internal coherence of the network as well. The combination of characteristics has led Cohen (1971) to qualify the networks and diaspora as 'ethnic trading monopolies'. In other words, the preservation of a trade monopoly was facilitated by not assimilating with the host society but rather by conforming to cultural norms accepted elsewhere (Launay 1982, 3). Thus, the immigrant traders could serve as intermediaries between local populations and other distant regions.

Demand for kola nuts has always been significant in the Savannah and Sahel regions of West Africa, where Islam prevails. To some extent, kola nuts are used as a substitute for stimulants such as alcohol and tobacco, the consumption of which is restricted according to Islamic norms and values.

Zongo literally means 'camping place' or 'place of halt' in the Haoussa language. In fact, before becoming the diaspora neighbourhoods as they have been described above, they just constituted small rest places for passing trade caravans. Zongos were established all along the trade itineraries between Haoussa land and the Asante markets and were initially populated by settled traders and religious teachers. The zongo populations offered accommodation and other services to itinerant caravan traders. Even when populations of other origins established themselves, the zongo areas continued to be referred to as such. As a result of the dominance of Haoussa in long-distance trade, zongo society became increasingly haoussanised and reflected the main characteristics of Haoussa society. Since kola nuts and cattle were among the main products exchanged by zongo members, cattle and kola markets are still sometimes qualified as zongo. Many present-day West African cities with roots in the 18th and 19th centuries still have a zongo neighbourhood, even though the population is identified as Sahelian rather than Haoussa (for more details about zongos see also Schildkrout 1978, 67-98; Adamu 1978; Agier 1983 and Norris 1984).
Along with the ever-intensifying long-distance trade which involved increasing numbers of people grew the necessity of utilising different identity markets to preserve the distinctiveness of the trading community. The dominance of Haoussa traders in the West African long-distance trade brought about a process of gradual 'haoussanisation' (Adamu 1978; Lovejoy 1980). Haoussanisation can be defined as the ideological-cultural process by which non-Haoussa groups are progressively assimilated into Haoussa culture. This process specifically occurred among traders of non-Haoussa origin, many of whom adopted its language (even today the Haoussa language to a large extent still constitutes the lingua franca of West African trade), its cultural and legislative traits (specific Haoussa values, manners and juridical practices became prevailing standards) and its dominant religion, i.e. Islam. In fact, the term 'Haoussa' not only became synonymous with trader but also with stranger, which again stressed the distinctive character of the trading diaspora. In other words, Haoussa became a term which simultaneously denoted ethnic category membership and professional status. A similar phenomenon occurred with regard to the Dyula trading networks which figured prominently in the salt and kola trade of the western part of West Africa. The term 'Dyula' would ultimately refer to any trader regardless of his origins or language (Launay 1982; Curtin 1984). In line with the instrumental view on ethnicity, both haoussanisation and dyulanisation were mechanisms of group identification with a common economic interest.

A more general identity marker for long-distance traders throughout West Africa has been Islam. In West Africa, the spread of Islam was directly related to the development of long-distance trade patterns and the North African traders who came across the Sahara were the first to bring traders of the Savannah area into contact with Islam (Hiskett 1984). Further promulgation occurred either in the form of political or religious wars (the so-called jihads) or through itinerant Koranic teachers (malams). At the time of the earliest caravans, traders were already being accompanied by these religious teachers who preceded the caravans to establish contacts in foreign market towns (Lovejoy 1980). It is commonly acknowledged that the long-distance trade networks of the Haoussa, Wangara and Dyula have strongly contributed to the diffusion of Islam in West Africa (Adamu 1978). Ever since, Islam has been a major common identity marker for long-distance traders throughout West Africa. It contributed significantly to establishing a cultural distinctiveness for the trading diaspora in the sense that Islamic norms and values have left their mark on long-distance trade (ibid.). To a certain extent, Islam did create a bond of confidence between traders, offering them '.. both the means of seeing themselves as part of a super-community and a set of elementary regulations ..' (Rodinson cited in Meillassoux 1971, 72). Grégoire (1993) finds part of the explanation of the dominance of Haoussa trade networks in the observation that '.. Islam has adapted remarkably well to Haoussa norms and customs, and even reinterpreted some of them ..' (1993, 114).

The changing identity of West African traders

From around the end of the pre-colonial era onwards and as a result of trade expansion, increasing opportunities, growing modernity (Evers & Schrader 1994), changing attitudes and the gradual opening up of the economy, trade progressively ceased to be the prerogative of specific ethnic groups. As Warms notes, '.. members of the traditional [ethnic] trading groups were unable to block the entry of new merchants in the market [and] by the end of the colonial era [ ] commerce involved more people than ever ..'
(Warms 1994, 99). Ethnic monopolies gradually disappeared. As a result, ethnic solidarity was increasingly replaced by occupational solidarity and this reflected a trend towards a more universal entrepreneurial culture (Curtin 1984). Occupational solidarity stressed the perception of 'being a trader', instead of putting emphasis on the features of a particular ethnic group. However, even though identity markers shifted from ethnic to occupational groups, the functional aspects of the trade diaspora remained valid: traders still needed someone to provide them with lodgings and business contacts. Accordingly, the organisational aspects of trade networks have remained largely the same throughout the region (Grégoire & Labazée 1993; Amselle 1977; cf. Section 2.2), even though the actors within a trading network no longer inevitably belong to the same ethnic group (Agier 1983). Nowadays, in order to sustain the occupational solidarity of a trader community, various identity markers are used in what is now a 'multi-ethnic trade' (McCorkle 1995, viii). The large spectrum of identity symbols includes kinship ties, social clubs, dress codes, long-standing business relationships or shared region of origin (Agier 1983; Warms 1990, 1994; Kulibaba 1991). Even fictitious kinship ties ('brother') have been mentioned as identity markers which indicate the existence and reliability of a confidence relationship (McCorkle 1995). Furthermore, as Islam has progressively penetrated into a substantial part of West African society, traders have sought other ways of identifying on religious grounds. For instance, some traders adhere to Islamic sects or distinguish themselves by the number of times they have made a pilgrimage to Mecca (Grégoire 1986, 1993; Warms 1990). However, despite the generally acknowledged tendency towards employing 'social' identity markers, the reference to ethnicity continues to be mentioned as a means of delineating commercial niches or to hold the members of a trade network together (cf. Kulibaba 1991; Holtzman & Kulibaba 1992, both on cattle trade).

In summary, it appears that the role of identity markers is one of distinguishing members of a group from 'others' by stressing common features. The latter ultimately serve the economic purpose of restricting access to specific trade domains to those traders who comply with these conditions. In other words, identity markers not only aim at excluding outsiders but strengthen the internal cohesion of a group of traders or a trade network as well. This further implies that they not only differentiate traders from non-traders as indicated by Evers & Schrader (1994) but distinguish between members of the community of traders as well.

The instrumental use of identity is particularly well reflected by the issue of accumulation. The notion of accumulation in West African trade is to a large extent culturally determined. Through the accumulation of various forms of capital, a trader establishes his identity which he might further capitalise on in his commercial activities.

With respect to the continuous search of traders for identity markers, an interesting case has been described by Grégoire who studied the role of religion among traders in Niger (Grégoire 1993). The author observed the tendency of young, wealthy traders to adhere to a recent Islamic movement known as Izala, whose ideology runs against the traditional concept of redistributing wealth as a prestigious act to be performed by all reputed traders (ibid.). In the light of our discussion on trader identity, the reluctance of the traders who adhere to the Izala movement to redistribute wealth can be interpreted as another attempt to distinguish themselves from other traders among whom the pilgrimage to Mecca and other features of religious investment have become increasingly common.
Accumulation

The previous section highlighted the significance of identity markers for West African traders. These identity markers have become increasingly diverse and were found to serve the purpose of internal differentiation between members of the trader community through which economic gains can be realised. One of the most prominent factors that differentiates traders is their level of wealth. In fact, it will be argued that wealth constitutes a crucial identity marker in the sense that it confers prestige on a trader which he can capitalise on economically. In view of the variety of social, religious and economic identity markers mentioned above, it is no surprise that the wealth of a trader is not just determined by his material possessions. This brings us to the notions of 'accumulation' and 'wealth' in their West African trade context. It appears that wealth contains an economic, a social and a symbolic component which not only reflect the culture-specific norms and values related to the definition of wealth but the significance of each of them for further accumulation as well. In other words, traders deliberately aim to accumulate economic, social as well as symbolic wealth because these can eventually be mobilised or capitalised on for the further benefit of their trade activities. Given this instrumental aspect, the notion of wealth can be expressed in terms of (1) economic capital, (2) social or human capital and (3) symbolic capital. The non-exclusively economic character of capital accumulation has been stipulated by several authors (Agier 1983; Grégoire & Labazée 1993; Geschiere & Koonings 1993).

The accumulation of economic capital among West African traders typically refers to investments in real estate, transport or livestock. Nevertheless, it is difficult to elaborate on this complex issue since the investment patterns of West African traders to a large extent differ according to the commodity traded and the location-specific investment opportunities in the trader's area of residence. The results of a study carried out by Agier (1983) revealed a preference among traders to invest in houses. The ownership of several dwellings and parcels not only constituted a financially secure investment in the urban environment concerned, it served the purpose of accommodating a large number of work relations as well. The relationships of traders form the second component of wealth, i.e. social capital. In the literature on West African traders, social capital has often been designated as human wealth and as 'richesse en hommes' or 'arzikin mutane', its respective equivalents in French and Haoussa (cf. Agier 1983; Grégoire 1986). Investing in social capital means investing in humans. The aggregate number of individuals in which a trader has invested constitutes his network. In turn, at any given moment this network of relationships can be transformed or mobilised into '... a productive asset from which [the trader] can derive a return ...' (Fafchamps & Minten 1998a, 1). In the first place, this implies that traders invest in those people who (possibly) will serve a specific purpose in their business activities. The nature of the investment and the nature of the service carried out by the person a trader maintains a relationship with can vary considerably. In fact, this ranges from providing someone with food and lodging in exchange for the transportation of merchandise to financing the election campaign of a political or religious leader who might be willing to provide an administrative or financial favour in the future (Lambert & Egg 1994). These trade networks can be of great significance in the long-distance trade or in illegal cross-border trade. This will be demonstrated hereafter when we elaborate on some of the more common functions performed by network members as well as on the ways in

10 Alternatively, Fafchamps & Minten (1998b, 1) argue that social network capital is used to '.. emphasise that agents drive benefits from knowing others with whom they form networks of interconnected agents..'.
which network relationships are established and maintained. In addition to the trade network component, a trader can accumulate social capital through more general redistribution mechanisms which are not necessarily aimed at those individuals who could perform a service within the commercial activities of the trader. For instance, a typical case constitutes the distribution of money, food or other commodities by traders during the celebration of religious (Islamic) ceremonies such as the celebration of *Aid-el-Kebir* (Tabaski). Social capital fulfils a function of prestige which a trader can equally capitalise on in business, when obtaining purchases on credit for instance. Various other ways exist for a trader to increase his status. These include the third component of wealth: symbolic capital. To accumulate symbolic capital, a trader has to acquire a reputation for his hospitality and generosity, irrespective of the type of investment made to realise this. According to Grégoire ‘tous les moyens sont bons pour faire connaître sa richesse, manifester sa générosité et accroître ainsi son prestige au sein de la population ..’ (1986, 184). In particular, acquiring a reputation for being a devout Moslem is crucial for the accumulation of status and is one of the most outstanding features of the symbolic capital of traders. The accumulation of what is often called religious capital can have various manifestations, of which the pilgrimage to Mecca and the concomitant acquiring of the title of *El Hadj* is the most well known. Investments in mosques and Koran schools as well as the distribution of gifts among religious authorities equally belong to this category and contribute to the status of a trader. Warms (1994, 112) has noted that a particular way of praying is used by aspiring merchants in Sikasso (Mali) to further their integration into the commercial community. According to Grégoire & Labazée (1993, 23-28), the redistribution of wealth and the building up of religious capital clearly have an economic purpose. They implicitly confirm the status and

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.. [A trader] can employ every possible means to display his wealth, to manifest his generosity and to increase his prestige among the population ..’

The relationship between culture, trade and accumulation has been a much debated issue in literature (see Labazée (1995) for an elaborate review of ‘culturalist’ interpretations of norms and values in West African trade). According to Ellis & Fauré (1995), the prevailing opinion has long presumed that African cultures were strange or contradictory to the ethic of capitalist accumulation. During the 1950s and 1960s, efforts were made to convey the capitalist spirit to developing countries as it was thought to be lacking in the subsistence-oriented African societies (Hopkins 1995). In particular, the aptitude of Islamic norms and values for capitalist development to occur were frequently questioned (cf. Rodinson 1966, 129). Meillassoux, for instance, wrote that ‘Moslem culture is not appropriate to the requirements of modern commerce ..’ (1971, 79). He further claimed that Moslem entrepreneurs would not utilise modern means of communication and administration and would refuse to adopt the ‘Western’ mode of managing an enterprise. Moreover, they allegedly underestimated the importance of education by sending their children to Koran schools instead of modern schools, and their business networks, based on alliance and kinship would ultimately crumble away (ibid, 79-80). In a more recent publication, Harding & Kipré (1992) confront the capitalist logic with what they call the ‘lineage or Moslem logic’ and claim that investments made by Moslem traders have rarely been directed to the productive sectors of the economy but rather had a distributive or ostentatious character. Ellis & Fauré, however, hold that similar visions on Africa are thoroughly erroneous (1995, 8). They claim that despite the common characterisation of the West African trade system as inefficient, unproductive and based on redistribution rather than accumulation, it is now widely accepted that most of its features display a remarkable dynamism and the ability to balance necessary social obligations on the one hand and the imperative of making profit on the other (ibid.). Commerce has certainly not been inhibited by Moslem ideology (Grégoire & Labazée 1993, 16).
moral superiority of the traders and at the same time restrict the access of others to a trading community which has established its own rules and norms of behaviour. In this light, they estimate that acquiring the title of El Hadj is a sign of success in business and confirms 'membership' of a commercial elite. The identity and status of a trader is not exclusively defined by his symbolic capital but also by his accumulated economic and social capital. Together, they represent the wealth of a trader as well as his capacity to employ the various components of his wealth (economic capital, networks and status) as instruments to obtain further commercial benefits.

The discussion of accumulation in the context of West African trade has provided a more detailed insight into the role of ideological factors such as identity and religion. It identifies the rationale behind investment and accumulation priorities of traders. Nevertheless, it raises the question of which factors eventually determine the financial success of traders through which they can invest in the above-mentioned domains, establish their identity and further expand their wealth position. In the literature, several levels of wealth determinants have been distinguished. These range from individual qualities such as motivation or business intuition (Baier 1980, 174) to structural factors such as fluctuating macroeconomic circumstances for a specific trade sector (Grégoire 1986; Ellis & Fauré 1995; Baier 1980). Mention has equally been made of 'membership of a commercial community' (Warms 1994, 97) referring to the prestige function of identity. Furthermore, particular attention has been paid to the organisation of trade networks and the importance of family connections as explanatory variables for the success of traders (ibid.).

Since the role of individual qualities and structural factors to a large extent varies according to the nature of the trade sector concerned, they will be examined in relation to the cattle trade and cattle traders in Benin in Chapters 6 and 7. However, the organisation of trade in networks and the importance of family connections in trade can be dealt with from a general West African perspective.

2.2 The organisation of trade networks

The emergence of trade networks in West Africa is closely linked to the nature and requirements of long-distance trade. The exchange of products over substantial distances and between buyer and sellers of different cultures has necessitated a network organisation. The network members initially established a common identity along ethnic lines but the importance of ethnicity as a unifying variable in long-distance trade networks gradually diminished as trade became multi-ethnic. However, while identity markers have gradually altered, the practical organisation of long-distance trade networks and the type of actors have always retained their basic structure. Despite the unquestionable change in the structural macroeconomic and political setting of trade, the circumstances in which long-distance traders have had to operate have continued to require a network type of trade organisation. In fact, physical and cultural distances have remained and even the politico-administrative setting of trade regulation in general and cross-border trade in particular is not yet transparent enough for traders to abandon a network organisation (cf. Chapter 5). The present section therefore pays attention to the way in which these trade networks have been organised, the type of actors involved, their functions and the establishment and maintenance of relations.
In order to put the forthcoming paragraphs into perspective, two types of trade organisation have been distinguished: First, the 'network type' [A] of trade organisation and second, the 'relay type' [B] of trade organisation (cf. Lambert 1992; Agier 1983; Amselle 1977). These two types are visualised in Scheme 2.1.

![Scheme 2.1 Two types of trade organisation](image)

The characters a-c represent the point at which commodities change hands between actors, from the initial purchase to the final sale. The main distinction between network trade and relay trade is that in the second case commodities are effectively exchanged and ownership is transferred from one actor to another in a series (1-n) of exchanges before reaching the final destination. In the case of network trade (A), however, no transfer of property occurs and when commodities change hands between the initial purchase and final sale it corresponds to the involvement of representatives or employees on behalf of the chief trader who remains the owner of the commodity along the entire length of the trade route until the final sale.

As McCorkle (1995, 8) rightly notes, relay trade and network trade are not mutually exclusive. To illustrate this, reference is made to the previous section in which the pre-colonial long-distance trade was depicted as an inter-ethnic relay trade with commodities being exchanged on the border of agro-ecological zones which overlapped with ethnic territories (Amselle 1977; Lovejoy 1980). During each separate stage, however, the mode of trade organisation could well correspond to a network. For instance, the inter-ethnic relay trade at the edge of the Sahara desert between a Touareg and a Haoussa trader could be succeeded by a network exchange in which the Haoussa trader sent out network members to traverse the Savannah and forest zones and sell the commodities at an Asante market place (Amselle 1977). This shows that relay trade possibly consists of an articulation of various trade networks (Lambert & Egg 1994).

The relay system can be considered the most ordinary form of consecutive transactions between sellers and buyers in a marketing channel. The network type of transaction appears to conform to a vertically integrated marketing channel which unites various stages between the producer and consumer. It is, however, characterised by very specific features when dealt with in its West African context. These features could be of explanatory value in our attempt to provide more background to the strategies of cattle traders in Benin.
The analysis of the organisation of a trade network corresponds to the breakdown of its functions, the concomitant actors and the relationships between the actors. This predominantly functional approach to the study of trade networks has been largely followed by Amselle who provides an according definition. To Amselle, a trading network is a "... système commercial formé par la combinaison de trois fonctions commerciales, celle de chef de réseau, celle de commerçant itinérant et celle de logeur-correspondant ..." (1977, 195).\textsuperscript{13}

His definition refers to the functional organisation of networks, whereby the distinct roles of three actors are emphasised. It equally has a spatial connotation which will be elaborated on later. Although we discuss the whole spectrum of network functions, it should be noted that not all trade networks in West Africa are organised in a similar fashion. On the contrary, various configurations exist. However, discussing the variety of prevalent functions provides an understanding of the cornerstones of West African trade networks.

The central position in the trade network is occupied by the so-called \textit{chef de réseau}, the network chief or \textit{jula-ba} as he is traditionally referred to in Haoussa. His position as a prestigious trader is usually based on a combination of material wealth, prestige and an extensive network of personal relations. According to Harding & Kipré (1992, 11), the chief trader represents the top of the commercial pyramid, a position acquired through the volume, diversity and value of his trade activities as well as through the extent of his commercial relations and investments, and the derived political and social authority. The \textit{jula-ba} decides upon most of the transactions' details (time schedule, quantity, destination etc.). Furthermore, he takes care of all financial arrangements. In most cases, the network chief is a sedentary trader which implies that he does not take part in all stages of the trading activities but has a crucial function in financing transactions and working out the organisational details of long-distance trade. The extent of his activities and his established prestige and relations network enable him to deal with business from his 'office' without moving. His position at the top of the pyramidal hierarchy of trade relations allows him access to all kinds of trade information which he receives from his various employees. Numerous prosperous network chiefs involved in long-distance trade in traditional commodities such as cattle, food grains or kola nuts have settled in well known Savannah-based market towns (Forrest 1994).\textsuperscript{14}

The employees constitute the second group of actors in the trade network and perform a variety of network functions. First of all, each trade network has a 'hinterland' from which the network chief receives commodities such as food grains or livestock (cf. Goura Soulé 1988). To this purpose, he employs several so-called 'collectors' (\textit{Madugai}). The collectors are advanced a certain amount of money in order to collect the merchandise from producers on behalf of the chief trader. In most cases, the collectors have considerable experience and are well acquainted with the specific area in which they operate. Thus, the chief trader's hinterland can be geographically divided into operating areas for a large number of collectors. Giving large sums of money to the collectors demonstrates the confidence and trust the network chief has in them.

\textsuperscript{13} '... a commercial system build upon the combination of three commercial functions: that of network chief, of itinerant trader and of landlord-broker ...'.

\textsuperscript{14} Nowadays, throughout West Africa these typical market towns include Ziguinchor (Senegal), Kankan (Guinea), Odiénné (Côte d'Ivoire), Sikasso (Mali), Bawku (Ghana), Pouytenga (Burkina Faso), Dapaong (Togo), Malanville (Benin), Maradi (Niger), Kano, Jibiya, Maidiguri (Nigeria) and Maroua (Cameroon).
Another group of employees comprises the 'itinerant traders' (les commerçants itinéraires). The *jula-den*, as they are called in Haoussa, perform the physical part of the transaction, i.e. the transportation of the merchandise to the final destination market. The commodities plus an amount of cash to cover various transaction costs is entrusted to the itinerant trader by the network chief. Upon return, the latter will reimburse the amount of cash (the sales revenue) or the equivalent in goods which the chief ordered. The latter are then sold in the home town of the network chief, with the profit going to him. As the itinerant traders perform an essential and often sensitive function they will usually have a close relationship with their superior. Some network chiefs, however, prefer to take care of the final sale themselves, even though the transport of merchandise is handled by employees. They will do so particularly in the absence of price standardisation for the commodity sold, which means that marketing experience can partially determine the price obtained. The absence of price standards at most markets for cattle commonly gives rise to this type of practice.

A further crucial function in the trade network is performed by the landlord, for which the terms 'logeur-correspondant' (Amselle 1977) or 'logeur-intermédiaire' (Kulibaba 1991) are the equivalents used in the French literature. Hill defined a landlord as a '..settled stranger who makes it his business to accommodate long-distance stranger-traders and to assist them in selling, and usually storing their goods ..' (1966, 350). In historical perspective, the community of landlords corresponds to the trade diaspora dealt with in the previous section. One of the main functions of a landlord has always been to act as a cross-cultural broker (Curtin 1984). In the cattle trade, for instance, cross-cultural brokerage has been indispensable because butchers typically belong to a different ethnic group from cattle traders. To fulfil this function, the landlord is permanently established in the market town, the final station of the long-distance trade. The itinerant trader usually deals with one particular landlord who can be considered part of the trade network. In a network configuration, the landlord often has a kinship relation with the chief trader or otherwise they belong to the same ethnic group or share the same region of origin. As Cohen stated: '..this attachment of a dealer to one landlord usually holds for years and sometimes continues to hold between their sons when they die..' (1965, 11).

The landlord assumes various duties for the visiting trader of with the provision of accommodation being of importance. This lodging function has been crucial for long-distance trade since the time required to sell all commodities necessitates a stay of several days at a market far away from one's home area. To facilitate this task, a landlord commonly has one or more residences to accommodate his traders. In addition, he is expected to provide at least one meal a day, to accompany the trader to the market and to provide business information (Lovejoy 1980; Lambert 1992). The above-mentioned brokerage function is cemented in his mediation between seller (the visiting trader) and buyer (the butcher), i.e. assisting the sale, identifying creditworthy and reliable customers and providing on eventual debt collection service if necessary. Until the departure of the trader, the landlord usually keeps the money and takes care of the administration. Occasionally, a trader returns before his debts are repaid, leaving the task of debt collection to his landlord. The typical combination of the landlord and broker functions is reflected in the widespread use of the terms 'landlord-broker' or 'mai-gida dillali' in Haoussa (cf. Section 4.3). The reward for a landlord-broker is a commission (lada) which he receives

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At most West African markets, the landlord is referred to as 'mai gida'. This is a Haoussa term which literally means 'house owner'. See Launay (1979) for an extensive discussion of the role of landlords among the Dyula.
from his customers. The visiting trader traditionally has no obligations towards his landlord but it is common practice to give him a small sum of money or a present to his wives.

For a long time, the function of landlord-broker has enjoyed considerable prestige. In the Islamic setting of long-distance trade, the fact of receiving multiple visitors certainly contributes to this. 'Guests are presents of God' Kumasi landlords used to proclaim in the 1960s (Hill 1966, 354). Moreover, several respected and wealthy landlords who currently live in the coastal towns of West Africa are wealthy retired long-distance traders of Sahelian origin (Ancey 1992; Agier 1983). Until the 1980s, this was the case on the Cotonou cattle market (Josserand & Sullivan 1979, 63). The image of being a retired trader conferred on these landlord-brokers the required position of neutrality (Hill 1966, 352).

Having dealt with the main actors in the network type of trade organisation, it should be noted that some actors can fulfil a combination of functions at any one time. For instance, the above-mentioned landlord-brokers could be independent traders themselves operating a business on their own account (Hill 1966; Agier 1983, 162; Launay 1979, 72). The same goes for the chief trader at the top of the hierarchy who could receive other traders in his house thus performing the function of landlord. In addition to the practice of simultaneously performing several functions, a landlord typically assumes his tasks for more than one trader. This implies 'membership' of different trade networks. The present-day situation at most coastal cattle markets reflects this situation. The landlords accommodate and assist several traders at a time. With each of these visiting traders a specific relationship exists which is typically based on a shared region of origin or on a kinship bond. The most essential feature of the relationship is mutual trust, i.e. the expectation that duties are assumed seriously (the trader) and the expectation that the relationship will be renewed (the landlord).

Scheme 2.2 A cattle-trade network in Nigeria

Sources: Based on Cohen (1965) and Smith (1962)
Scheme 2.2, which is primarily based on Cohen's description of the cattle trade in Nigeria (Cohen 1965) and Smith's (1962) analysis of marketing and exchange among the Haoussa is illustrative of the way in which the network actors traditionally formed a trading network. It visualises the position of the network chief, his collectors, the itinerant trader and the landlord in relation to the flows of cattle and of money. It shows that collectors were sent out to purchase cattle from pastoralists in northern Nigeria and that the operations were financed by a Kano-based Haoussa network chief. The latter subsequently commissioned an itinerant trader to transport the herd to the market in Ibadan. Upon arrival, the itinerant trader was accommodated by his affiliated landlord-broker with whom a long-standing relationship had been established over the years. The landlord-broker organised the final sale of the cattle to a Yoruba butcher. Apart from the initial purchase of the animals, it is only at this stage that transfer of ownership occurred. Cohen noted that the sale of the animals to a butcher forms the most complicated and risky stage in the marketing channel because of a notorious lack of creditworthiness among the latter. Together with the practical services he provides, this makes the function of a landlord of crucial importance, especially when the maintenance of constructive business relations between traders and butchers of different ethnic backgrounds is concerned, an element which can affect the sales prices finally obtained.

The preceding paragraphs highlighted the specific functions of the network actors and the advantages obtained through this type of trade organisation. For instance, the collection and transportation of commodities by the collectors and the itinerant trader facilitate the realisation of economies of scale. In principle, the role of the network chief can be limited to organising transaction details. A frequently cited advantage of a network organisation is the smooth circulation of information (Egg, Galtier & Grégoire 1996). According to Amselle (1977), the landlord is an indispensable actor in the trade network with respect to the provision of market information. Finally, reference was already made to the possible role of networks in restricting access to long-distance trade for other 'non-networked' traders. This issue will be considered in detail in Chapters 6 and 8.

At this stage, the question remains as to the nature of network relationships. The nature of the relationship which links the network chief to the other actors is a fundamental element of the network organisation, since it has become evident that the actors are entrusted with significant responsibilities in dealing with capital and cattle. The importance of trust as a basis for these relationships was acknowledged by Bellot (1983, 188) who labelled the network actors as 'hommes de confiance' (men of trust). In fact, it is this very nature of relationships, as opposed to regular employer-employee relations, which makes them qualify as network relations.

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16 Baier traced several unsuccessful attempts by Europeans to enter the cattle trade in Niger during the colonial era. According to him, the European merchants were '... unable to mobilise primary relations with fellow merchants, brokers and others to supply themselves with information about the honesty or solvency of potential buyers and sellers ..' (1980, 166).
The management of network relations

Having described the main functions and actors of an 'archetypal West African trading network', we will elaborate here on the logic and maintenance strategies which constitute the backbone of these networks. According to McCorkle (1995), a trade network has an elaborate internal structure and unique operational rules which include '.. complex superordinate and subordinate relationships ..' (ibid., vii). Agier summarised the requirements for relation management as follows: '.. [un commerçant] .. doit savoir ménager des alliances, entretenir des relations en faisant pour cela les dépenses nécessaires ..' (1983, 278). When a trader successfully regulates his relations, he is able to maintain or improve his position in trade. With respect to the achievement of a proper management of networks, three types of relations are commonly distinguished. These relations are called 'work relations' since they refer to the substance of the relationship between the network chief and his (subordinate) network members who perform one or more specific trade functions on his behalf. A distinction is made between: (a) direct kinship relationships, (b) matrimonial alliances and (c) patron-client relations.

(A) Direct kinship relations refer to those cases in which the trader (network chief) has a work relation with his son, his (younger) brother or a male cousin. A substantial body of literature exists describing these relations and their implications for a trade network (Agier 1983; Amselle 1977; Grégoire 1986). Agier (1983) observed that the work relation between father and sons appeared not to be as strong as expected. Similarly, Warms (1994, 105) notes that relatively few of the children of traders go into trade. In many cases, one of the trader's children will eventually be 'selected'. Using evidence from a group of wealthy Lomé-based entrepreneurs, Agier suggests that, depending on his technical and managerial skills, one of the sons (especially the first-born son) can be offered an autonomous position by his father and sometimes even encouraged to start a business on his own (Agier 1983; see also Amselle 1977). Before establishing his own business however, the son will usually have carried out several transactions on behalf of his father. This enables the latter to assess his specific qualities in commerce. Forrest (1994) noticed that an important reason behind this strategy is the inheritance system prevalent in Moslem culture, with the division of wealth and possessions between the sons of the deceased. With many polygamous households, the number of sons involved is substantial and if the inheritance is dispersed it can prevent an effective continuing in the business and may eventually lead to the collapse of the enterprise (Grégoire 1986, 195; Warms 1994, 104). The pressure to comply with Islamic inheritance laws has led some traders to transfer part of their business to an elected son at an early stage. The prompting of individual trade activities may prevent fragmentation of wealth because the trader will transfer a substantial share of his capital/assets/relations to his son and assures the continuity of the family in business after his father's death. Baier, in his study on livestock traders in Zinder, Niger (1980, 142-207) has noted the situation in which the sons of a trader are too young to work, and the trader has to rely upon employees in order to expand his business. This raises the question of whether the accumulated wealth belongs to the 'immediate lineage' or '.. to those who helped build the firm ..' (ibid., 176). Custom relating to inheritance was unsatisfactory for the traders of Zinder since '.. it dictated that all their possessions should go to the people of their lineage, and none could

17 '.. [a trader] has to be capable of forging alliances, and sustaining relationships by making the required expenses ..'.

18 In the Haouussa language, these relations are referred to with the term zumunci.
be reserved for the perpetuation of the business they founded ..' (ibid., 179). To prevent
this, various strategies were employed and many families worked out matters of inheritance
among themselves. This included arranging the marriage between a trader's daughter and
one of his 'employees', to convert the latter into a family member and avoid the possible
 discontinuation of business after the death of the trader. With regard to inheritance
practices among Dyula traders, Launay also observed that '.. Moslem rules [ ] could be
modified to fit the circumstances ..' (1982, 56). Nevertheless, some authors have stressed the
often difficult relationship between father and son which might prevent the a smooth
continuation of business within the family (Baier 1980).

A more intense work relationship has often been detected between a trader and his
cousin(s). Traders were found to employ the son of their own, their wives' or their
mother's sister. However, evidence of work relationships with cousins connected to the
trader via a paternal bond is rare. Kinship relations in a trading network appear to be
established on a matrilineal basis (Baier 1980; Agier 1983; Gégoire 1986). The phenomenon
of 'haoussanisation' in the pre-colonial stages of West African trade has apparently left its
traces and to some extent supports the hypothesis of widespread matrilineal network
relations since it has led to a diffusion of cultural and commercial values and practices
pertaining to matrilineal Haoussa society. The inclusion of direct kin (sons, brothers or
maternal cousins) into the trading network presided over by the chief trader usually means
being incorporated into the trader's household or being provided with accommodation in
one of his residences. Furthermore, the chief trader will take care of food and most basic
expenses in exchange for trading services such as collecting or transporting merchandise.
The practice of 'give and take' or 'reciprocity' is a fundamental feature of a network
relation.

(B) Matrimonial alliances constitute the second group of work relations often found in trade
networks. An 'alliance' reflects a strategy in which certain individuals become ultimately
linked to a chief trader through marriage to one of his daughters or female kin (Amselle
1977; Baier 1980). The marriage is decided upon by the chief trader when he is satisfied
with a particular employee's performance in trade. The marriage therefore corresponds to
the modification of an employer-employee (patron-client) relationship into a kinship
relation. It further establishes the position of the chief trader but equally provides new
opportunities for the former employee who can start his own business and accumulate his
own wealth more freely. His commercial activities will usually continue to be closely
linked to those of his father-in-law. In other words, the marriage not only seals a social
bond between them but equally confirms and enforces the already existing commercial
relationship. As Agier writes: '.. l'alliance beau-père/gendre représente un enjeu des relations
simultanément sociales et commerciales ..' (1983, 225). A similar relationship also serves as
insurance in times of hardship (ibid.) since a dependency relation has been created in which
the (marriage) favour performed by the trader can implicitly be considered as the creation
of a reciprocity relationship to serve at a later stage (cf. Baier 1980, 181). Finally, the
marriage strategy applied in such a way assures the continuation of an existing trade
network.

19 '.. the alliance between son-in-law and father-in-law represents an arena of simultaneously
social and commercial relations ..'.
The patron-client relationship basically involves a network relation which is not based on (allied) kinship. It contrasts with a basic employer-employee relation in which the latter is financially rewarded (regularly or occasionally) for a particular service rendered. On the contrary, it should instead be considered as a reciprocal relationship between the 'patron' who occupies the superior position in the trade hierarchy and his subordinate, the 'client', who carries out trade functions for which he is typically rewarded with food or accommodation. A patron-client relation generally establishes itself when the chief trader (patron) has done a particular favour to his employee. This might involve the provision of accommodation or financial assistance to resolve a particular problem. This 'investment' by the trader implicitly establishes a dependency relation which commits the client to his patron. Throughout the relationship, the dependent and reciprocal character is reconfirmed when the trader favours his client. The favour may have an 'educational' character when, for instance, the client is provided with a loan in the form of working capital to allow him to establish his own business. These observations have led Warms to estimate that the relationship among patrons and clients is, at its best, one of mutual, though not equal, benefit (Warms 1994, 111). A patron-client relationship can ultimately alter into a kinship relation when the employee is 'rewarded' for his services by marrying the daughter of his patron. This subsequently provides an opportunity for a more equal business association to replace the formerly subordinate versus super-ordinate relationship. Nevertheless, the initial hierarchy to some extent remains and the former client is expected to be prepared to 'assist' his patron when necessary.

The most illustrative example of a patron-client relationship in the context of West African trade networks is the apprenticeship system. An apprentice works for a trader in exchange for lodging, food and the transfer of commercial knowledge on how to carry out a particular business.
Scheme 2.3 summarises the various types of work relations just mentioned in an imaginary trade network. It shows that traders envisage various modes of establishing and maintaining sustainable network relationships. Through the competent use of and investment in kinship, 'constructed kinship' or other forms of alliances, they succeed in establishing an element of dependency, reciprocity and trust which links the network actor to the chief trader and strengthens the internal cohesion of the network.

The present section has specifically examined trade networks in their most prominent configuration, i.e. within the long-distance trade. In a broader sense, trade networks encompass more relationships, for instance, contacts between network chiefs constitute relationships on an equal basis which are maintained differently. Direct contacts with suppliers without the intervention of collectors are another example. Together they comprise the 'business network' of a trader. The nature of these types of network relations tends to depend on the trade sector concerned and will therefore be dealt with in the context of cattle traders in Benin (cf. Chapter 8). However, notwithstanding the differences in the number, type and nature of relations that constitute a trade network, the underlying principle remains the same. It is related to the role of networks in dealing with the structural features of West African trade. The next section starts at the structural level with an historical account of West African cattle trade patterns in their macroeconomic and politico-administrative setting.

2.3 Patterns of cattle trade in West Africa

The structure of the conceptual framework presented in Section 1.3 reflects our approach to the study of the cattle trade and cattle traders in the sense that it assumed that the strategies and decisions of traders have to be examined in relation to their personal characteristics on the one hand, and the structural level of trade on the other. In accordance with this approach, Sections 2.1 and 2.2 have singled out several factors pertaining to the personal characteristics of traders such as their identity, accumulation objectives and the organisation of their trade activities in networks. The findings already indicate that these factors had to be interpreted in the light of general developments in trade (the structural level). For instance, the organisation of long-distance trade networks and the changing identity markers used by traders partly reflected their response to changes in the structure of trade represented, among other things, by the expansion of trade opportunities and the increase in the number of traders.

The present section introduces the historical development of the cattle trade in West Africa. In doing so, it provides a broader framework to the historical overview of the expansion of cattle trade in Benin (Sections 3.1 - 3.3) as well as to the analysis of current trade patterns (Section 5.5). Specific attention will be paid to developments in the macroeconomic context and to the role of the state. The section is organised around the distinction between the pre-colonial era (until around 1900), the colonial era (until around 1960) and the post-colonial era (until the 1990s).

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Part of this section is based on L. De Haan, P. Quarles van Ufford & F. Zaal (forthcoming).
The pre-colonial era

Kerven (1992) pointed out the existence of long-distance livestock trade flows in pre-colonial Sub-Saharan Africa. Many historians seem to have neglected this trade, perhaps because they were more interested in export goods like ivory and slaves. Most livestock were traded in networks whose core business was luxury items such as gold or cloth rather than livestock. During most of the pre-colonial era, demand for meat was generally too low to induce trade outside the local level. Nevertheless, some cattle, sheep and goats as well as livestock products such as skins, hides and leather were to be found in the trading caravans.

In West Africa, the direction of pre-colonial trade patterns was typically determined by the location of prosperous regions such as Asante and Haoussa land. Because of the relatively high transportation costs, mainly due to its time-consuming character, the long-distance trade was basically limited to luxury items which only the high-income elite could afford. The origins and organisation of long-distance trade have already been dealt with in Section 2.1. Although little evidence exists of intensive cattle trade in this era, Hopkins (1973, 58-73) and Baier (1980, 147) claim that for centuries livestock products were traded between the complementary ecological zones of West Africa. In the northern parts, extensive livestock rearing took place, while the southern parts were hardly suited to livestock production due to trypanosomiasis caused by the tsetse fly. Thus, livestock products and some manufactured items from the Savannah as well as salt from the Sahara were exchanged for slaves, ivory and kola nuts from the forest zones. According to Kerven (1992, 50), the urban areas of the Haoussa-Fulani emirates, situated within the livestock zone, were important outlets for cattle as well. Norris (1984, 170) estimated that 10 per cent of the value of commodities traded by the caravans of itinerant Haoussa traders traversing Togo was made up of cattle and other livestock such as horses and donkeys. Lovejoy (1980), however, remarked that livestock was only of marginal importance to Haoussa traders who had limited contact with the pastoral Fulani of Niger and north-west Nigeria until the 19th century (Kerven 1992). The traders who used to travel along the 'northern' caravan route which passed through Fada N’Gourma in present-day Burkina Faso were an exception (cf. Map 2.1). Here, some livestock would be purchased for subsequent sale at the markets of Yendi and Salaga in present-day Ghana (Adamu 1978). Further evidence of this pre-colonial livestock trade between the Gurma region in Burkina Faso and the markets of Asante in present-day Ghana has been provided by Arhin (1971), Agier (1983) and Skinner (1962). In addition to the Haoussa traders, from the 18th century onwards the Mossi formed the main ethnic group involved and they used the caravan centres of Fada and nearby Pouytenga as starting points (Skinner 1962; see also Izard 1971 on Pouytenga). Today, Pouytenga is the largest cattle market in Burkina Faso.

The extent to which pre-colonial 'states' such as the Asante and Dahomey kingdoms or the Haoussa emirates directly interfered in the long-distance trade differed considerably. For instance, Lovejoy (1980) estimated the minimal interference of Haoussa authorities in the trade to be of prime importance for its development. The Asante authorities, though, attempted to control trade activities. This can best be illustrated by the location of the main international market in the region, namely Salaga (cf. Map 2.1). The Salaga market was situated just outside the Asante territories but the Asante apparently exerted considerable influence upon its commercial activities (Arhin 1971). They deliberately prevented Haoussa as well as other foreign traders from operating on their territory which meant that traders could not buy directly from producers and had to rely on the Salaga market for the
purchase of kola nuts. In this way, the Asante controlled, and to some extent monopolised, the kola market. Notwithstanding this, the authorities appeared to depend on the foreign traders as well, notably with respect to the supply of certain commodities. This ultimately led to the establishment of an agreement with the Haoussa traders regarding the import and export of specific trading commodities (Adamu 1978; Lovejoy 1980). Similar arrangements were made by the rulers of the Dahomey empire. Their dependence on foreign Haoussa traders led to the relatively privileged position of the latter in Dahomey. They were the main suppliers of the royal palace and its entourage, and the Haoussa immigrants kept there as slaves had a chance of being freed eventually (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1976; Adamu 1978).

In addition to the links between traders and the few strongly centralised pre-colonial states such as Asante and Dahomey, the long-distance trade throughout West Africa usually depended on local kingdoms or any other form of prevailing 'sovereign' structure for safe passage. Apart from wild animals, one of the major problems long-distance trade caravans were confronted with was extortion and robbery by violent groups or roaming warriors. In exchange for protection and safe passage, the trade caravans would usually be prepared to pay substantial amounts to local chiefs. In this light, Amselle (1977) noted the relative immunity the Islamic religion conferred on Islamic itinerant traders when travelling through territories occupied by Islamic rulers. It will be argued in Chapter 3 that the safety aspect was of crucial importance for the development of trading patterns in today's northern Benin.

The colonial era

From the early stages of colonial occupation onwards, the flourishing of export crop economies in Sub-Saharan Africa induced a significant increase in demand for meat thanks to a substantial rise in rural and urban incomes. As a result, the trade in cattle received a tremendous impetus and, while some new patterns emerged, existing ones were intensified. For West Africa, this was particularly true for trade flows destined to specific regions characterised by high purchasing power such as southern Ghana, southern Nigeria and the groundnut producing area in Senegal.  

The rise of cash incomes in the oil palm and cocoa growing regions of Nigeria and Ghana respectively raised demand for meat and consequently stimulated the cattle trade which originated in the Sahelian and Savannah belts to the north. In German Togo, the Savannah region intensified its supply of cattle to the coastal export production zones of Togo and Ghana from the turn of the century onwards (De Haan 1993, 65,109). The impact of a demand-stimulating cash crop economy is best illustrated by the example of Nigeria. The exports of cattle towards southern Nigeria, notably to the booming cities of Lagos and Ibadan, rose from 8,000 head in 1906 to around 200,000 animals annually during the 1930s (Hopkins 1973, 248). A considerable share consisted of live imports from the French territories to the north. Kerven (1992, 56) estimated imports to amount to 123,000 cattle in 1934. The trade towards southern Ghana also intensified. Norris (1984, 181) and De Haan (1993, 108) demonstrated that the importance of northern Togo as a transit area

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21 Hugon (1993) attributes the rise in demand also to demographic changes that occurred following colonial occupation. The concentration of colonial economic activities in the coastal zones caused substantial migration towards these areas (1993, 9).
for the long-distance trade in kola nuts declined at the beginning of the 20th century. Instead of travelling to Ghana directly through Benin and Togo, traders increasingly headed for the Gurma and Mossi areas in present-day Burkina Faso in order to trade textiles for cattle, thereby intensifying a pattern which had originated in the pre-colonial era. The animals were then transported on the hoof towards the coast and sold at considerable profit. In 1904 and 1905, present-day Ghana imported some 16,000 head of cattle from present-day Burkina Faso, a number that had quadrupled by 1950 (Skinner 1962).

By the end of the colonial era, considerable quantities of meat were imported from Europe as well. In the late 1950s, about 19,000 tons were brought into the region annually, mostly frozen or canned (Mittendorf & Wilson 1961). Because these are considerable quantities, frozen meat will not only have been sold to Europeans and African higher income groups. However, it is difficult to determine to what extent imported meat was in competition with indigenous the cattle trade and meat production.

The established picture of an intensifying cattle trade during the colonial era is illustrative of the structure of the colonial économie de traite (trade economy) in West Africa. In contrast to the so-called settler and mining economies of East and Southern Africa, the West African colonial economy was primarily based on export crop production by African peasants dominated by European trading firms which equally added various new commodities such as salt and textiles to the existing indigenous marketing channels. The 'Atlantic trade' (McCorkle 1995, 11) by European trading firms left the indigenous trade in food grain and cattle relatively untouched. Accordingly, the rapid increase of cattle exports from the Savannah areas to the coast at the beginning of the colonial era indicates an African traders' response to new opportunities offered by growing demand for meat. The African traders were able to benefit from the situation because the direct interventions of the colonial state and the participation of European firms in the indigenous food trade remained minimal (Dijkstra 1995).

One of the most crucial changes that occurred in the colonial era was the fact that long-distance trading became a much safer activity. Both the pax britannica as well as its French equivalent the pax colonial undeniably contributed to the increased volume of indigenous trade in West Africa (McCorkle 1995). A second factor concerned the improvements in the domains of infrastructure and communication. The construction of several railway lines not only induced an intensification in terms of volumes traded but reoriented some trade patterns as well. For instance, whereas the completion of the Bamako - Dakar railway in 1923 established Bamako as a pivotal point in the kola trade between southern Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal (Amselle 1977), the stretch between Abidjan and landlocked Ouagadougou added to the southward expansion of the cattle trade.

Assuming a slaughter weight of 150 kg per animal, 1 metric ton of carcass is the equivalent of 6.7 animals. Thus, the 19,000 tons of meat imported annually in West Africa during the 1950s would correspond to 127,000 head of cattle.

The modernisation of transport caused a modification in the overland kola nut trade between southern Ghana and northern Nigeria. From the early 20th century onwards, the Haoussa traders started to make use of regular ocean-going shipping connections between Ghanaian ports and Lagos for the transport of kola nuts (Hopkins 1973, 248). From Lagos, trains were used for transportation northwards. The overland caravan route finally collapsed when during the world wide recession of the 1920s, kola nut production started to flourish in southern Nigeria, an area which suffered from a cash crop production crisis (McCorkle 1995, 11).
use of the railway between Kano and Lagos (completed in 1911) also shows shifts in trade patterns occurring under colonialism. Initially, the Nigerian railways provided a new opportunity for Haoussa traders to enter the export of groundnuts, as they could now supply European export companies by rail (Forrest 1994). Some Haoussa traders had even migrated to southern urban centres where they engaged in the Atlantic import and export trade under license to European firms (Grégoire 1986). At the same time, the railways were used to intensify cattle transportation and in 1918 some 13,000 animals reached Lagos by railway alone (Kerven 1992). The Haoussa traders became increasingly engaged in the cattle trade and Okediji (in Kerven 1992, 52) estimated the number of Haoussa cattle traders in Lagos to be 2,000 in 1930. On the eve of independence, some 160,000 cattle were railed annually from the northern territories towards Ibadan and Lagos (Mittendorf & Wilson 1961).

In addition to the safety and infrastructure elements which indirectly enhanced the cattle trade, the colonial authorities also made more direct attempts to intervene in cattle raising and marketing. These measures included the introduction of import duties and the levying of cattle taxes. Since the colonial powers quickly recognised the economic importance of cross-border cattle trade, attempts were made to cream off some of its wealth. The French policy in Niger to keep the livestock trade within French territory and to increase tax revenues was implemented through the introduction of a customs barrier and a market tax. Both measures immediately resulted in increased cross-border cattle smuggling to Nigeria where cattle could be marketed tax free. The customs barrier proved too expensive and was soon abandoned (Kerven 1992). Overall, French policy did not prevent an increase in livestock marketed towards coastal areas. Neither did the British caravan toll on the southward trade have an impact on numbers of cattle traded (ibid., 78-80). Both colonial powers imposed taxes on pastoralists. These obligations certainly contributed to an increase in cattle sales over the colonial era (De Haan 1993). The jangali cattle tax which the British took over from the Haoussa in Nigeria is the best known. Kerven (1992) related the imposition of the jangali tax system to increased cattle sales by pastoralists in northern Nigeria. Even isolated communities were incorporated in the very effective system of tax collection. Apart from customs and taxation, colonial policies in West Africa affected cattle raising and cattle trade through veterinary measures. French colonial policy in West Africa was mainly oriented towards increasing meat production by traditional pastoralists (De Haan 1997b, 100). This politique de la viande (meat policy) put

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24 In general, the colonial trading houses deliberately used African traders to establish purchase and sales contacts (Grégoire 1994, 124). However, African traders never had real access to facilities such as credit or export contracts which were monopolised by the trading houses. Harding uses the term 'marginalisation' of African traders to describe this aspect (1992, 13). He further argues that during the economic crisis of the 1920s and 1930s, African traders deliberately took refuge in economic niches such as the cattle and kola sectors, in order to 'survive' (ibid.).

25 In contrast, French taxation of the northward trans-Sahara trade by Touareg contributed to its downfall and diverted trade flows to the south. Up until the 1920s the Touareg resisted French rule and presented a threat to the small and ill-financed French military presence, to which the French responded by systematically undermining Touareg economic and military power. Trade was more easily taxed than elsewhere because the few northbound routes all had to pass certain oases. After the nation-wide revolt against the French in 1916 a large number of Touareg fled to Nigeria and as a consequence the trans-Sahara trade was disrupted (Kerven 1992, 77-78). The disruption was further increased by competition from commodities imported through coastal harbours.
much effort into training veterinary personnel and setting up a network of veterinary posts where medicines were distributed, cattle were vaccinated and the health of slaughtered animals certified. French research concentrated primarily on disease control, the production of vaccines and the breeding of trypano-tolerant cattle. In addition, new grazing areas were opened up by digging of wells, and trekking routes to market outlets were equipped with physical infrastructure like watering points, kraals and tracks. Furthermore, the authorities occasionally expressed their concern about the provision of meat to urban consumers and military garrisons, notably during both world wars when substantial numbers of local soldiers were recruited.

British colonial policy in West Africa improved trekking routes as well. It further focused on veterinary measures among which were attempts to eradicate rinderpest and control the tsetse fly. As a consequence, cattle populations in the British territories increased significantly. The only direct and meaningful foreign enterprise involvement in the cattle sector in West Africa was the British attempt to control the exports of hides and skins through its trading houses. Adebayo (1992) demonstrated the importance of hides and skins as export products for British colonial enterprises. African hides and skins supplied the European and later also the American leather industries. At the turn of the century, the Royal Niger Company (RNC) was given an exclusive monopoly on these exports. Like developments in other export sectors, local traders were engaged as agents for the RNC at the expense of their previously independent businesses. Hide and skin exports were the only area in the cattle trade sector which the colonial powers sought to regulate and control to a meaningful extent. It was only in the late colonial era that British policy in Nigeria sought to persuade Fulani livestock owners to market more cattle in order to provide urban consumers in the south with a regular meat supply to improve the nutritional quality of their diet (Kerven 1992). Contrary to this, French policy towards trade regulation became more relaxed around 1950.

The post-colonial era

In post-colonial West Africa, direct state involvement in the cattle trade remained as limited as it had been in the colonial era. The trade itself continued to be primarily north-south orientated, since the major consumer areas were still located in the coastal zones. However, expanding Sahelian cities such as Bamako, Ouagadougou and Niamey also attracted increasing volumes of cattle. Means of transportation and communication gradually modernised and movements by truck increasingly replaced movements by train and on the hoof. The possible impact of these improvements is illustrated by the observation that, nowadays, some cattle traders in Pouytenga, the largest cattle market in Burkina Faso, are regularly informed by telephone about market opportunities in Abidjan, the capital of Côte d’Ivoire, and can send a truckload of cattle the very same day, which will arrive within 36 hours.

Map 2.2 provides a general overview of the direction of the main long-distance trade flows of cattle for the period between the 1960s and the 1990s. The basic structure of these trade patterns dates from the colonial era. In short, the long-distance trade in cattle represents the linkage between the livestock production zones of the Sahel and the Savannah and the major consumption centres on the West African coast.
Despite an overall stabilisation in the orientation of trade flows, the southward long-distance trade experienced some important shifts over the years. Whereas some trade patterns were diverted or came into existence only temporarily, the creation of or modifications in other patterns would have a more structural character. The shifts were to a large extent determined by three major factors. First, crucial events in the structuring of trade patterns were the extensive droughts that occurred in the early 1970s and 1980s. These droughts caused an important geo-spatial shift of pastoral production systems, i.e. a migratory drift southwards of substantial numbers of herds. A lot of cattle ended up in one of the coastal countries which consequently saw an increase in their rate of self-sufficiency as well as in the magnitude of their internal trade. Second, substantial restructuring of trade flows occurred in reaction to diverging economic developments and growth rates in the region’s leading economies, Ghana, Côte d’Ivoire and Nigeria. Third, by 1975, after the upheaval caused by the first period of drought, coastal countries began to turn to world market suppliers of frozen beef, a policy aimed at assuring a regular and stable supply to urban consumers. During the 1970s, beef imports were provided by Latin American suppliers from Uruguay and Argentina. By the mid-1980s, their prime position was taken over by beef imports from Europe which were more competitive thanks to export subsidies granted by the European Union. The latter was blamed for disturbing the West African market for cattle and beef. However, it has been demonstrated that these imports were only a partial reason for declining cross-border cattle trade. Economic recession as well as inefficiencies in regional marketing channels contributed just as much (Quarles van Ufford & Klaasse Bos 1996).

Two examples illustrate the combined effect of these three factors on the cross-border cattle trade. At independence, the Ghanaian economy was among the most thriving in the sub-region. As a consequence, the country attracted substantial flows of cattle from various origins. Cattle even reached Accra from north-eastern Nigeria. In 1960, some 20,000 head of cattle were transported from Maidiguri/Kano to Lagos by train and then by truck to Accra (Mittendorf & Wilson 1961). At the same time, Ghana imported about 74,000 head of cattle from Mali and Burkina Faso (ibid.). These geographical patterns changed, when,
during the early 1970s, the Ghanaian economy collapsed and the Nigerian economy experienced significant growth due to increasing oil revenues. Cattle from as far away as Mauritania were brought to the booming Lagos and Ibadan consumer centres.26

The economy of Côte d’Ivoire experienced a similar growth. Consequently, cattle exports from Burkina Faso to Côte d’Ivoire went up from 49 per cent of total exports in the 1960s to 72 per cent in the 1970s. During the same period, Ghana’s share in these total exports had declined to 19 per cent (Josserand 1990). In addition to these general economic trends, currency and exchange rate disparities were equally followed by a restructuring of trade flows. For instance, fluctuations on the black currency market of the Nigerian Naira compared with the relatively stable CFA franc of the francophone West African countries frequently resulted in changes in the volume of livestock trade towards Nigeria. Whereas the latter had always been a major consumer market for cattle from its neighbouring countries, the deteriorating exchange rate of the Naira led to a temporarily inversion of cross-border trade at the beginning of the 1990s. Nigerian cattle were observed at consumer markets in Cameroon. Further shifts in trade patterns occurred when the CFA franc underwent a sudden devaluation in 1994. As a consequence, unfavourable terms of trade with Ghana, where the Cedi had been progressively devaluated in line with the Structural Adjustment Programme of the 1980s, were implicitly annulled. Analysing the impact on cross-border cattle trade one year after the devaluation, Quarles van Ufford & Klaasse Bos (1996, 14) pointed at increased numbers of livestock exported from Sahelian countries to both Ghana (up 380 per cent to a total of around 50,000 head annually) and Côte d’Ivoire (up 15 per cent to a total of 105,000 head a year). This rise was partly due to declining imports of frozen beef. In Côte d’Ivoire, these imports halted completely because of doubled prices after the devaluation and a reduction of European Union export subsidies on its frozen meat. The reduction in subsidies also caused a drop in frozen meat imports in Ghana. Together with a more favourable exchange rate, the number of cattle imported from the Sahel increased considerably. In Mali and Burkina Faso, slaughterhouses experienced a relative scarcity in supply until a few months after devaluation as a consequence of increased exports towards the coast. In Benin, trade flows were similarly modified and the first few months following devaluation witnessed a steep increase in exports towards Nigeria. When the Naira was further devaluated, however, trade declined to its previous level.

Only on rare occasions have trade flows been diverted or contracted by political tensions. For example, as a result of the political conflict between Senegal and Mauritania in 1989, the geographical patterns as well as the actors involved changed significantly. Senegalese cattle imports from Mauritania, previously effected by Mauritanian traders, were suddenly replaced by imports from Mali carried out by Malian traders (McCorkle 1995, 56). Today, the old cross-border cattle trade has largely been restored and Mauritanian traders have returned to the scene. Similarly, after many Fulani were expelled from Ghana following the so-called Operation Cow Leg in 1988, internal geographical patterns were restructured since the availability of animals had decreased throughout the country.

26 A comparable sequence of increased oil revenues and subsequent peaks in cattle imports occurred at the end of the 1970s and in the early 1980s (cf. Section 5.5).
The early post-colonial policies of most West African countries continued to pay attention to veterinary issues. In addition, the focus gradually changed towards the development of ranching schemes and the allocation of grazing rights. From the 1980s onwards, the approach to livestock development shifted from large livestock projects to pastoral groups and natural resource management (De Haan 1997b).

A clear tendency among newly independent states was to increase interventions in the trade of agricultural commodities, as development strategies then required the state to take the lead in economic development. In addition to the colonial marketing boards for commodities such as coffee, cocoa and cotton, many countries established cereal marketing boards just after independence in order to guarantee national food security and self-sufficiency, a task governments did not want to entrust to the private sector (Hugon 1993; Van der Laan & Van Haaren 1990). Several of these boards received considerable financial support from western donors (Lele & Christiansen 1989). According to Dijkstra (1995, 29), the new boards largely refrained from trading perishables because of the risky nature of operations that required a high degree of flexibility, and the limited availability of cold storage and processing facilities. Nevertheless, some Sahelian governments, however small and unsuccessful their efforts introduced initiatives in this domain. Their policies were initially geared to the building of slaughterhouses, cold storage facilities and the encouragement of meat marketing from Sahelian to coastal countries. To accomplish these objectives, organisations such as ONERA (Burkina Faso), SODEPRA (Côte d’Ivoire), SONARAN (Niger) and SODERA (Benin) were established in the 1970s and attempted to control specific stages of the marketing channel. Apart from the construction and management of slaughterhouses they engaged for instance in milk production, and attempted to set consumer prices and regulate cattle markets according to a weight-and-grade system. However, they never tried nor succeeded in monopolising all stages of the marketing process. Private traders operated parallel to these marketing boards and sometimes even benefited when the board requested they purchase cattle for state ranches. In fact, most state marketing boards relied just as heavily on private traders as did the colonial European trade firms (Grégoire 1986). 27

The case of the Meat Marketing Board (MMB) in Ghana is illustrative. The Ghanaian government set up this board just after independence in 1960. It invested heavily in a canning plant and slaughterhouse facilities on the border with Burkina Faso where cattle were bought directly from traders. Domestic marketing was carried out by the private sector (Sullivan 1984). The MMB also secured a monopoly on extra-African meat imports and determined official consumer prices, which were frequently circumvented by the private sector. However, the scale of its activities steadily declined like many of its West

With respect to direct state intervention in cattle trade, considerable differences exist between West Africa on the one hand and East and Southern Africa on the other. In East and Southern Africa, state intervention was not restricted to meat processing alone and specific policies attempted to organise markets, to facilitate the marketing from large-scale ranches and to control the sale of cattle by indigenous livestock producers in order to reduce grazing pressure. The interventions affected the structure of the cattle trade. As a result of embargoes and quarantine regulations, at least some of the demand for meat was supplied by settlers and thus partially hampered trade from pastoral areas. It has further been shown that both in East and in Southern Africa marketing boards played, and some even continue to play, a much more important role in these interventions than in West Africa, the most prominent case unequivocally being the Botswana Meat Commission (De Haan et al., forthcoming).
African counterparts due to poor management practices. Today, the MMB mainly has a distribution function, purchasing meat from private butchers and selling it through a few MMB cold storage facilities. Finally, the case of Niger’s marketing board SONARAN is worth mentioning. In the early 1980s, SONARAN (Société Nationale des Ressources Animales) engaged in official livestock and meat trade with one of the few private industrial meat canning companies in West Africa, the Nigerian Food Company (NFC). On the basis of yearly contracts, a significant financial turnover was achieved. However, it was the government of Niger itself who was responsible for SONARAN’s failure to fulfil its contractual obligations, since it established regional export quotas in 1986 in order to induce a faster herd growth (Bio Goura 1993). At the end of the 1980s, SONARAN’s relations with the NFC suffered increasingly from the deteriorating exchange rate of the Naira and operations were suspended accordingly. Under the Structural Adjustment Programmes introduced in the 1980s, several of the above-mentioned marketing boards were privatised or disbanded. The function of most cereal marketing boards was restricted to that of maintaining an emergency stock. With regard to the livestock and meat marketing boards in West Africa, their intervention capacity was reduced to a minimum if not completely.

To summarise, the results of more than two decades of state intervention in livestock marketing were largely unsuccessful in the light of the extensive implementation of trade regulation and taxes, and the objectives of the marketing boards (Bekure & McDonald 1985). Despite attempts to control or limit the cross-border trade of cattle, flows have typically continued illicitly and unregistered. In fact, the possibility of conveying cattle on the hoof across borders gives traders a head start on government control. With regard to the marketing boards, results have been equally mediocre. Parallel to the SONARAN experience, other cases reveal that initial success was followed by financial and organisational difficulties. Chad, for instance, exported significant quantities of frozen beef to Central African countries up until the 1970s when most operations ceased. The successful agencies appear to have been those regulating the production and export of hides and skins from Sahelian countries.

2.4 Concluding remarks

At both levels of analysis, i.e. trade and traders, a thorough background was provided in the preceding sections to forthcoming chapters which will investigate the cattle trade and cattle traders in Benin.

First of all, it is clear that the personal characteristics of traders as they were mentioned at the outset of this study (cf. Section 1.3) can be interpreted as expressions of wealth and identity on the one hand, and as instruments of trade on the other. Wealth and accumulation appeared to have a culture-specific connotation in that they are typically expressed as a function of a trader’s aggregate economic, social and symbolic capital. Together, these represent the degree of business success the trader enjoys. However, in addition to being mere indications of a trader’s wealth position, they appeared to represent valuable instruments of trade as well. This was substantiated by a discussion of the role of trade networks, the most prominent exponent of social capital. The size of a trader’s network as well as the nature of relationships it encompasses not only represent his wealth but also fulfill important commercial and organisational functions as well. For instance, a
network is an indispensable tool for the organisation of long-distance trade. As such, it facilitates trading and helps reduce costs.

Second, other personal characteristics of traders appeared to fulfil an instrumental role as well. In this respect, Section 2.1 examined the types of identity markers that have historically been used by West African traders. It appears that these personal identity markers have specifically served to differentiate between traders and non-traders, to differentiate between members of the trading community, and to facilitate the practical organisation of long-distance trade and the maintenance of trade networks in particular. In other words, they have been used to defend trade monopolies, to delineate market niches or to restrict access to a commercial elite. In historical retrospective, identity markers were found to have shifted from being predominantly based on ethnic background to a more diverse range including kinship ties or shared region of origin, a shift which reflects the general tendency towards a multi-ethnic trade.

Finally, a different contextual perspective was put forward in the final section (2.3) which discussed the patterns of cattle trade in West Africa. We historically reconstructed the expansion and diversion of trade patterns while paying particular attention to supply and demand factors as well as (macroeconomic) policies. These remarks on the structural level of trade contributed to the establishment of a general framework for the cattle trade within which the focus of analysis will be concentrated.
2.4 Concluding remarks

At both levels of scrutiny, i.e., trade and traders, a thorough ethnographic analysis provided in the preceding sections half revealed how wealth and status of the individual are instrumental in understanding wealth and accumulation achieved. Wealth and accumulation appear to be value-specific manifestations of what they are typically described as attributes or aggregates of social and symbolic capital. Together, these representations of status and power are the wealth position. They appear to represent wealth characteristics of trade as well. This wealth is held and by a description of the role of trade networks, the most prominent examples of trade capital. The use of a trader's network as well as the nature of relationships a trader enjoys not only represent his wealth but are also fulfilled in some cases and organizational behavior as well. For instance, a