Strategies of cattle traders

Cattle traders strategically employ their personal characteristics to shape their trading strategies and their mode of trade organisation. On the one hand, the strategies and modes of organisation constitute a response to the structural features of the cattle trade. On the other, they reflect the deliberate use of personal 'assets' to create new opportunities. The outcome of 'responsive' as well as 'opportunistic' strategies and modes of organisation of cattle traders is mirrored in trade patterns. In a nutshell, this constitutes the main line of argument put forward in the present chapter. In terms of our initial research objective, sufficient building blocks are now available to proceed with the analysis of the interplay between actors (traders) and structure (trade). The levels of trade and trade setting were established in Chapters 4 and 5 and the cattle traders, in all their diversity, were introduced in Chapters 6 and 7. With regard to the traders, a significant observation was in the internal differentiation of the trader community, along the intersecting lines of wealth, ethnic identity and personality. This internal differentiation appears to be crucial in understanding the nature and background of strategies employed.

In terms of the conceptual framework, the entry point of the present chapter are the personal characteristics of traders, captured in the notions of economic capital, social capital and knowledge capital that also guided the discussion on entry modes. In addition to this, the concept of symbolic capital (i.e. the prestige and status of traders) will now come to the fore. However, in view of the research findings which will highlight the role of ethnicity and identity in the strategies of cattle traders, we prefer to use the term 'ideological capital' to capture and specifically emphasise the active use the traders were found to make of factors such as identity and status. The use of 'capital' already suggests that we will pay particular attention to the way in which 'characteristics' of traders are transformed into an asset in trade.

The linkages between assets, strategies and patterns of trade will be reviewed in three consecutive sections. Section 8.1 examines the networks of cattle traders. It argues that networks are mechanisms to tackle the structural deficiencies of trade and necessitate a form of relationship management based on mutual trust. Section 8.2 presents the differences among traders in their responses to structural changes in trade, notably the macroeconomic fluctuations and changes in the institutional setting of trade. It argues that the responses of particular groups of traders explain the way in which new trade patterns
developed. Moreover, it introduces the importance of differences in knowledge and ideological capital. The latter will be further elaborated upon in the final section (8.3) which emphasises the significance of the knowledge and identity background which the traders derive from agriculture and pastoralism. The way this background is employed in their trading strategies will appear to have crystallised into new trade patterns.

8.1 Trade networks

Networks are one of the most outstanding features of West African trade. Their origin can be traced back to the 16th and 17th centuries when the long-distance trade across distinct agro-ecological zones began to expand. A network type of trade organisation provided traders with the means to deal with the structural features of long-distance trade which involved the purchase, transport and sale of commodities over a vast geographical area characterised by economic and socio-cultural diversity. A common ethnic identity held the network members together and facilitated the maintenance of an ethnic trading monopoly in long-distance trade. Nowadays, the nature of West African trade has been modified substantially and the number of traders is sufficiently large to prevent ethnic trade monopolies. Yet, the practical advantages of a network type of trade organisation in dealing with the structural features and deficiencies of trade have remained, again in the long-distance trade in particular. The present section examines the organisational structure of the networks of cattle traders in Benin. It departs from the structural level of trade reflected in the nature of purchase, transport and sales activities to explain the composition of networks. In fact, most of these activities specifically pertain to the trade in cattle. We will further highlight the differences in network organisation between traders of distinct ethnic origin. Before dealing with the trade networks of cattle traders in Benin and their relationship management, an attempt will be made to be more precise about the concept of 'network relations' and to arrive at a working definition.

Agier (1983) defined a trade network as a complex set of work relations which encompass kinship relations as well as patron-client relations. According to the author, the network members carry out trade activities on behalf of the chief trader to whom they are attached through complex social relationships. For a trader to maintain such a network of 'dependants', it is not only the financial reward but especially the social reward, through housing, marriage or other favours, that counts and keeps the network intact. Whereas Agier, through this approach, stresses the nature of the relationship between a trader and the person he has a work relationship with (for instance, his son or his apprentice), our emphasis will be laid additionally on the type of service which is carried out. It will be argued that the nature of the relationship depends on the type of service performed. In addition to these work relations, a network further encompasses the relationships which can be grouped under the heading of business contacts. Typically of a different nature, business contacts also facilitate a trader's organisation of purchase, transport and sales activities. For the purpose of the present study, this brings us to define a trade network as encompassing the whole set of relations which enable a trader to dispose of manpower for trade-related labour tasks, to facilitate the execution of trade functions and to generate recurrent cost reductions. This definition emphasises the two major components of the networks of cattle traders in Benin: the labour network and the business network.
The labour network

The collection, transport and storage, i.e. the marketing, of agricultural produce in a West African trade setting typically demands the deployment of manpower. The poor state or lack of basic infrastructure such as feeder roads on the one hand and the scarcity of transport on the other explain the need to rely on human labour. Moreover, product characteristics can equally require the involvement of manpower when marketing is concerned. Both elements are particularly true for the trade in cattle since the handling of live animals not only requires the continuous presence of herders, in view of the virtual absence of specialised forms of cattle transport and the inaccessibility of certain zones for trucks, but also specific skills and attention. What then, are the specific labour-intensive activities related to the trade in cattle? In all, four tasks can be distinguished which concern the handling of animals between the point of purchase and the point of sale.

First, during the collection stage, the animals have to be conveyed from the point of purchase (market-place, pastoral village or farm) to a fixed collection point, usually near the home of the trader. Second, given the fact that it usually takes several weeks before a trader will have purchased the number of cattle required, the animals awaiting transportation have to be watched over and pastured in the meantime. Third, depending on the final destination, cattle are conveyed on the hoof and/or by truck. The labour bottleneck is particularly felt when cattle have to be walked over considerable distances and across borders, such as when cattle are conveyed from northern Benin to Lomé or Saki (cf. Map 5.6). However, the transport of cattle by truck also demands the presence of herders. In the case of a truckload of 30 animals, two herders watch over the cattle while sitting on the trailer in order to prevent the animals from falling and injuring each other. Finally, at the market of destination the animals have to be looked after before they are sold. At consumer markets this can take several days or even weeks if the supply is abundant.

Most cattle traders have had experience with one or more of the above-mentioned tasks in the early phases of their careers. With the gradual evolution of their businesses, they have progressively 'externalised' activities related to cattle trekking and herding. In general, a trader can recruit the manpower he needs through kinship relations, through apprenticeships or by occasionally employing someone. Various points come to the fore when traders make strategic choices between possible labour solutions. These considerations differ according to the type of activity that has to be performed. The following table, which is based on the research sample, shows that traders generally prefer to combine kinship, apprentice and occasional employee relations to solve so-called labour bottlenecks.

First of all, the fact that most traders, irrespective of the category of labour tasks score on more than one type of labour illustrates the importance of combining types of labour. Most combinations are observed when cattle trekking towards the sales market (3rd column) is concerned, a task which usually requires the presence of more than one herder. The rationale for combining different types of labour is the trade-off between experience and trust. The outcome of this trade-off is reflected in the table which, at the level of all traders, shows the almost equal importance of family labour and salaried employees.

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1 Monthly or yearly salaried employees are a rare phenomenon in Benin's cattle trade and most herders are engaged and paid on a per activity basis.
Table 8.1 The nature of labour relations put into use for various labour tasks according to ethnicity (n=37)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>labour tasks</th>
<th>type of labour</th>
<th>collection of cattle</th>
<th>pasturing of herd**</th>
<th>cattle trekking***</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>all traders (n=37)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bariba traders (n = 13)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulani traders (n = 16)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (n = 8)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Row totals do not add up to the number of traders mentioned. Not only does each trader score on each of the three labour tasks, a large number also score for different types of labour within a labour task category. For instance, a trader who combines the labour of his children with that of hired herders for cattle trekking, will score on 1 and 3 in the cattle-trekking category.

* type of labour
** refers to the pasturing of the herd that awaits transportation
*** refers to cattle trekking towards the sales market
1 = family labour
2 = apprentice labour
3 = salaried employees

Source: Fieldwork

Second, it appears from the table that apprenticeships are less important than the deployment of family labour and salaried employees. This is partly due to a general decline in the importance of traditional apprenticeships which has taken place over the years. Although some characteristics of the traditional apprenticeship have remained crucial for traders (the aspect of mutual trust in particular), its nature seems to have changed and to some extent become more professional and formal. For instance, contrary to the situation in the past, most apprentices today do not live with their patron, and they now receive a salary when they carry out a particular task. It can therefore be difficult to distinguish between apprentices and regularly engaged salaried employees with whom the trader has established a relationship of trust. The significance of maintaining a confidence bond, irrespective of the type of labour, is reflected in the fact that the rewards of a salaried employee frequently comprise more than monetary remuneration alone. This 'extra' makes the level of contact qualify for incorporation as a network relation.

The third observation is related to the fact that there are no significant differences between the two main ethnic groups that were represented in the sample, the Bariba and Fulani. However, one could have expected the involvement of family labour to be greater among Fulani traders, given the experience of pastoral families with cattle herding and trekking. This is not the case. They frequently make use of salaried herders, the latter getting an even higher score compared with family labour in the case of cattle trekking to the sales market. Apparently, the availability of family labour is less among Fulani cattle traders. This is at least partly due to the fact that the (extended) families of the Fulani cattle traders involved in the survey were small when compared to Bariba or Gando families. In addition, a great deal of labour is needed for livestock keeping which accordingly reduces labour availability for trade purposes. Cattle trekking (3rd column) to distant sales markets is a good example since it involves a long absence of herders, sometimes up to several

2 The background to declining numbers of apprenticeships was discussed in Section 6.2.
weeks. For the Bariba traders, the trade-off between labour used for agricultural purposes and labour used for trade was felt less on a year-round basis. Only in the most labour-demanding stages of the agricultural season (weeding and harvesting periods) did they rely more on hired labour for their cattle trade. During the same period, some also deliberately slowed down their trading frequency.

Table 8.2 examines the nature of labour relationships in different labour tasks in relation to the wealth level of traders. The composition of an individual trader's labour network does not appear to differ significantly according to the level of wealth, except for the outstanding importance of family labour in the highest wealth category. At first sight, this seems a peculiar situation because it might have been expected that the importance of hired labour (salaried employees) would increase parallel to the increasing capacity of a trader to pay for it. Contrary to this, the table reveals that salaried employees are used by all traders irrespective of their wealth position, implying that financial considerations are of minor importance. In fact, the financial analysis of marketing costs for the cattle trade presented in Section 5.6 demonstrated that the labour costs for cattle herders are not particularly high in comparison to other cost categories. This finding confirms earlier remarks on the crucial role of the trade-off between experience and trust instead of the trade-off between salaried and non-salaried herders. For labour tasks in general and that of long-distance cattle trekking in particular, a trader will consider trust at least as important as experience. In other words, although the employment of a salaried herder might be preferable in terms of his experience in cattle trekking, a trader may still prefer to use a family member or someone else with whom he has a close relationship. This also explains why cattle traders seek to establish relations of trust with those salaried herders they employ regularly. Some traders were observed to solve the trade-off by combining family labour (trust) with occasionally employed herders (experience).

Table 8.2 The nature of labour relations put into use for various labour tasks according to wealth category (n=37)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labour tasks type of labour*</th>
<th>Collection of cattle</th>
<th>Pasturing of herd**</th>
<th>Cattle trekking***</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All traders (n=37)</td>
<td>25 9 19</td>
<td>23 9 23</td>
<td>23 14 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High (n=15)</td>
<td>14 5 6</td>
<td>12 5 8</td>
<td>13 7 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle high (n=6)</td>
<td>2 - 4</td>
<td>3 2 4</td>
<td>4 3 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle low (n=12)</td>
<td>6 2 7</td>
<td>5 3 7</td>
<td>4 4 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low (n=4)</td>
<td>3 - 2</td>
<td>3 - 4</td>
<td>2 - 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Row totals do not add up to the number of traders mentioned. Not only does each trader score on each of the three labour tasks, a large number also score for different types of labour within a labour task category.

*type of labour
1 = family labour
2 = apprentice labour
3 = salaried employees

** refers to the pasturing of the herd that awaits transportation
*** refers to cattle trekking towards the sales market

Source: Fieldwork
The preference for family labour comes to the fore at the level of trade networks of wealthy traders. Their status, material wealth and often central position within the (extended) family have them to more easily recruit among family members for labour tasks related to their cattle trade. These family members are typically accompanied by salaried herders to fulfil both the conditions of trust and experience. In contrast, less wealthy traders appear to be less capable of mobilising family members and apprentices and are thus forced to rely on hired herders.

The relationship between the three main labour tasks and the type of labour used will now be discussed in more detail. It was already mentioned that, given the sensitivity (value of the merchandise, hazards en route) of long-distance cattle trekking and the absence of labour contracts, trust relationships between trader and herder are of great importance. The herder will trek the animals over extensive stretches and the risk of something happening en route is significant (cf. Section 7.2). A good relationship with a herder will contribute to a higher degree of responsibility for the tasks to be carried out. A subsequent reduction of risks involved in trekking can be achieved. This reduction can be crucial in financial terms, though extremely difficult to quantify.

How do traders establish and maintain these long-standing relationships based on trust? Obviously, kinship and apprenticeship relations imply a situation of mutual trust and this explains why traders often use these types of labour. However, when family members or apprentices lack the specific knowledge for long-distance (cross-border) cattle trekking, a trader still has to rely upon employing someone. His strategy then is to establish long-standing relationships with particular herders, i.e. incorporating them into a pool of labour (his labour network) out of which he recruits depending on the specific purpose of the task. The larger the pool of related herders, the larger a trader's network is. Instead of maintaining a purely professional relationship in which the trader pays for the service performed, the bond between a trader and a herder whom he employs can be strengthened through financial or organisational assistance for the latter, on top of his salary. Additional 'favours' given cattle herders were found to be a common strategy among long-distance traders. Most commonly, financial assistance would be provided in the case of a marriage or illness of an employee. The trader would thus re-confirm the existence of a special relationship with this particular herder, with the nature of the relationship exceeding the sole payment of a salary. A trader's capacity to establish and maintain such a 'pool of labour' to a significant degree depends on his financial position which determines the extent to which he can provide financial assistance to his employee(s). In this respect, wealthier traders have a clear advantage not only in maintaining but in extending their labour relations as well. Ethnicity was not found to determine the choice of herders. This is basically due to the fact that most experienced herders are Fulani, which limits the trader's options. Thus, for long-distance cattle trekking all traders employ Fulani herders.

The labour tasks at the collection stage reveal a different situation. The distance covered as well as the possible risks are significantly lower. Other considerations than trust relations apply when the choice for those carrying out the labour tasks is concerned. From the table it appears that the conveyance of animals from the point of purchase to the home

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3 This is illustrated by the group of Malanville-based cattle traders who used to purchase their animals at Burkina Faso markets during the late 1970s and early 1980s. These traders always employed the same herder with whom they had a good relationship. The confidential bond between these traders and the herder was crucial because the trekking of cattle herds from Burkina Faso to Ibadan and Cotonou was a hazardous venture, involving fraudulent border crossings and difficulties with officials which had to be sorted out by the herder.
of the trader is either carried out by a herder engaged on the spot or by family labour. The choice for either one is simply related to convenience. The only limiting factor is experience in cattle trekking. To trek one or two cattle, even over short distances, can be extremely difficult since the animals may be restless when not in a larger herd. Although this might limit the availability of family labour (especially for those families with a non-pastoral background), it never causes real problems because a herder can very easily be recruited at the market. Another task at the collection stage is watching over the herd before transportation to its final destination. Again, traders use either family labour, their apprentices or occasional employees. The nature of the task that has to be carried out is such that a purely professional relationship between trader and employee will suffice (in contrast to long-distance cattle trekking). In some cases, the herder who watches over the cattle is the one who eventually will also follow the animals to their destination. A purely professional relationship with herders who are available in sufficient numbers to be recruited easily cannot be considered part of a trader’s labour network. The relations are not sustained and are simply payment for services rendered. Long-standing relationships were found to include more than payment of a salary, with the extra serving as investment in a trust relation which will facilitate a trader’s business and allows cost reductions in the long run.

Two specific labour-intensive tasks occur at the market of destination, notably the consumer markets in the south. First, the animals have to be watched over outside market hours. Although there are always herders who can be engaged on the spot, the risk of theft or problems occurring when animals devastate the fields of urban farmers are such that traders often rely upon their own cattle drovers. Second, when animals are sold to butchers on credit the repayment delay can be considerable. Although traditionally the landlord-middleman is responsible for recovering a trader’s debts, many traders nowadays prefer to do this themselves. However, being absent from home for several weeks is generally seen as undesirable. Given the delicacy of the task, the preferred solution is to leave a family member at the market who will make sure that all debts are recovered. Even so, most traders prefer to stay at the market themselves.

The business network

In addition to the labour tasks and labour solutions discussed above, the network of a cattle trader is composed of business relations. The so-called business network encompasses those relationships which enable a trader to obtain financial and organisational advantages in the field of purchases, sales, transport and information. Similar to the objectives of establishing trustworthy labour relations, the maintenance of business relations appears to be guided by risk evasion to a large extent. Some of the arrangements can thus be qualified as risk-minimising arrangements. This section briefly discusses the necessities and opportunities related to business contacts. A distinction is made between collaborative arrangements among cattle traders on the one hand, and their contacts with non-trading actors in the marketing channel on the other.

Contacts with non-trading actors of the marketing channel

As in other private trade sectors, individual traders have preferential contacts through which they obtain financial and organisational advantages. According to our working definition, these contacts belong to the trade network. The advantages pertain to the main
marketing functions usually distinguished by economists: purchase, transport, sale as well as finance and information. Long-standing relations with cattle owners (purchase), truck owners (transport) and butchers (sale) are likely to ease transactions and occasionally give rise to favourable prices or a reduction of risks such as credit default.

On the purchase side, the maintenance of regular contacts with certain cattle owners (pastoralists or farmers) might result in the latter repeatedly calling upon the same trader to sell their animals. Well-established relations with cattle producers have always proved to be of crucial importance in the light of spatially dispersed supply, strong demand for particular types of animals, an imperfect spread of market information and the absence of price standardisation. In Section 2.2, it appeared that 'collectors' (the so-called madugats) figure prominently in West African trade networks: they collect commodities at the farm gate on behalf of the trader. The cattle traders in Benin, however, rarely employ collectors for the purchase of cattle. They are equally reluctant to entrust these tasks to children or other family members and only experienced cattle purchasers are employed as collectors. The near absence of this network function in the cattle trade, in contrast to the situation in the food grain and cash crop trade, appears related to the fact that grains are bought at relatively stable unit prices (often fixed at the pre-harvest stage) whereas cattle prices are negotiated on the spot and knowledge of price-quality ratios is essential. The purchase price of cattle was found to be of significant importance to the final profit margin (cf. Section 5.6). Therefore, traders are inclined to carry out this function themselves.

A strong relationship between a cattle trader and a pastoralist typically consists of more than cattle transactions alone. The establishment of the relationship entails the rendering of various types of 'services' by the trader to the pastoralist. In this respect, credit arrangements are the most usual. The trader lends money to the pastoralist and is reimbursed later in cash but most commonly in kind (cattle). Some traders provided the example of lending money to a pastoralist upon the birth of a calf. The loan would be cleared when the calf had grown and could be sold. Credit arrangements are also provided to farmers, notably for the purchase of agricultural inputs. Furthermore, a cattle trader may assist a pastoralist in gaining 'access' to local authorities to resolve problems of tenure, theft and the like. In the past, pastoralists used to live in isolated rural areas and contact with traders constituted a valuable, if not the sole, means of getting access to 'urban affairs'. Hence, upon establishment in a particular area, some pastoralists would seek a local trader (or sometimes a local butcher) in order to build a sustained relationship of 'mutual services'. This trader would then become their preferred sales partner and privileges such as the opportunity of selecting specific types of cattle for purchase or eventually purchasing cattle on credit would be conferred on him in order to confirm the reciprocal relationship.

From the point of view of the cattle trader, access to such network relations and hence to a stable supply base requires not only status within the local community but a sufficiently strong material position as well. While capital is needed to finance the lending of money, status is indispensable as well. Pastoralists will have more confidence in the value and

Traders stressed the alleged dilemma related to refusing to lend money. According to them, a refusal cause a deterioration in their relationship with the pastoral community as a whole and therefore damage their supply base. Moreover, not lending money would equally damage the prestige of a trader.

In general, transactions on credit are subject to strict conditions. Traders can be asked to deposit money in advance. Some pastoralists will refuse to deliver on credit if the trader intends to sell outside the region (which means a long repayment delay) or if the trader is not married (which increases the 'risk of disappearance').

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durability of the relationship if the trader is well-known for being generous or for being a devout Moslem. Even though status and material wealth are important, ethnicity does not limit access to this type of network relationship. Bariba and Fulani traders both have preferential suppliers among (mainly Fulani) pastoralists. During discussions, both Fulani pastoralists and Bariba traders claimed that the basic strength of an exchange relationship relied upon 'mutual service' and 'mutual trust', which outweighed the 'ethnic distrust' prevalent in other areas such as conflicts over tenure arrangements (cf. Van Driel 1996). A favourable condition for the construction of a network of purchase contacts is a history as a butcher. Several cattle traders (excluding the Fulani) started their trading career from a butcher's background. In northern Benin, the butchers are particularly famous for their well-established relationships with pastoralists and some of the butcher-trading families enjoy an excellent reputation among Fulani pastoralists.

The conditions just mentioned consequently limit the number of cattle traders capable of forging an extensive network of multiple ties and reciprocal relationships with local pastoralists. Although the traditional network-type arrangements between pastoralists and traders continue to exist today, their importance has diminished as a result of changes in pastoral society on the one hand, and changes in the market structure on the other. The emergence of new cattle markets over the last two decades has increased the importance of impersonal transactions carried out at formal cattle markets.

At coastal sales markets, similar network-type relationships between cattle traders and butchers occur less. In large, this is due to the role of the landlord-middleman who mediates in transactions. Therefore, the contact between trader and landlord is of much more importance given the fact that the sale of an animal is often negotiated directly between the latter and the butcher, i.e. in the absence of the trader. Thus, a trader clearly has an interest in a trustworthy landlord-middleman. At coastal markets, cattle traders have traditionally dealt with landlords who belonged to the same ethnic group and preferably originated from the same region, and when they visit a particular coastal market for the first time they will prefer to accompany an experienced trader upon whose information the choice for a landlord-middleman is based.

A final component of the business network of a trader is preferential contact with truck owners. Significant organisational (in terms of fewer delays) and financial (in terms of cost reduction) advantages can be obtained when a cattle trader (a) has his own means of transport, (b) has a good relationship with a truck owner or (c) has good contact with a transport broker, i.e. someone who arranges transport. The latter two conditions are of prime importance because ownership of trucks, notably those able to hold 30 or more head of cattle, is rare among Benin's cattle traders. Among the traders in the sample, no one owned a 30-ton truck and only 7 traders possessed a 10-ton truck. These were exclusively used for the transport of cattle over medium distances, i.e. not to the coastal markets. The prevailing situation with respect to the transport system in Benin makes access to transport sufficiently difficult for these contacts to be essential. Delays of up to several weeks occur frequently, notably when cattle competed for trucks with cotton and groundnuts. Thus, several Malanville and Guéné-based traders 'cultivate' their relationships with Guéné-based and Malanville-based transport brokers who perform the (paid) specialised service of travelling to Niger in order to make an early agreement with Niger truck drivers for cattle loads to be picked up at Guéné. Cultivating a relationship has to be broadly interpreted. Regular courtesy visits and small favours are among the essential elements which this practice encompasses. In general, the high status of a trader was observed to facilitate relations with truck owners or transport brokers. This is not so much due to the financial
significance of the favours done, but rather to the sheer fact of being visited by, and 'seen' with, a prestigious member of the trade community, the so-called grands commerçants, and thus being identified with status and devout Islamic practices.

Collaboration between traders

An important feature of the mode of organisation of cattle traders in Benin is collaboration. Elements of the labour network as well as the business network converge when co-operation between traders is concerned. Whereas purchases and sales are trade activities which are almost exclusively performed by traders individually, the transport of cattle to coastal markets is often done jointly. The main questions to be answered here are: why do traders collaborate, with whom and under what circumstances?

The most practical reasons for working together are limited capital and risk evasion. Cattle herds conveyed to the major consumer markets in the south usually consist of at least 20 animals when trekked on the hoof and at least 30 animals when truck transport is used. A trader who has only enough working capital to purchase 5-10 animals is obliged to seek co-operation with other traders. Otherwise, his transport costs, converted to a per animal rate, will be too high. Therefore, traders try to transport their animals together. This not only has the advantage of diminishing transport costs, but the presence of multiple cattle drovers is more secure in case of something happening to one of them or to the animals. Hence, part of the labour bottleneck can be overcome. Another advantage is that costs which have to be paid for in advance (truck hire, the salary of the cattle drovers and administrative expenses) can be shared. Even the big traders who possess the financial capacity to purchase 20-30 animals at a time often put their herds together with someone else's (they call this _partir en association_). On the one hand, their interest in doing this is to reduce risk, particularly in the case of animals trekked on the hoof. Putting herds together means that traders only invest part of their working capital for a particular trip. To do this on an individual basis would not be very cost-effective. When something eventually 'happens' to the herd, the financial risk incurred by each trader is equal to the working capital invested. On the contrary, the risk of being forced out of business is substantially larger when a trader's complete working capital is invested in one particular trip. Moreover, given the fact that the purchase of 20-30 animals is time-consuming, putting together smaller numbers of animals means that quick departures can be realised when information is received about favourable conditions at a particular market. These collaborative arrangements usually imply that transaction costs are shared according to the number of animals of each participating trader. On the other hand, the big cattle traders are very frequently asked by smaller traders with limited financial capacity if a few of their animals can join the larger herd. From the point of view of both this is a profitable venture. The smaller trader will be able to visit distant consumer markets and benefit from the contacts, trustworthiness and experience of the established trader. The latter will gain because the smaller trader will help with the cattle trekking and the situation allows for a sharing of risks. In the cattle trade vocabulary this is commonly referred to as _"suivre quelqu'un"_, i.e. to follow someone (cf. Section 6.2). Established traders will see it as their responsibility to let smaller traders accompany them. In specific situations, a wealthy trader can even decide to account for all the transaction costs incurred. Here, status considerations will usually play a role. To help someone from the same village by accounting for expenses

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6 For instance, at least 2 cattle drovers are required to convey 5-10 animals from Banikoara (northern Benin) to Saki (Nigeria). Twenty animals, though, can be conveyed by 3 drovers which implies that economies of scale are realised.
confirms a trader’s prestigious position. One trader declared that he did not want a related smaller trader from his neighbourhood to share the costs because ‘... toute contrepartie serait vol...’ (every form of compensation would mean theft).

Finally, the establishment of alliances with foreign traders can also be considered as part of the business network. An alliance usually consists of lodging and providing market assistance for the visiting trader, whereby market assistance covers information on potential clients, prices, truck availability, cattle drovers and the like. As such, it resembles the function of landlord-middlemen at coastal markets. For both Benin-based and foreign traders, these alliances have notable organisational and financial advantages. Moreover, they encompass elements of prestige since ‘assisting’ and ‘lodging’ a visitor is considered an important virtue and a privileged area for big traders who are devout Moslems. The functioning of such an alliance is illustrated by the contacts established between two Accra-based Ghanaian traders and their Guéné-based counterparts. The Ghanaians started to visit the Guéné market in 1995. They were quickly recognised as potentially interesting trade partners and the Guéné traders assisted them not only with identifying the right animals to purchase but also with various formalities such as currency exchange and truck hire. The contacts, in turn, provided the Guéné traders with an opportunity to visit the Accra cattle market. They were assisted by their Ghanaian counterparts who acted as landlord-middlemen and took care of the sales and currency exchange activities. Similar alliances have, over the years, been established between Benin-based traders and visiting traders from Togo, Niger, Burkina Faso and Nigeria.

According to the traders themselves, no strict conditions prevail in the choice of a trading partner. They are usually keen to emphasise that ‘knowing’ and ‘trusting’ someone is crucial for the establishment of a business relationship, just as important as for labour relations. Moreover, traders often claim that a cattle herder or a business partner should be ‘serious’. These notions are sometimes difficult to interpret for the ‘outsider’.

Some traders stated that they knew the 'personal history' of those traders they collaborated with. Honesty and sincerity were considered core qualities for cattle traders. These qualities included being a hardworking, devout Moslem who can be taken at his word. From the field observations and interviews with cattle traders it appeared that the notions of ‘trust’ and 'knowing someone' were based on a variety of other factors which could be analysed in a somewhat more straightforward manner. For instance, when the choice of a trading partner with whom a collaborative arrangement would be agreed upon was based on 'trust', it commonly meant shared membership of a conventional ethnic group. This finding was challenged by the traders themselves, who claimed that the choice of a particular trading partner is not determined by ethnic group. Some even claimed the existence of a trader ethnicity (‘... l’ethnie commerçante...’ or ‘... la race commerçante...’). This implied that with regard to collaboration, the shared trader identity would exclude any form of discriminate behaviour based on divisions between conventional identities such as

Similar observations were made by Warms (1994, 104) who, in his article on accumulation paths for Malian traders, mentions ‘... confidence, friendship and trust among community members ...’ as crucial conditions for success ...’. The person’s history and deeds are paramount ...’ (ibid. 104) and ‘... a key characteristic of [ ] the commercial community is [being] considered [ ] serious ...’ (109). These remarks illustrate the importance of these concepts. In Warm’s study (based in Sikasso, Mali), a reputation for seriousness meant successful repayment of small debts and devotion to religion. Confidence determined the eligibility of someone to be lent money.
being Fulani, Bariba or Djerma. However, the situation appeared to be complex in everyday situations. For instance, few inter-ethnic collaborative arrangements were observed between Bariba and Fulani cattle traders. Since these groups dominate the cattle trade in absolute numbers, it is fairly easy to choose a trading partner within a particular ethnic group and traders were found to be inclined to do so, contrary to the situation with regard to labour relations (cf. above). Nevertheless, being Bariba or being Fulani does not always fully substitute for being 'trusted' as a trade partner and allow inclusion in a business network. An additional common denominator or 'shared value' is required. It appeared from field observations that a trading partner is 'known' or 'trusted' when factors such as kinship, age-group or village/region of origin are shared.\(^8\) Notably among the cattle traders in rural areas, a shared village or region of origin as well as a shared place of residence proved to effectively contribute to the establishment of a 'trust' relationship. It shows that in areas where communication linkages are poor, traders search for partners with whom regular contacts can easily be maintained. In addition to the practicalities, the presence of the partner nearby confers a sense of 'assurance' to the relationship. Both sides are responsible for the success of the business activities since failure could 'isolate' the traders' families in the village(s) concerned.

A partnership differs when collaboration between local and foreign traders is concerned. Irrespective of the ethnicity of a foreign trader, he can expect to be assisted by a local trader at the market of the latter. For instance, Mossi traders from Burkina Faso and Djerma traders based in Lomé and Accra were assisted by local Fulani as well as local Bariba traders. However, the determinants of this type of collaboration were much more closely linked to wealth and status position. Only the traders at the top of the hierarchy seemed to be eligible for collaboration with wealthy foreign traders. On the contrary, less wealthy foreign traders, such as the numerous seasonal Fulani traders from Niger, tended to seek assistance within the same ethnic group.

The extent of trade networks

Having discussed the formation of trade networks among cattle traders in Benin, we will now assess the extent of the networks of those cattle traders who participated in the research by studying their labour and business components. Table 8.3 presents the extent of trade networks in relation to the wealth position of traders. Since the extent of a network was included as one of the dimensions of wealth (cf. Section 7.1), the results confirm our expectations. Still, the table provides the starting point for a brief discussion in which the extent of networks will be examined in the light of a representative variable at the structural level (the year of entry into the trade) and a variable at the actor level (ethnicity).

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\(^8\) These factors particularly guide the choice of partnership for Gando, Dendi and Djerma cattle traders who form relatively small groups in the trader community. Their position limits the options for collaboration within an ethnic group. Notwithstanding respective histories of occasional conflicting relationships, both Gando and Djerma traders were found to co-operate with Bariba and Fulani traders. Most collaborative arrangements were based on a shared village of origin.
Table 8.3 Breakdown of traders according to wealth category and extent of trade network (n=39)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEALTH CATEGORY</th>
<th>small</th>
<th>medium</th>
<th>extensive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>high (n=15)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>middle high (n=7)</td>
<td>43% (3)</td>
<td>29% (2)</td>
<td>29% (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>middle low (n=13)</td>
<td>62% (8)</td>
<td>38% (5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>low (n=4)</td>
<td>75% (3)</td>
<td>25% (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* small networks include mainly family members, particularly for labour
medium networks include some family members as well as occasional apprentices or business contacts
extensive networks are wide relations in the business and labour field

Source: Fieldwork

The number and the quality of the contacts of the highest wealth categories, perform a crucial facilitating function in the sense of constituting a 'pool of relations' from which a trader can draw to overcome potential bottlenecks in the areas of labour, and purchase, sale and transport facilities. Thus, the network allows the analogous realisation of cost reductions (the difficult-to-quantify costs related to risk reduction in particular) and increase in status (in the sense of social capital). The more extensive the network relations are the less vulnerable a trader is to eventual setbacks. Clearly, these elements contribute to the enhancement of the wealth position of a cattle trader and, in turn, to a further expansion of his network. The network is not only the outcome of a particular stage on the accumulation path but a determinant of further wealth as well.

This raises a question with regard to the individual capability of cattle traders to construct a network: are the same determinants at play in determining the wealth position of traders as in determining the extent of their network? To a large degree, the answer is expected to be positive since the actual extent of a trader’s network constituted one of the four criteria on which the wealth ranking was based. Notwithstanding this, it remains of interest to see whether they are both influenced by the same factors. In Chapter 7, a distinction was made between determinants at various levels ranging from the trade setting to membership of ethnic groups to individual factors such as business intuition. In order to capture the (period-specific) impact of the trade setting, the year of entry into the cattle trade was put forward as a variable. In linking the extent of networks with the year of entry, we could equally test the hypothesis that the extent of a network is a straightforward product of the number of years of involvement in the cattle trade, i.e. the life-cycle explanation. This relationship is presented in Table 8.4, while Table 8.5 examines whether the extent of a network depends on membership of a particular ethnic group.

The findings presented in the tables to some extent correspond with those revealed in the previous chapter, in the sense that both the highest wealth and most extensive network categories reveal a relatively high presence of Bariba traders as well as of traders who entered trade before 1965. In this respect, it was already argued that ethnicity alone does not explain differences in wealth since it is closely related to the year of entry into the trade, with Bariba traders entering at an earlier stage than Fulani traders. Hence, the results of Table 8.4 display a relationship between the extent of a network and the year of entry into the trade. In other words, entering the cattle trade after 1975 or during the 1980s
appears to diminish the opportunities of constructing an extensive trade network. The conclusions drawn in Chapter 5 about long-term decreases in the profitability of long-distance trade are certainly relevant in this respect.

Table 8.4 Breakdown of traders according to extent of trade network and year of entry into the trade (n=39)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR OF ENTRY</th>
<th>small</th>
<th>medium</th>
<th>extensive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1965 (n=11)</td>
<td>28% (3)</td>
<td>36% (4)</td>
<td>36% (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965 - 1975 (n=12)</td>
<td>42% (5)</td>
<td>33% (4)</td>
<td>25% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975 - 1985 (n=8)</td>
<td>38% (3)</td>
<td>38% (3)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985 - 1995 (n=8)</td>
<td>50% (4)</td>
<td>37% (3)</td>
<td>13% (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fieldwork

Table 8.5 Breakdown of traders according to ethnicity and extent of trade network (n=39)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ETHNICITY</th>
<th>small</th>
<th>medium</th>
<th>extensive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bariba (n=14)</td>
<td>36% (5)</td>
<td>36% (5)</td>
<td>29% (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulani (n=17)</td>
<td>47% (8)</td>
<td>41% (7)</td>
<td>12% (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (n=8)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
<td>50% (4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fieldwork

Still, the table reveals that some traders of later generations did succeed in building up a medium-sized or extensive trade network. These exceptions could be explained at an individual level, in terms of personal talent, qualities and luck. In fact, the careers of the individual cattle traders concerned here certainly bear indications of business intuition being a major factor. The patterns of accumulation revealed a high number of very lucrative transactions at the early stages of a career. Furthermore, it seems likely that the extent of a trade network is determined by a trader's character as well as his competence in establishing and maintaining social contacts, both of which enable him to develop a circle of labour and business relationships. In addition, among the traders who started after 1975 but were able to build up a medium or extensive network, some clearly benefited from kinship relations, i.e. they either 'inherited' the network relations of their fathers or were able to rapidly expand the number of business relationships using the working capital of a family member.

*The category 'others' contains Gando, Djerma and Dendi traders in particular. For these traders, the same remarks are valid as for Bariba traders as far as the year of entry into the trade is concerned (cf. Section 3.4).*
Network cases

The present section concludes with a detailed presentation of the trade networks of two cattle traders: El Hadj Medagui whose network was classified as 'extensive', and Ali Bodado who had a network which was considered medium in size.

**El Hadj Medagui**

Scheme 8.1 portrays the labour (8.1a) and business (8.1b) network of El Hadj Medagui, a Kandi-based Bariba trader. To a large extent, it illustrates all the aspects of the cattle trade network. The Medagui family is a well known cattle-trading family whose members used to be the main suppliers of the Cotonou market during the 1970s and the early 1980s. The family has always had strong roots in the butchery sector: the first traders in the family all started their careers as butchers or butcher-traders. This butchery tradition and the well-known family name and reputation facilitated particularly good contacts with the Fulani pastoralists who live in the Kandi area. The Medagui family has a long history of reciprocal relationships with Fulani pastoralists, for whom they took care of a variety of 'urban affairs' in exchange for beneficial purchasing arrangements for cattle. Nowadays, El Hadj Medagui Senior is still the *pater familias* but he has retired from active cattle trading. His first-born son, El Hadj Medagui Saadou, has taken over the senior trader position within the family. Nevertheless, although the labour and business network is 'shared' collectively, family members purchase and sell cattle on an individual basis. For instance, when Saadou arranges the transport of a truckload of cattle to Cotonou, not all of the animals will belong to him. Usually his father and his younger brother will have financed part of the herd themselves. Accordingly, the profit made on each individual animal will accrue to its owner. The composition of a trade network obviously alters over the years. When the children of a trader grow up he will try to involve one or more of them in the business, thereby substituting their labour for that of apprentices or employees. At a later stage, when these children have finished their education in trade, they will be 'liberated' in the sense of becoming financially independent traders who continue to employ the labour and business network of the family. In the same manner, those network members who had previously been used for their labour become business contacts at the moment they start their own business. Scheme 8.1, therefore, also reflects the historical perspective of the Medagui trade network.

In view of the conclusions drawn from Table 8.1, it seems somewhat surprising that the task of cattle trekking towards the market of destination has always been carried out by family members or apprentices. Although Fulani herders have been temporarily engaged to collect cattle from the market or to pasture cattle awaiting transportation, they have never been employed for long-distance cattle trekking. Earlier, it was observed that the majority of Bariba cattle traders combine the employment of experienced Fulani herders with that of their own children. This difference is due to the market of destination. Whereas most traders visit markets within Benin as well as across the borders in Nigeria and Togo, the Medagui family has always exclusively traded in Cotonou, a market which can be reached by train (from Parakou) or by truck. Accordingly, it has never really been necessary to engage experienced herders since there were no hazardous or risky cross-border itineraries that had to be covered on the hoof.
Medagui Saadou used to accompany cattle transports to Cotonou on behalf of his father. Thereafter, he started working for himself and occupies a central position in the trade network at present.

A paternal cousin used to be chief cattle drover for Medagui Senior during the early 1970s.

Another paternal cousin used to be chief cattle drover for Medagui Senior during the same period but exclusively for cattle trekked to the Kolokoundé market, an itinerary he knew well.

The son of a neighbour and friend used to be an apprentice of Medagui Senior during the 1970s and early 1980s (together with Medagui Saadou). He took care of trekking cattle and accompanied truck transports. Since the 1980s, he has been living in Cotonou as a landlord-middleman (see business network).

A long-standing employee who regularly receives up to 200,000 CFA francs to purchase cattle in the pastoral villages surrounding Tia and Angaradébou, just north of Kandi.

Two younger brothers of Medagui Saadou have been trekking cattle for him since the late 1980s.

Another younger brother has also trekked cattle on behalf of both Medagui Senior and Saadou. Although he continues to occasionally accompany cattle transports, he also has his own cattle trade today.

The members of the Medagui family have always engaged Fulani herders, either on a permanent basis (pasturing the various herds) or occasionally (to collect cattle from the purchase market). At present, one of the former herders is an apprentice to the family.

Several of Medagui Senior's grandchildren and even the children of the two youngest of his four wives carry out minor tasks (collection of cattle, pasturing etc.).

Schemes 8.1a and 8.1b show the multiplicity of possible network functions ranging from labour solutions to trade partnerships. Not everyone (occasionally) employed and not everyone to whom an animal is sold or from whom cattle are purchased is automatically a member of the trade network. On the contrary, relationships have to be long-standing and should generate organisational and/or financial advantages. In the case of the Medagui family trade network, most relations have developed and strengthened over the years and over generations. Sons of trader colleagues and friends of Medagui Senior are now important contacts for Medagui Saadou at the Cotonou market. Moreover, the foundation for the fame of the Medagui family among Fulani pastoralists in the Kandi area was already
laid in the 1930s and 1940s when the father of Medagui Senior was a well-known butcher. Even nowadays, butchery activities play an important role in the family and contribute much to the strengthening of relationships with neighbouring Fulani pastoralists.

The father of Medagui Senior used to be an important butcher. He was the first to establish the name of the family as cattle traders in the pastoral villages near Kandi. His son and grandson have benefited from this image of being regular buyers.

Both Medagui Senior and Medagui Saadou have had trader colleagues with whom they preferred to work.

Two of Medagui Senior's sons are truck drivers who have their own means of transport. Their contacts within the community of truck owners, as well as their own trucks give the other family members relatively easy access to transport for cattle.

The younger brother who trades independently is considered a trade partner.

Another brother of Medagui Saadou is a cattle trader established in Parakou. He facilitates all sales activities when the Kandi-based traders decide to sell their cattle in Parakou.

The son of a cattle-trading friend of Medagui senior (in fact, his former patron) is now the market chief at the Cotonou market. Thus, any 'problems' in Cotonou are usually dealt with in favour of the Medagui family.

A former apprentice is a landlord-middleman at the market in Cotonou today. He assists in the sales activities of the family upon their arrival in Cotonou.

The cattle-trading members of the Medagui family have established excellent relations with numerous Fulani cattle owners who live near Kandi. They frequently consult the Medagui traders in order to sell their animals. Moreover, the Fulani often order cattle, i.e. they ask for good-quality reproductive bulls which the Medagui traders subsequently look for at the markets they regularly visit.
The labour and business components of Ali Bodado's trade network are represented in Schemes 8.2a and 8.2b. Ali Bodado is a Fulani cattle trader who currently lives in Mamassy Peul near the Karimama cattle market. His family of pastoralists used to live in Niger just to the north of Malanville. Ali's father as well as his uncle were occasional cattle traders who operated at the markets in the border regions of Benin, Niger and Nigeria. Attracted by the trade activities of his father and uncle, and with the financial assistance of his brother, Ali started his own cattle trade in the mid-1980s following the extensive drought which hit many pastoral families. Ali was able to effect some profitable transactions and he soon extended his trade of a few animals to cover the markets of Ibadan and Lagos and later also Lomé. With the expansion of his trade activities he engaged a fixed apprentice/herder and Ali's maternal cousin also started to accompany him on his trips. Both receive salaries for the tasks they carry out today and Ali provides them with food and accommodation as well.

1. A maternal cousin with whom Ali has an apprentice relationship on the basis of food and accommodation. The cousin purchases a few animals on his own and accompanies Ali on his trips.

2. A cattle herder with whom Ali has a long-standing apprentice relationship. The apprentice is paid a salary for each task he carries out.

The labour and business network of this cattle trader is much more compact than the extensive relations of the Medagui family. For instance, Ali has only very limited well-established contacts with surrounding pastoralists, even though his name has become better known as his trade has expanded. The majority of his cattle are purchased at the Karimama market. The few other traders with whom Ali collaborates are crucial for his activities because he accompanies them to the interesting and lucrative markets of Lomé and Ibadan.
Ali Bodado’s father traded cattle in the area around Malanville and he purchased animals from pastoralists in Niger, Nigeria and Benin border regions. He introduced Ali to some of his business contacts and taught him ‘cattle-trading skills’.

Ali Bodado’s uncle used to work in close collaboration with his father.

Ali Bodado’s brother is a night watchman in Sokoto (Nigeria) and occasionally assists Ali by lending him money for the purchase of cattle.

Business contacts at the Karimama cattle market with whom Ali makes joint trips to the coastal markets of Lomé and Ibadan.

8.2 Strategies in response to a fluctuating trade setting

This section addresses the responses of cattle traders to some of the major events that have had an impact on Benin’s cattle trade from around the 1960s onwards. The major events include macroeconomic and institutional developments as well as transformations in agriculture and pastoralism. The responses to changes in agriculture and pastoralism will be dealt with in Section 8.3 which deals with traders’ strategies in relation to their (ethnic) identity and skills. Here, we will focus on responses to the macroeconomic fluctuations and to the formalisation of the market structure.

Responses to a fluctuating macroeconomic setting

In earlier chapters, it was demonstrated how a modification of macroeconomic parameters diverts cattle trade patterns. For instance, a favourable currency exchange rate coupled with enhanced demand at the major consumer markets in southern Nigeria oriented the activities of cattle traders in that direction during the 1970s. From the mid-1980s, however, a severe economic crisis reduced the trade to Nigeria. In addition to the shifts in patterns, it was shown that the number of cattle traders has gradually increased over the years, leading to more competition and fewer opportunities for individual traders. At the structural level
of trade as well as at the level of individual traders, evidence showed long-term deteriorating profit margins in long-distance trade. On the other hand, it has become clear that the economic (cotton) boom in most of the southern Borgou region has provided new profit-making opportunities. In short, a picture has emerged of a macroeconomic setting characterised by short as well as long-term fluctuations which have both positive as well as negative impacts on individual cattle traders.

Referring to the original objective of linking the structural level of trade with that of the actor, an effort has to be made to understand the response of individual traders to the developments described. On what grounds did they decide whether or not to change their sales destinations and how did they cope with deteriorating trade conditions? It is argued that few statements are true for the trader community as a whole. Instead, the general patterns of trade and the shifts therein tend to dissimulate differences between specific groups of cattle traders, which explains their ability or willingness to respond to changing conditions. Hence, we should concentrate on the level of subgroups of traders which can be distinguished along the lines of ethnicity, identity or wealth position, but equally consider individual qualities such as business intuition, the readiness to experiment and mobility. This will enable us to categorise and thus comprehend the distinctive responses registered among individual traders. In the first place, the (small) group of pioneering cattle traders will be singled out. Their strategies in creating or responding to new trade opportunities, based on above-average business intuition, have been of crucial importance in occasioning changes in the market. Although the role of pioneers is likely to persuade other traders to make similar choices, the individual ability of traders to choose their sales markets was found to be constrained by ethnic group membership. The background and extent of the phenomenon of 'ethnically monopolised markets' is dealt with in detail since it reflects the use of what we called 'ideological capital'. Finally, arguments will be put forward to explain the distinct responses of traders to deteriorating macroeconomic circumstances. The notion of mobility will be central to this.

Pioneering traders
When traders display the habit of regularly selling their cattle at a particular market they will refer to this as '.. faire une ligne ..' (covering an itinerary). For instance, 'covering the Ibadan route' means regularly going to Ibadan. Most traders will have their favourite ligne with which they are particularly familiar and they will usually become known for this. It can take quite some time before a trader is acquainted with all the ins and outs of a particular trade itinerary: the transport arrangements, the type of cattle that are best sold or the contacts with landlords and butchers. In Chapter 6 it was argued that a minimum degree of familiarity was required in order to independently start cattle trading activities along a particular itinerary. Familiarity with and experience on particular trade routes is therefore considered an important asset by traders, something that we referred to as their knowledge capital. In turn, this familiarity can be 'comfortable' and might result in a

\[\text{Beyond subgroups of traders, personal experiences might influence decisions at the very individual level and explain a divergent strategy compared to the large majority of traders. In this respect, the case of a Banikoara-based trader is illustrative. In 1982, at the height of cattle exports to Nigeria, he had 25 animals confiscated by customs officials in Benin. Despite the ever-improving trade conditions in Nigeria, he no longer attempted to export cattle and focused exclusively on the markets of Parakou and Cotonou. To a similar extent, recurrent default payments may explain a trader's reluctance to visit a particular market. Yet, it is too complex to take these individual experiences into account in a general analysis.}\]
limited scope and unwillingness to diversify trade itineraries and to add new destinations to their repertoire. A substantial number of traders thus continue to visit the same market(s) for a long period of time, avoiding the alleged risks of tempting new outlets. For some, the advantages of knowing the ins and outs of a particular trade destination outweigh not only the risk but also the potentially difficult process of internalising this knowledge for a new destination. They may even take occasional losses for granted. This attitude was summarised by a retired cattle trader who claimed that '.. si tu fais une ligne et ça marche tu ne l’abandonne plus ..' (if your usual itinerary is going well, you never change it).

Accordingly, we might label the trade strategies of such traders as conservative. The fact of 'sticking' to specific sales markets obviously limits the likelihood of capitalising on opportunities elsewhere. The case of two traders from Niger who have operated in Benin since the 1980s illustrates this. Since their arrival in Benin, they have only traded cattle between the Karimama and Guéné region and pastoralist camps as well as smaller markets in the southern Borgou region, alternating profits and losses though gradually increasing their working capital. However, they have never been to Cotonou, Lomé or Ibadan and are not interested in doing so. They consider their regional trade business sufficiently lucrative. Perhaps, however, unfamiliarity with new markets as well as the supposedly higher risks involved explain their reluctance. A similar attitude of reluctance towards alternative markets or new opportunities in trade was observed among other traders as well. Some of them have been selling cattle in Nigeria for a long time, irrespective of the downward trends in the exchange rate between the Naira and the CFA franc. These traders, and this constitutes a frequently observed strategy, did not modify their destination market but instead adjusted the number of cattle traded at one time as well as the frequency with which they visited Nigerian markets.

In summary, the cases illustrate the background of those trade strategies and decisions which have been qualified as 'conservative'. However, in spite of the significance of familiarisation with specific trade itineraries, shifts in trade patterns do occur and it is important to understand under what conditions traders make the decision to visit a new sales market. In this respect, one of the most crucial factors is the pioneering behaviour of a small group of cattle traders. These pioneers differ from other traders in the sense that they possess a well-developed sense of business intuition, constantly tend to be looking for new opportunities and 'venture' to new destinations or into new types of trading. In doing so, they tend to 'pave the way' for other traders who might initially hesitate but then decide to follow. Hence, the pioneers indirectly persuade some of the more conservative traders, who would probably prefer to stick to familiar routes, to visit new destinations or to try different types of trading.

Throughout the history of the cattle trade in Benin, several traders have fulfilled the role of pioneer. With regard to the period from the 1970s onwards, Malanville-based El Hadj Boureima, a Fulani trader, is possibly the most outstanding exponent of this group. In fact, Boureima is a very 'sophisticated' trader with exceptional communicative qualities who has an extensive network of well-maintained social relations from which he receives information about new opportunities. Moreover, he is not afraid to take risks in searching for new outlets. Boureima visited a Koranic school in Kano (Nigeria) and travelled extensively through several West African countries. He was among the initiators of the group of Malanville-based Fulani traders who frequently visited Burkina Faso at the end of the 1970s and during the early 1980s. At various cattle markets in Burkina Faso, supply was sufficiently available and cheap enough to allow export to Nigeria, where the oil boom had enhanced demand for meat. He shifted his focus back to the markets in northern Benin...
when the Nigerian market became less lucrative and the policy of Thomas Sankara's Burkina Faso decided to prioritise self-sufficiency and borders were regularly patrolled by customs officials and the military. So Boureima moved on to sell cattle in Cotonou during the 1980s. After the political situation in Lomé had stabilised in the early 1990s he was one of the first Fulani cattle traders from Benin to visit the market there. Among other things, he figured out possible ways of reaching Lomé from the Guéné and Karimama markets of his home region and he established contacts with Lomé-based landlords. In his wake, numerous traders decided to 'do the Lomé itinerary'. The role of Boureima was crucial in providing market information to these interested traders.\footnote{After the Lomé route had been (re-)established for traders from Benin, some traders attempted to sell their cattle at the market in Accra (Ghana). They did so when the supply of cattle at the Lomé market was abundant. Thus, they fulfilled a similar pioneering role for other traders as Boureima had at the Lomé market, by figuring out itineraries, establishing contacts as well as envisaging ways of dealing with Ghanaian customs officials.}

El Hadj Ibrahim, a Bariba cattle trader from Kérou, is another example of a trader with a pioneering spirit. He was among the first to rightly predict expanding demand as a result of the increased adoption of draught power among farmers in the Borgou region. His catalyst role in this area will come to the fore in Section 8.3 which deals with the role of pioneers in trade strategies based on pastoral and agricultural skills.

The paragraphs above have elaborated on the role of pioneers in their continuous search for new opportunities. In their wake, a much larger group of cattle traders with an initially more reluctant attitude will eventually ‘follow’. However, the consideration of an individual trader as to whether or not to visit a new market is not only determined by his own business intuition or that of others. In fact, beyond an apparently reluctant attitude towards visiting new markets there might well be more than a reference to the convenience of being familiar with an itinerary. This will be illustrated by exploring the backgrounds of the phenomenon of 'ethnically segregated markets'.

**Lomé and Cotonou: ethnically segregated markets?**

Ethnicity can be a decisive factor in affecting the choice of a particular sales market and hence the ability to capitalise on favourable macroeconomic conditions and to create new patterns of cattle trade as well. We will illustrate this by examining an important finding which is the observation that the cattle markets of Cotonou and Lomé are visited by Bariba and Fulani traders respectively. During the period of research, the presence of Bariba cattle traders in Lomé and that of Fulani cattle traders in Cotonou was negligible. How have these long-distance trade destinations become ethnically separated?

The analysis of current trade flows of cattle presented in Section 5.5 (Table 5.8) revealed distinctions between the Karimama and Guéné markets on the one hand and the Goumori and Founougo markets on the other. It appeared that the relative importance of the three main coastal markets (Cotonou, Ibadan/Saki and Lomé) varied according to the area of departure. Whereas the Lomé market was a significant destination for traders purchasing at the Guéné and Karimama markets, its importance was negligible for the 'Goumori and Founougo traders'. The opposite situation occurred with regard to Cotonou which has only very weak links with the Guéné and Karimama markets. Furthermore, it appeared that the observed differences could not be explained away by analysing the transaction costs or profit margins which did not appear to differ significantly between the various itineraries (cf. Section 5.6, Table 5.9).
With these observations in mind, we subsequently note the fact that very few traders operate at both groups of markets. It was already mentioned that it is predominantly Fulani traders who operate within the Guéné-Karimama-Malanville triangle. In fact, few members of the Bariba ethnic group live in the northern Borgou region and only a small number of Bariba traders occasionally visit the Guéné market. At the Goumori and Founougo markets, the ethnic composition is somewhat more varied. In addition to the many Bariba traders, there are quite a lot of Fulani traders who have either Goumori or Founougo as their home market. Most of these Fulani traders operate exclusively at a local or regional level. The present analysis, however, concerns (international) coastal markets and the observation that an 'ethnic preference' exists for either Lomé or Cotonou. The Bariba traders, nowadays, sell their cattle by choice at the Cotonou or Saki markets whereas the Fulani traders sell their cattle at the Lomé and Ibadan markets. Can the hypothesis of 'ethnic monopolies' be confirmed or does the apparent role of ethnicity conceal other explanations? It will be argued here that the 'ethnicity hypothesis' is true to a significant extent.

In the past, there have been few indications of the existence of ethnically segregated markets. Until the 1980s the markets concerned here were visited by Fulani as well as Bariba traders. From the chapter that dealt with the history of the cattle trade in Benin until the 1960s it appeared that Lomé and particularly Atakpamé (both in Togo) were frequently visited by Bariba traders. For a long time, the Bariba traders sold their cattle to a very wealthy Djerma trader who had set up business in Atakpamé. The Lomé and Atakpamé markets were also visited by Fulani traders, not so much from the Malanville region but more from the north-western parts of Niger. Before the 1960s, Fulani traders from the Guéné and Karimama region were oriented towards Cotonou and Nigeria, the Abeokuta market in particular. The frequency with which the Bariba traders visited Lomé slowed during the 1970s when the cattle supply in Lomé was partly taken over by traders from Burkina Faso (cf. Section 5.5). At the same time, Cotonou and Nigeria had become attractive markets even though cattle exports were officially banned, a prohibition which was particularly severely monitored in the Benin - Togo border region. The attraction of Cotonou and especially Nigeria determined the orientation of the Fulani traders. The importance of Lomé as an outlet for cattle originally from Benin was greatly reduced by the end of the 1970s and this situation continued into the 1980s and 1990s covering the period of political unrest in Togo as well. After this, the Fulani traders from Malanville reappeared in Lomé whereas the Bariba traders did not. This situation cannot be explained without a clarification of what had happened at the Cotonou market in the meantime.

Until the 1970s the market at PK6 in Cotonou had been largely in the hands of 'foreigners'. This was best illustrated by the crucial position of the main landlords (dillali) who included a Djerma from Niger and two Fulani originally from Mali. However, from the middle of the 1970s the position of the 'autochthonous' traders became more pronounced. In addition to the Fulani traders from northern Benin, it was the Bariba traders from the Banikoara, Kandi and Kérou regions who became increasingly involved at what they would call their home market. The Bariba traders especially would consider themselves as 'locals' and as such distinguished themselves from the Fulani traders even if the latter were born and raised in Benin. In the 1980s, the power equilibrium at the Cotonou market was gradually modified in favour of the Bariba. This is best illustrated by

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12 Even today, most Bariba traders refer to Cotonou as their home market by saying that when they sell cattle here, they sell them '... à la maison...' (at home).
the fact that in 1982 El Hadj Sabi Sambo, a Bariba from the village of Bagou, near Kandi, became market chief. Following this, the Fulani dillali were progressively 'replaced' by Bariba dillali leading to the present situation of clear dominance by Bariba dillali of Fulani dillali. Some Fulani landlords who were established in Cotonou either retired from the business or moved to Lomé. From the point of view of the Fulani traders, they 'gave in' when it appeared, in the 1990s, that Lomé had become an attractive alternative. The Fulani traders had been going to the Ibadan and Lagos markets since the 1970s but after the oil boom of the early 1980s the attractiveness of these markets had somewhat diminished. Some Fulani traders frequently went to Cotonou during the 1980s despite the increasingly strong position of the Bariba at that market. By the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s more and more of the Fulani traders had reoriented their activities either towards Ibadan or Lomé. The Bariba traders, who have a rich history of trade relations with Togo, did not seem interested in reverting part of their trade to that market which has experienced a steady growth throughout the 1990s. When asked, many would mention 'credit problems' as the reason for not going to Lomé these days. However, payment delays are no less of a problem in Cotonou. Other Bariba traders mentioned the numerous tracasseries routières (illicit taxes and road blocks) in Togo or the fact that 'a Bariba prefers not to stay abroad for a sustained period of time'. Only some traders gave the alleged problems at the Lomé market as their major reason for not going there. These included the high risk of being swindled by landlords and butchers. Nowadays, the market in Lomé is very much dominated by Fulani (since the 1980s) and Djerma landlords from mainly Niger and from Burkina Faso, Mali, Nigeria and Benin to a lesser extent. The butchery sector is also dominated by 'Sahéliens', in this case Haoussa. The difficulty of selling cattle at a 'foreign' market crowded with ethnic groups characterised by strong mutual ties, and the fear of being 'cheated' because of a lack of acquainted middlemen discourage the Bariba traders from going there. As a result, a situation of ethnically segregated markets or ethnically monopolised markets now exists.

Additional support for the 'ethnically monopolised markets' thesis was found at the markets of Tchaourou and Bohicon. At the former, the Fulani cattle traders form the main group of buyers and predominantly sell their cattle in Lomé, even though the market at Cotonou is much more accessible from a transport point of view. The market of Bohicon is also supplied predominantly by Fulani cattle traders, and some of its features are similar to the Lomé situation. First, the Bohicon market is situated in the zongo neighbourhood which has always been a stronghold of 'foreigners'. The same goes for the Lomé cattle market. In fact, there have always been fewer traders from Togo than foreign traders at this market, something which is reflected in its zongo location. Second, just like in Lomé, the actors who operate at the market of Bohicon are mainly 'Sahéliens' and include Fulani, Djerma and Haoussa. The market chief is a Djawando trader originally from Mali (cf. Section 3.4). These features confirm the hypothesis that, unlike in Cotonou, a 'nationalisation' of the Bohicon market has not occurred, its character remaining to a large extent 'foreign'.

In Nigeria, Bariba traders from Goumori and Pounougo sell their cattle in Saki and Fulani traders from Guéné and Karimama sell their cattle in Ibadan or Lagos. Apparently, this involves much less of an ethnic than a spatial explanation. The Saki market is located in what had been Bariba territory before the colonial powers drew their frontier between Nigeria and Benin irrespective of the home areas of ethnic groups, and the Bariba traders accordingly refer to it as a home market (Igue 1988, 221). In this respect, the 'nature' of the Saki market is, for the Bariba traders, comparable to that of Cotonou. Regardless of this,
the market at Saki is not dominated by them. Fulani traders bring cattle from northern Nigeria as well as from Parakou and Tchaourou, and Haoussa is the predominant language when market transactions are carried out. Accordingly, it is the geographical location of the Saki market as compared to the Ibadan market that explains the observed patterns. The Bariba as well as some Fulani traders who operate at the Goumori or Founougo markets reach Nigeria by trekking their herds on the hoof (cf. Map 5.6). For them, having covered at least 20 days of trekking, Saki is a much more convenient sales market. For the Fulani traders operating from Malanville, the itinerary is different. The animals are usually trekked on the hoof to Kamba in Nigeria, from where they are trucked to Ibadan which is much more easily accessible from Kamba than the market of Saki (ibid.).

Responses to deteriorating trade conditions

The previous sections have sought to demonstrate the presence of distinctive categories of traders with respect to the nature of responses to a fluctuating macroeconomic setting of trade. The analysis focused in particular on the ability and 'eagerness' to respond to favourable trade conditions such as the periodically reinforced demand for cattle in Nigeria or Togo. However, traders have also had to respond to deteriorating circumstances. For instance, despite the improvement in economic conditions in Borgou province, the conditions at long-distance destinations represented by the coastal consumer markets substantially worsened as a result of the economic crisis of the 1980s, to large extent triggered by the austerity of Structural Adjustment and declining oil revenues in Nigeria. This clearly reduced the opportunities for cattle traders involved in the long-distance trade, notably in comparison to the period between the 1940s and the 1970s, which was characterised by an expanding market, the benefits of which were reaped by a relatively small number of cattle traders. Ever since, the profit-making opportunities and individual room for manoeuvre have gradually been reduced for most traders. We will now summarise the main types of traders' responses which revolve around the revision of trading strategies both inside and outside the cattle trade.

First of all, all traders unequivocally claimed that in times of financial adversity they not only reduce the frequency of trading but the number of cattle traded at any one time as well. It is generally judged preferable not to invest one's complete working capital in the trade cattle when demand and price developments at the sales market are uncertain. Besides, most traders prefer to keep a certain amount of working capital in reserve in order to be able to recover from low sales prices or losses such as confiscated herds or a disease in the herd. Of course, keeping reserves is much less feasible for small traders who automatically invest a substantial part, if not all, of their capital. In an insecure trade setting they run relatively high risks. It has already been mentioned that traders with limited financial capacity are occasionally forced to temporarily retire from business, i.e. the 'on and off' phenomenon. Furthermore, a reduction in the number of cattle traded at a time implies a heavier reliance upon collaborative arrangements with other traders to obtain a truck-load of cattle or a herd of manageable size. Also in this area, wealthier traders are in a more favourable position because their business networks are simply more extensive.

A second response that was mentioned by the traders focused on transactions at the local level. Although they feel that a big cattle trader should concentrate on the long-distance itineraries for reasons of prestige, many of the wealthier Bariba cattle traders occasionally become involved in transactions at the local level, the trade in draught animals in particular. The number of cattle purchased is usually low, transaction costs are low as
well and the animal can be maintained in the herd to await more favourable sales conditions. This strategy covers both a response to poor conditions at coastal markets and to new opportunities as well. It will, however, be argued later that the big traders have not become involved in the whole spectrum of possible transactions at the local level.

In addition to a diversification in the range of transactions carried out, a typical response among the Bariba traders has been to fall back on agricultural activities, the production of cotton in particular. For many, the revenues of cotton production have repeatedly provided an opportunity to re-enter the trade in cattle. Whereas the Bariba traders have sought responses in agriculture, the Fulani traders have turned to pastoral activities. For some, financial adversity in trade and a loss of working capital would be a reason to return to the pastoral activities of the family and to hope to restart cattle trading at a later stage. This closely resembles the strategies of Bariba traders in agriculture. However, a significant group of Fulani cattle traders respond to deteriorating circumstances by relocating their cattle trade activities to another region. This striking spatial mobility is illustrated by the case of El Hadj Diallo, a Fulani cattle trader who was born in southwestern Niger.

El Hadj Diallo started out as a cattle trader in the south-western part of Niger during the early 1960s. He started trading at the local level, capitalising on price differentials between markets and pastoralist villages. Before this, he had been active as a small-stock trader. Together with a Djerma colleague, he traded sheep and goats towards Accra. The small stock was first brought by truck to Lomé where it spent 1-2 days recovering, before being loaded on another truck going to the Nima-zongo market in Accra. Thus, he came to know both the Lomé and Accra markets. In the early 1960s, Diallo switched to the cattle trade and reoriented his activities towards Abeokuta, Ilorin and Ibadan in Nigeria. Together with a Haoussa trader he had met in Lomé, he used to trek 30-50 cattle on the hoof, which took about 40 days. Once in a while they would bring cattle to Cotonou or Lomé. In 1984, Diallo lost a lot of money as a result of monetary reforms in Nigeria (cf. Section 5.5). He decided to stay in Kandi (Benin) for a while with a friend to recover from his substantial losses. He chose to purchase heifers and exchange them for other cattle in pastoralist camps. This type of trading required the sort of experience he possessed, and only a little capital. Based in Kandi, he covered an area stretching from Sokode in Togo to Saki in Nigeria, where he sold the 'fruit of the exchange'. At the end of the 1980s, he finally decided to set himself up as a landlord-middleman at the Lomé market, which he knew very well. In Lomé, El Hadj Diallo clearly benefited from the contacts he had established in the various countries he had visited.

According to his personal success in business as well as to the macroeconomic conditions in a range of West African countries, Diallo has continuously adapted his involvement in the cattle trade (long-distance trade, local trade, exchange of heifers) as well as the geographical location of trade activity (Niger, Ghana, Nigeria, Benin and Togo). In a similar move, some of the wealthy Fulani cattle traders have recently made trips to Niger to purchase cattle, since they felt that price levels in Karimama and Guéné were too high. They generally spend several weeks visiting a large number of cattle markets. The animals bought are collected and trekked back to Benin by salaried herders and family members. Interestingly, some of these traders had made similar purchase trips to Burkina Faso at the end of the 1970s and in the early 1980s. At that time, they aimed to purchase large numbers of cattle for conveyance to Nigerian markets. Yet, while Diallo and the other Fulani traders have remained within the cattle trade, other Fulani traders have demonstrated a similar spatial
mobility combined with trade activities other than cattle. The latter included contract herding for urban absentee cattle owners as well as the retail trade in petty commodities. This strategy is well reflected in the biography of Mamane.

Mamane is a Fulani cattle trader born in Niger but raised by his uncle in Founougo. His father carried out some small-scale cattle-trading activities in Niger and in 1984, Mamane joined his father. The earnings were, however, unsatisfactory and Mamane was not able to create an opportunity to start a cattle trade for himself. Therefore, he decided to try his luck in Abidjan (Côte d’Ivoire) where he met other Fulani traders who introduced him into the (ambulant) retail trade of radios and tape recorders. After two years, he had accumulated sufficient capital and went to Djibo (Burkina Faso) to purchase cattle to sell in Abidjan. Again, his cattle-trading activities were not lucrative enough and he reverted to petty trading in Abidjan for some years. In 1991, he returned to his family in Niger and was informed about his uncle’s cattle trade in Founougo. Soon afterwards, Mamane left for Benin and established himself in Founougo. His uncle provided him with some starting capital and together with other immigrant Fulani traders from Niger he engaged in the cattle trade around the market of Founougo. This time, his business was somewhat more successful and today Mamane actively trades cattle between the markets of Founougo and Saki in Nigeria.

The biography of Mamane is representative of a large number of small Fulani (as well as Djerma) traders who alternate success and failure in the cattle trade, with temporary reliance on other trade activities. For these small traders, it is difficult to establish themselves permanently in the cattle trade. Instead, they follow the ‘on and off’ pattern described in Section 7.1. The profits of informal retail trading activities in urban agglomerations, for which commodities such as cloth, cigarettes, shoes or electronic equipment are purchased on credit, provide an opportunity to re-enter the cattle trade with an adequate amount of capital to make cash purchases of cattle.

The fluctuation in the macroeconomic setting of trade has not been the only factor traders have had to respond to or to capitalise on. The formalisation of the market structure caused by the emergence of new cattle markets provoked a variety of responses and actions among cattle traders of differing ethnicity and wealth.

The impact of a formalising market structure

One of the conclusions drawn from Chapter 4 concerned the tendency towards a formalisation of the market structure. This formalisation appeared with the emergence of new (formal) cattle markets, the establishment of new modes of market organisation and the concomitantly reduced influence of traditional institutions such as the middleman (dillali). The present section focuses on an outcome of the formalisation trend for the mode of operation of cattle traders, i.e. the tendency away from exchange configurations based on highly personalised informal contacts between buyer and seller towards configurations based on impersonal formal market relations. It will be argued that particular subgroups of traders have specialised in particular types of cattle purchases.
Emerging markets and modifying exchange configurations

In order to put in perspective our analysis of changing exchange configurations and the resulting differentiation in purchase strategies between various groups of cattle traders, the following paragraphs will highlight some of our earlier findings.

The first point relates to the multiplication of cattle markets. In the period up to the early 1980s, only very few specialised cattle markets existed in northern Benin. It was therefore common practice among traders to purchase their cattle within pastoral villages since few other opportunities existed. To facilitate this practice, they sought to establish sound reciprocal relationships with local pastoralists. These traditional, highly personal and informal exchange relations dominated the structure of cattle trade well into the 1980s. By then, the rise of new cattle markets with formal modes of market organisation had set out to change this situation. The improved opportunities for cattle transactions at formal market-places occasioned a gradual shift in the relative importance of formal market exchanges to the detriment of exchange at informal markets. A further consequence of the emerging markets was an increasingly dynamic trade at the local level. It was shown in Section 5.4 that, nowadays, substantial numbers of cattle are traded within the so-called local exchange circuits. These include transactions between formal markets and between formal and informal markets as well. The second point concerns the modifications in the marketing behaviour of pastoralists. The emergence of new formal cattle markets has significantly contributed to an increased knowledge of market functioning as well as a heightened awareness of prevailing price levels among Fulani pastoralists. During fieldwork it was frequently and convincingly claimed by traders that the Fulani pastoralists are now assuming a stronger position in the negotiation process and have become suspicious of prices proposed by traders. They often commented on this development by stating that ‘.. les Peuls ont ouvert les yeux ..’ (the Fulani have opened their eyes). In doing so, they implicitly referred to the changes in pastoral society and the continuing integration of pastoralists into the market economy. In short, assuming a 'stronger attitude' generally comes down to refusing the price proposed by a trader while making reference to the allegedly higher prices prevailing at formal markets and by offering the alternative of such an on-market sale. The strong perception among traders of the Fulani pastoralists having become 'hard negotiators' has contributed to a growing mutual suspicion and a subsequent deterioration of traditional informal exchange arrangements. Given the enhanced competitive position of pastoralists in negotiating sales prices, it has become increasingly difficult for traders to negotiate favourable transactions at informal markets. As a result,

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13 In Section 1.4, an informal market was defined as a market ‘.. which can occur spontaneously at any site where buyer(s) and seller(s) meet and which is characterised by the absence of any organisational structure or control of authorities ..’ (Fanou et al. 1991, 16). A transaction carried out in the village of a pastoralist typically corresponds to an informal market transaction. A formal market, on the contrary, is managed by an official organisation and occurs at a fixed location at fixed hours.

14 Although increased familiarity with market functioning and price levels and the alternative of selling at a formal market have certainly improved their position, the ability of pastoralists to negotiate a favourable transaction with a trader depends on various additional factors which have come to the fore throughout this book. First, the majority of pastoralists still sell an animal when an immediate cash requirement has to be met. These 'stress sales' obviously weaken their negotiating position. Second, it was demonstrated in Sections 5.1 and 5.2 that the sales price of an animal equally depends on the degree of demand competition in the various market segments. The attractiveness of the sale prices may therefore depend on the type of cattle offered for sale.
some cattle traders have become reluctant to engage in purchases at informal markets such as in the village of a pastoralist. Instead, they have shifted their attention to the formal markets.

Both points reveal a tendency away from traditional personalised exchange relations between trader and pastoralist at informal markets, towards more impersonal formalised exchange relations at formal markets. It would be wrong, though, to conclude that transactions at informal markets have completely ceased to exist. On the contrary, instead of a radical shift from informal market to formal market transactions, a more refined picture has emerged in which the former continue to be important in absolute numbers. Many pastoralists still prefer to invite a trader to their village, out of convenience, practical constraints or out of cultural habit (Quarles van Ufford & Djédjébi 1997). What has changed, however, is the composition of the groups of cattle traders who nowadays carry out informal and formal market transactions respectively. We will argue that a process of purchase specialisation has occurred which to a significant extent links a particular type of trader to a particular type of purchase.

Specialisation in the field of cattle purchases

With regard to the transactions at informal markets, several more possibilities exist in addition to transactions in a pastoral village. To support our specialisation argument, it is essential to make a distinction between informal market purchases in pastoralist villages, on farms and at transhumance sites on the one hand, and formal market purchases on the other. This is shown in Table 8.6 which highlights the differences in purchase strategies between big and small traders of the Bariba and Fulani ethnic groups. The distinction between big and small traders follows the criteria established in Chapter 7 (cf. Scheme 7.1).

Table 8.6 The importance of cattle purchases at informal and formal markets for various types of traders according to ethnicity and wealth category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>pastoralist villages</th>
<th>farms</th>
<th>transhumance sites</th>
<th>formal markets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>big traders</td>
<td>Bariba</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+ + +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fulani</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+ + +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>small traders</td>
<td>Bariba</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+ + +</td>
<td>+ + +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fulani</td>
<td>+ + +</td>
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<td>+ +</td>
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</tbody>
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Source: Fieldwork

First of all, the big traders (Bariba as well as Fulani), whose main objective is the sale of cattle at coastal markets, are the ones who complain about the reduced opportunities for negotiating favourable transactions at informal markets. Today, their focus is on formal market purchases in the first place. Of course, an advantage of this is the opportunity to buy a substantial number of animals at one time. This is necessary for a trader who wants to capitalise on a sudden scarcity of cattle at a coastal market. In second place, it appears from Table 8.6 that the big Bariba traders continue to use their traditionally sound contacts with farmers to purchase cattle ‘on the farm’, notably just after the agricultural season. Despite increased market participation among farmers, well-known traders within the local Bariba communities continue to be invited by farmers to take care of the sale of their draught animals. Nevertheless, the weight of similar transactions has decreased over the years. At the same time, the big Bariba traders have reduced the number of cattle purchased
in Fulani villages. They have deliberately decreased their reliance on this purchase strategy in view of the modified attitude of pastoralists, the inconvenience of going around pastoralist villages and cattle camps, as well as competition from groups of small traders who specialise in exactly these types of purchases, i.e. in pastoralist villages and at transhumance sites (cf. Table 8.6). The big Fulani traders employ similar arguments to justify their increasing focus on market purchases. For both groups, considerations of prestige contribute to this behaviour. Frequently going *en brousse* on a motor bike to visit pastoralists is perceived less as purporting to big traders than to 'being seen' (purchasing, praying and socialising) at a cattle market. Yet, both groups of traders try to continue to maintain regular and sound relationships with nearby pastoralists in order to remain well-informed about animals for sale. However, the value of these traditional relationships within their total purchase picture has declined. It was argued in the previous section that these relations constituted part of the *business network* of big traders whose status and material wealth were facilitating in this respect. Nowadays, the reciprocal nature of the relationships has not been altered and credit arrangements for pastoralists against beneficial sales for traders continue to exist. The big traders, though, have taken a more passive stance and typically wait for the pastoralist's initiative instead of actively going around the villages themselves.

The second group concerns the small traders of Bariba as well as Fulani origin. First of all, it appears from Table 8.6 that their purchase patterns differ from those of the big traders. The distinction comes down to less reliance on the formal market and preference for informal market purchases. In the second place, the table shows that within the group of smaller traders, a significant degree of specialisation has occurred according to ethnic background. The main conclusion to be drawn concerns the prime position of 'small' Fulani traders with regard to purchases in pastoralist villages and at transhumance sites. In addition to this specialisation, the small Fulani traders have come to substantially outnumber their Bariba counterparts.

Again, the emergence of new cattle markets from the 1980s onwards is advanced as the principal explanatory variable. It was argued above that the big traders have shifted a large part of their purchases to these new cattle markets. This shift occurred for reasons of convenience but the changes in the market behaviour of pastoralists and the intensification of competition from smaller traders were also put forward as reasons. The main *raison d'être* for intensified competition in the field of purchases at informal markets can be attributed to the increasing involvement of a group of Fulani traders whose competitiveness has primarily been due to their ability to specialise. This 'ability', in turn, was facilitated by the existence of cattle markets on the one hand and by their particular skills on the other. How are these two phenomena related? First of all, the results of the market survey presented in Chapter 5 highlighted the multiplication of possible exchange configurations caused by the emergence of cattle markets. The importance was shown of the number of cattle transactions taking place at local and regional levels of trade. These transactions consisted of trade between formal market-places as well as of trade between formal markets and pastoralist villages, cattle camps and farms. Thus, the new situation appears to have provided the opportunity for traders to capitalise on price differentials, however small, between formal cattle markets on the one hand and informal markets on the other. In turn, it has been the small Fulani traders in particular who have moved into this part of the market. Their strategy consists of actively going around pastoralist villages, isolated cattle camps and transhumance sites in search of animals to be sold at local
This way of trading requires specific pastoral skills in which the Fulani traders have a comparative advantage because of their general acquaintance with the villages of pastoralists, as well as experience in making long field trips and the equally time-consuming practice of going from one cattle camp to another on foot (cf. Section 8.3). Moreover, the animal might have to be taken to several markets before a price is proposed whereby the trader is able to make a profit. In general, the profit margins on local level trade are low and unpredictable with traders frequently experiencing both gains and losses. In this respect, the observation that most small Fulani traders take care of cattle trekking themselves has to be considered an important cost-saving element which has contributed to the phenomenon of ethnic specialisation.

The purchase of cattle at transhumance sites constitutes a specific category. In particular during the dry transhumance season, the small Fulani traders focus on this type of purchase. Given the mobility and often isolated position of transhumant cattle herds, purchases require a specific strategy for which pastoral skills are essential. This puts Fulani traders in a prime position to capitalise on price differentials between transhumance sites and local cattle markets.

In summary, the specific features of local trade between pastoralist villages and formal markets appear to have limited the purchases of small Bariba traders to farms, and those of big Bariba as well as big Fulani traders to the market. For a big trader, local trade is too time-consuming and the profits are small compared to the more lucrative long-distance trade in large numbers. Moreover, their status does not entitle them to endure the hardship of going around camps and villages on foot and to trek the animals themselves. For bigger traders, visiting a pastoralist village brings several types of expenses including fuel and amortisation of motorbikes, the salary of the herder who will bring the animal to the trader’s home and the purchase of ropes to secure the animals. These expenses are likely to be prohibitive in a situation with only small price differentials. Thus, the big traders only occasionally purchase in pastoralist villages and, if so, it will frequently be upon the invitation of a pastoralist. The small Bariba traders have traditionally sound purchase contacts at the farm level. They are sometimes called upon to purchase or to sell cattle on behalf of a farmer. Other small Bariba traders perform the role of a broker at the market place. For instance, they may purchase an animal in the morning and sell it in the afternoon (or on the next market day). Although they continue to purchase in pastoralist villages, their number is small compared to the Fulani traders whose comparative advantages in this specific area have already been highlighted.

The phenomenon of specialisation has been ‘acknowledged’ by all actors in the trading community who consistently use the term of broker or *revendeur* (tjodonno sotai in Fulani and soukégibou in the Bariba language) as opposed to trader or *commerçant* (tenkoudjo in Fulani and tenkou in the Bariba language). In cattle-trade vocabulary, *revendeur* refers to a trader who specialises in small-scale transactions, both in the geographical (distance covered) and in the economic (numbers of cattle) sense. If a big trader is occasionally involved in a similar type of transaction, he will not be referred to as...
a *revendeur* because a final criterion for qualification as such concerns a positioning at the bottom end of the wealth ladder (cf. Section 7.2).

It is crucial to note that a substantial part of the group of specialised *revendeurs* is composed of immigrant Fulani traders from Niger. The background of this group of traders, who arrived in Benin from the mid-1980s onwards, was dealt with in Chapter 4. The Fulani traders from Niger rapidly and competently capitalised on the emerging opportunities occasioned by a multiplication of possible exchange configurations. Although it is extremely difficult to come up with exact numbers, the number of immigrant Fulani traders from Niger nowadays exceeds that of their local Fulani counterparts. A large number of the immigrant traders used to arrive in Benin alone, leaving other members of their household in Niger. As such, they were well placed to become involved in the type of trade described above. Moreover, they have appeared to be somewhat more inclined to endure the 'hardship' of trekking cattle, walking considerable distances and being *en brousse* (in the bush) for long unbroken periods of time. The traders would generally attribute this to the features of pastoral livelihoods in Niger which are less sedentary, less based on agriculture and much more mobile. Therefore, they are considered a separate group within the trade community and are usually designated as *revendeurs nigériens* (brokers from Niger). It is clear to other traders that the trade identity of a *revendeur nigérien* includes trade which is partly *en brousse*. The emergence of new cattle markets coupled with the particular skills of the small Fulani traders from Niger has resulted in the emergence of new patterns of trade. These patterns are found especially at the regional level where they link separate local exchange circuits (cf. Map 5.5). Their expansion is relatively recent (since the early 1990s) and was facilitated by the creation of cattle markets in Tchaourou, Pari, Kérou and Gogounou. Taking advantage of this, the Fulani *revendeurs* from Niger have used their skills to link these markets by capitalising on existing demand for particular types of cattle. Their strategies will be dealt with in detail in the next section.

Two final remarks are made which put the thesis of ethnic specialisation in perspective in relation to the emergence of new cattle markets. These remarks concern the differences between the southern and northern Borgou region on the one hand, and the differences between low and high market density areas on the other.

It was shown in Section 4.3 that the northern Borgou area has known the presence of cattle markets for longer than the southern Borgou region. Smaller Fulani traders were engaged in supplying cattle to visiting Haoussa and Yoruba traders from the south, who used to come and stay at the Malanville market. The tendency towards specialisation was thus already there. The advent of draught power and its increased use among Dendi farmers for agriculture and transport caused small Dendi traders to occasionally enter the trade between farms and markets. Notwithstanding this, purchases in pastoralist villages and at transhumance sites remained the prerogative of small Fulani traders, both those of local origin and those from Niger. However, although specialisation in types of purchases and trade has been prevalent in the northern Borgou region for a long time, the process has been much more pronounced in the southern Borgou area. It is a much vaster region and economic opportunities related to the cotton boom have been more widespread and attracted substantial numbers of traders from outside the area.

A final observation concerns the distinction between areas with a relatively high market density (the local exchange circuits) as opposed to areas where the market density is low (cf. Map 5.1). Areas characterised by an absence of cattle markets are either poorly inhabited as in the case of national parks or protected forests, or have a low 'head of cattle
to population' ratio. The distance to the nearest cattle market is considerable. The process of functional as well as ethnic specialisation is found in these areas where new cattle markets have not yet emerged to a much lesser extent. As a result, traditional exchange configurations continue to prevail. This implies that the differentiation in types of transactions is less, with the big local cattle traders continuing to purchase in pastoralist villages where they maintain preferential exchange relations. In these regions, the position of well-known local traders is equally dominant with regard to purchases and sales on behalf of farmers. However, the total number of cattle transactions is considerably lower in the areas without markets compared to the local exchange circuits.

8.3 Identity, skills and strategies

The type of strategies traders employ in response to particular situations within the cattle trade, or to create new opportunities for themselves in order to be more 'successful' and to accumulate more wealth find a strong foothold in their familiarity with agriculture and pastoralism. Farming and herding are important activities for traders and closely related to their trading activities.

The nature of occupations carried out by traders in addition to cattle trading is related to the predominantly rural character of the trade itself, in particular at the collection stage. As a result of the general orientation towards the rural areas, farming and livestock keeping appear to be important secondary activities for all cattle traders. In fact, the majority of traders live in and operate from rural areas, except for those based in intermediate towns such as Malanville, Kandi, Djougou or Parakou. Most 'urban traders' maintain strong links with their rural hinterland through ownership of cropland and livestock cultivated and watched over by kinship members.

It can be argued that agriculture has been the prerogative of the Bariba ethnic group whereas livestock keeping has been the privileged field of the Fulani. Before the 1980s, an overall symbiotic relationship existed between Fulani pastoralists and Bariba (as well as Dendi) farmers in northern Benin (De Haan 1997a; Van Driel 1996). Even though the Fulani pastoralists cultivated food crops, they bartered dairy products for grain to overcome shortages in food grain production. In some places the cattle of pastoralists used to graze in the post-harvest fields of farmers, 'applying' manure at the same time. Available space for dry- and wet-season transhumance facilitated the spatial coexistence of a pastoralist and a farming mode of production. Contract Fulani herdsmen looked after the cattle of Bariba and Dendi farmers, receiving the milk and some of the calves in exchange (De Haan 1995, 212). From the 1980s onwards, however, the complementary relations came under increasing pressure as a result of competition over space, to a large degree due to the 'drought induced' influx of foreign pastoralists (Van Driel 1996). The scarcity of land in certain areas was further aggravated by the expansion of cotton cultivation among Bariba farmers. At the same time, a situation developed in which livestock keeping by Bariba farmers became much more

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16 Few cattle traders who operate in northern Benin live in coastal towns. The only exception is Lomé which has traditionally housed a substantial community of 'foreign' cattle traders, just as Cotonou did until the 1970s. A number of Lomé-based traders operate at the markets in northern Benin.

17 As in other chapters, the emphasis remains on the Bariba and Fulani ethnic groups who dominate the cattle trade in absolute numbers.
common. In particular, it were the introduction of draught power and the ownership of cattle which familiarised the Bariba farmers with aspects of livestock keeping. Thus, because of the common practice of food grain cultivation among Fulani pastoralists it is fairly difficult nowadays to draw a sharp demarcation line between agriculture and livestock keeping as separate livelihood systems. For most Fulani or Bariba households either of the two activities occupies the most prominent position in terms of material importance as well as in terms of identity. Most Fulani will identify themselves as pastoralists even if they cultivate several hectares of millet or cotton. Furthermore, even Fulani without cattle will tend to identify themselves as a pastoralist.\footnote{Regardless of the financial and time-consuming significance of a particular activity, an individual's identity can be based on something else such as the historical or cultural value attached to a specific occupation. A Bariba will be likely to identify himself as a farmer, even if he possesses a substantial number of cattle which he might even herd himself.}

In spite of the significance of their agricultural, pastoral and off-farm occupations, the cattle traders in the sample identify themselves firstly as commerçants de bétail (cattle traders). In addition to the fact that the cattle trade constitutes their main source of income\footnote{Traders regularly acknowledge the material importance of cattle trading by stating that '... le commerce du bétail nourrit la maison ...' (the cattle trade provides for the household).}, it is above all considered a prestigious occupation, something worth being identified with. Beyond this so-called trader identity are the features of what used to be the historical identity of each individual trader along the lines of conventional ethnic groups. For example, the link between 'being Bariba' and 'being a farmer' constitutes such a feature. The elements that make up a trader's identity are to some extent reflected in his trading strategies. However, the increased experience with livestock keeping among the Bariba has led to pioneering behaviour of some in the area of trade strategies based on so-called 'pastoral experiences'. To a similar extent, the increased familiarity of Fulani traders with animal traction appears to have occasioned their participation in various types of trading in draught animals. In other words, these very trading strategies illustrate what could be called a 'shift in identity' whereby the content of the 'Bariba identity', for instance, increasingly includes aspects of livestock keeping practices. Before dealing with these strategies in detail, a brief overview will be given of the importance and type of activities performed outside the cattle trade.

Trading, farming and livestock keeping

The degree of trade diversification among the cattle traders in Benin can be considered relatively low in view of the level of highly diversified trading activities which came to the fore in other studies on West African traders (Grégoire 1986; Agier 1983). In addition to

\footnote{Several authors have pointed at the heterogeneity of Fulani identity (Burnham 1996; De Bruin & Van Dijk 1995). They criticised the tendency to depict them as intrinsically pastoral-nomadic and argued that it depends on contextual situations. For instance, various groups use non-pastoral identity markers while claiming Fulani identity: Fulani without cattle, as salaried herdsmen, as city dwellers, as intellectuals, as sedentary farmers or as traders (De Haan 1997b; Bassett 1994; Boutrais 1994; Guichard 1990). In an article on the 'ethnicisation' of Fulani society in northern Benin, Guichard (1990) describes the distinction between urban-literate and rural-illiterate Fulani and the attempts of the former to dominate the latter and impose on them what they believe to be the 'Fulani way of life'.}
cattle, few other commodities are traded. The options for lucrative trade activities are often confined to the purchase of specific goods at the market where cattle are sold. For goods such as bicycles, motorbikes and veterinary products a potential outlet exists in the home area of many traders, i.e. rural northern Benin. The traders who live in towns such as Malanville and Kandi have a broader range of opportunities to diversify their trade activities since both towns have highly dynamic market places. However, most of them rarely penetrate new markets and limit themselves, just like other traders, to the occasional return trade. It seems therefore justifiable to seek other explanations than the 'lack of outlet' for the low degree of trade diversification. A first element is inherent to the trade in cattle and refers to its time-consuming character. The purchase of a sufficient number of animals, their transport and sale can take up to several weeks. During this period, the trader is not only busy purchasing but most of his working capital will be tied up as well. This limits the options for diversification.

The second element is somewhat less tangible and refers to the orientation and background of most traders. The current generation of cattle traders in Benin largely originates from families who dedicated most of their time to agriculture or to pastoralism. Although the traders have moved away, most of them still attach importance to cultivation and/or livestock keeping. As a consequence, this orientation leaves less room for diversification of trade.

A distinction has to be made between traders who are directly involved in agriculture and pastoralism, and traders who are only indirectly involved. The first group of traders actively participates in either agriculture or pastoralism. For some, this means that peaks in agricultural labour requirement may slow down trade activity. With respect to the last group, the traders are usually occupied with cattle trading on a virtually full-time basis and they actively engage neither in farming nor in livestock keeping. Nevertheless, they often have strong links with family members who cultivate and thus provide part of the food the trader's household consumes. Others employ seasonal labour to work on the fields they own. Again, this will particularly concern food crops. The herds of town-based traders are usually looked after by contract herdsmen or by family members. Thus, the links with cultivation and livestock keeping remain strong and reappear in the choice of trade strategy.

Historically, it was the Bariba who were involved in agricultural practices whereas the Fulani identified themselves as pastoralists. Although these identities are, to a certain extent, still reflected in the choice for a particular cattle-trading strategy, the disappearing boundaries between agriculture and livestock keeping have led to a situation in which trade strategies based on either pastoral or agricultural knowledge are increasingly observed among both Bariba as well as Fulani cattle traders. This will be illustrated by a survey of trade strategies which are inspired by a background in and knowledge of farming and livestock keeping. Furthermore, we will examine whether a particular strategy can be seen as the privileged domain of a particular ethnic group.
Strategies based on pastoral skills

The large majority of cattle traders own at least some animals. The less wealthy traders will only have a few cattle, while some of the big traders own up to several hundred divided over various herds and watched over by family members or contract herders. In the previous chapter, it was indicated that cattle are the preferred and most usual form of investment. Some traders considered their herd as security in the case a reduction in their working capital. A reserve in the form of animals will facilitate a quick recovery in trade. However, herds are not only used as security or as a means of investment for which the interest rate is expressed in the number of new-born calves. Traders deliberately include the keeping of a cattle herd in their long-term trading strategies.

One such strategy starts with the purchase of bullocks (maximum 3-4 years of age). In general, bullocks are purchased by farmers for draught power purposes, by traders to be resold to farmers or occasionally to a butcher, and more rarely by pastoralists for reproductive purposes. For a pastoralist, a bullock is not the most useful animal in his herd and he will usually give it priority when the need to sell an animal occurs. Some cattle traders, however, will deliberately purchase bullocks with the longer-term perspective of selling it as a bull. To make this type of strategy profitable, the first and most essential requirement is to buy a bullock at a relatively favourable price. The price of a bullock is pushed upwards with the approach of the agricultural season, when farmers' demand increases. Cattle traders anticipate this demand through temporal arbitrage over a period of several months. For the long-term strategy described here, the traders not only select the months when price levels are at the lower end of the range (the rainy season) but also select markets where they know that low prices for bullocks can be obtained. In this respect, the markets which are located further to the south such as Parakou or Tchaourou are preferred. Here, the price of bullocks is relatively low during specific periods of the year, for instance during parts of the dry season when this region witnesses an influx of transhumance herds. During the same period, price levels peak in the north. Furthermore, the quality of animals is generally considered to be above average, notably when the purpose of sale is to keep animals in a herd for a longer period of time. The quality is closely related to the breed. The permanent or temporary presence of Nigerian herds with renowned Nigerian breeds in the region south of Parakou explains the observed pattern of traders purchasing animals in the south and taking them to the north in order to place them in a herd. At this stage, the preliminary requirements for effectively carrying out such a strategy become evident: knowledge of markets, price fluctuations and a good assessment of the quality of an animal.

After the purchase, the bullocks are placed in the herd which is watched over by a family member or a contract herder. The animals will remain in the herd for at least 4 years. In the meantime, expenses have to be made with respect to veterinary products and care as well as supplementary feeding when necessary. The risks of cattle theft or disease can never be ruled out but do not prevent traders from employing this strategy. Finally, the trader will determine the right moment for the bulls to be sold at a major consumer market on the coast or at one of the local markets in northern Benin.

In conclusion, this long-term strategy is based on the relatively high price level of bulls compared to that of bullocks (cf. Section 5.2, Graph 5.6). In addition to the required pastoral skills in terms of herd management and veterinary care, a knowledge of prevailing price levels of bullocks is equally important. This was substantiated by the remarks of cattle
traders who claimed that bullocks should be purchased at the right moment and at the right place for the strategy to result in attractive profits. Purchases of bullocks at markets located in the south reflect this statement. Both Bariba and Fulani traders were found to be involved. The Bariba traders have been increasingly attracted by this type of 'long-term arbitrage', an observation which can be attributed to their accumulated experiences in the field of livestock keeping. In fact, the majority of Bariba traders involved manage their cattle herds themselves with the assistance of family members.

The strategy that will be discussed next is also based on the application of pastoral practices and skills. The first difference with long-term investments in a cattle herd is the time-schedule. In addition, the associated pastoral skills appear to limit access for non-Fulani traders.

The so-called 'pasture-strategy' is characterised by its medium-term duration, i.e. not exceeding one year. Its main feature is the deliberate use of good grazing areas for the fattening of cattle during the period between purchase and sale. The following case study highlights the geographical and seasonal elements.

Seydou is a Fulani cattle trader who presently lives in northern Benin. He lived in northern Togo during the late 1980s and the early 1990s, when his family's cattle herd was taken to the region west of Sokode in search of pasture. For three consecutive years, Seydou was involved in cattle trading in that area. He then received information about the attractive prices of cattle at some small markets in the south-western parts of Burkina Faso, in particular during the dry season. Subsequently, he made a round trip to several of these markets to purchase a number of thin and weakened bullocks and bulls. During these trips, Seydou was accompanied by a couple of friends and together they engaged a salaried herder who watched over the herd, always assisted by Seydou or one of his friends. It took the group a little more than a month to collect a herd of around 20 cattle. This number was the minimum required to reduce the per animal rate of fixed costs (salary herder and subsistence costs during travel) to an acceptable level. The next stage consisted of slowly trekking the herd southwards to ultimately reach the area north of Kolokonde, then Djougou, Bassila and finally Tchamba (cf. Map 5.1). Within this area, the group searched for good pastures and available watering points for the remaining months of the dry season. At the onset of the rainy season, they hired a truck in Sokode to bring the cattle to the market in Lomé. The time was deliberately selected since the start of the rainy season typically corresponds to a period of relatively low supply of high quality animals at the Lomé market. Seydou's animals were thus in a competitive position.

In countries such as Burkina Faso or Niger, some cattle traders purchase specific animals to be fattened domestically (embouche). These animals are given supplementary industrial animal feed such as cotton grain (Van Helden & Quarles van Ufford 1994). Cattle traders in Benin only rarely fatten their cattle domestically, except for the sheep that are raised for Tabaski. Given the availability in Benin of industrial side-products such as cotton grain (occasionally purchased by the state farms), the absence of an embouche tradition is probably due to the availability of perennial pastures within 'acceptable distance', as is the case for the Bohicon and Tchaourou regions. Moreover, a tradition of forage cultivation is almost absent in Benin where the practice of post-harvest burning of fields is widespread. An additional explanation is the supply of draught animals which are usually well-fattened because they are kept at the farm and receive additional 'natural' instead of industrial feed.

22
Other Fulani traders have applied similar strategies. Having bought animals in the north during the dry season, they were trucked to the more humid regions around Bohicon and Tchaourou and brought to Cotonou or Lomé after a few months. In these cases, veterinary care is extremely important since the animals will not be used to the climate and although the pasture situation is favourable, the risk of cattle disease is significant.

The trading strategy outlined above, and illustrated with the case of Seydou, requires knowledge of markets and of prevailing price levels. Much more crucial, however, is the ability to locate pastures and to move constantly between them during a difficult period of the year (the dry season), across different regions or in disease-infected areas. The profitability of this trade strategy is laid in supplying well-pastured cattle during a period of the year in which the supply of good quality animals at coastal markets is low. The Fulani cattle traders involved in this type of trading, typically had experience in herding transhumant cattle and were very acquainted with the specific regions renowned for the quality of their pasture. Furthermore, their nearly continuous presence with the herd discourages other traders because it is so time-consuming. Very few non-Fulani traders were found to be involved in this pasture-based strategy.

A final type of cattle trading in which pastoral skills are crucial is the batta trade.

The 'batta' system
An analysis of current patterns of supply and demand as well as movements of cattle revealed a significant flow at the regional level in northern Benin, from the markets of Guéné and Karimama towards the southern Borgou region (cf. Section 5.4). This flow represents a very particular trade strategy carried out by a specialised group of traders.

In brief, this strategy consists of the purchase of high-quality animals and the subsequent exchange of these animals for a number of average and lower quality cattle. The purchase is performed by traders who exchange the cattle with Fulani pastoralists. In other words, it is a barter system. In Fulbe language this form of trade is referred to as batta and its French equivalent used in the French-speaking part of the trade community is système d'échange (exchange system). In the context of the exchange system, 'high-quality cattle' generally refers to animals with exceptional reproductive qualities, irrespective of age, breed or sex (kalkaldé in Fulbe language). These animals are 'in demand' by pastoralists who want to reinforce their cattle herds and are therefore willing to barter a certain number of 'regular' animals in exchange. In capitalising on the demand within this specific market sector, a specialised group of cattle traders came into operation in the 1960s. The story goes that in the 1960s the exchange system was introduced in Benin by a cattle trader from Mali who, until today, remains the system's patron in the eyes of his colleagues. According to several traders, it was Fulani pastoralists in Mali who used to exchange one heifer for two bullocks. Young bullocks were much in demand for bride-wealth purposes and due to a scarcity of money, the pastoralists relied upon the exchange of heifers. At the same time, a commercial variant developed in which heifers and other animals renown for their reproductive performance were exchanged for old cows and bulls. This variant allegedly found its way to Benin. Initially, some zebu bulls of the bororo type from Niger were introduced into the cattle herds of the northern Borgou region. The cross-breed offspring bororo cattle and local breeds were highly prized by the pastoralists from the southern Borgou area. Hence, the first patterns of batta trade were started.

23 An additional advantage is that the risk of crop damage is considerably less during the dry season.
Initially, the trade of animals between northern and southern Borgou pastoralists was exclusively reserved for Fulani traders who considered it their 'privileged domain' because of their competence in recognising breeding qualities and in enduring the hardship of this trade system, i.e. walks of 'several months or more'. Even today, Fulani continue to claim that non-Fulani cannot be associated with the batta trade.

In Benin, pastoralists' demands for reproductive animals are closely related to the spatial dispersion of breeds. Whereas the borgou and the borgou x zebu cross-breeds are the major breeds throughout northern Benin, 'pure' zebu cattle are largely concentrated in the Niger valley area around the Karimama and Guéné cattle markets as well as on the Niger side of the border. Throughout northern Benin, however, pastoralists prefer to have one or more zebu animals in their cattle herds. As a result of this, demand is highest in the Banikoara region and on both sides of the Kandi - Parakou axis, i.e. southern Borgou. The exchange-system traders bring together supply and demand by purchasing their animals at markets in the Niger valley area and by subsequently exchanging them in the regions just mentioned. The 'fruit' of the exchange is then sold at markets such as Gogounou, Pari and Tchicanda, a market situated just over the border in Nigeria not far from N'dali (cf. Map 5.1). The most difficult part of the system is to locate those pastoralists who, at a given moment, are willing to engage in the exchange. The actual bartering usually takes place in the pastoral village or in cattle camps. The traders are therefore obliged to go around various cattle camps before a potential client is found. Since most of them frequently make trips to locations where there are a lot of pastoral villages, they can be sure of being well informed about barter opportunities. Moreover, the fact that they often operate in small groups facilitates the quick circulation of information. The highly specialised character of this trade form and the time-consuming and sometimes difficult task of finding a client means that only limited numbers of animals (around 2-3 on average) are bought at a time. An additional reason for the low number of animals a trader can handle is found in the high purchase price (cf. Section 5.2). The supply of the high-quality cattle here is relatively scarce. A further significant element is transport. Following purchase at the Guéné or Karimama market, for instance, the animals have to be trekked over some 100-300 kilometres southwards. This is either done by the trader himself or by an engaged cattle drover. If the financial capacity of the trader is great enough, he will make use of truck transport which is normally available on the Guéné - Kandi and the Kandi - Parakou axes. The use of small trucks over relatively short distances is, however, only a recent

In the past, groups of several batta traders would sometimes collect around 30 to 40 bulls for exchange in the southern Borgou area. Accompanied by 5 to 8 herders, it could take up to one year before all bulls were exchanged. Today, the traders purchase a smaller number of cattle at a time and make more trips.

Pastoralists often define the zebu breed as 'la race totale' (the total breed) because of its 'beauty', manageability and reproductive qualities. Preferences especially include the zebu bulls of the tijwalli and gudali types, from Niger/Nigeria and Nigeria respectively. However, heifers from breeds prevalent in the northern Borgou, the zebu (kétédji), borgou (barguëti) but particularly zebu x borgou cross-breeds, are in demand in the southern Borgou area as well. According to informants, heifers from southern Borgou used to be exchanged for bulls from the north during the 1960s and early 1970s. Heifers from the south were preferred by northern Borgou pastoralists since they were more resistant. Two or three heifers were exchanged for one bull. This type of exchange has become superfluous as the supply at northern markets is now sufficient and more diversified.
development (cf. Section 5.6). Finally, a herder has to be engaged to trek the animals from the location of the exchange arrangement with the pastoralist to the market of destination.

The practice of the exchange system has a specialised and laborious character. By far the most essential requirement for participating in it is the ability to recognise the right 'high quality' animals for which a profitable exchange can be realised. For instance, the traders involved know that a reproductive bull should never have horns which point inwards because this would mean a declining herd size. Likewise, large testicles could mean lots of milk when birth is given to a female. These details can make the difference between being able to sell or not. Furthermore, traders with limited working capital are forced to take care of cattle trekking themselves and going to various cattle camps and villages is not only a time-consuming but arduous task as well, not in the least because it is much more difficult to trek 2-3 animals than to trek a herd. Equally determining are the risks involved. Accidents, disease and theft are potential dangers which can cause the bankruptcy of a trader. Given the often substantial investments per animal and the uncertainty about the possible number of cattle that can be obtained in the exchange, financial losses often occur. The traders themselves compare the activity with a lottery and the statement '.. le système c'est la loterie ..' is popular. It should be noticed, however, that despite the lottery qualification gross margins are very attractive and the occasional losses appear to be compensated for sufficiently. On the other hand, the trips are relatively time-consuming when compared to other forms of trade. Therefore the relatively low number of traders involved has to be explained by the requirements of the batta system: skill, contacts and hardship. The following case illustrates the mode of operation of traders involved in batta.

Mayema is a Fulani cattle trader who originally lived in Niger but arrived in Benin around 1986 to establish himself as a trader. Together with two friends, he specialised in the batta exchange system. In September 1996 he purchased 3 bulls at the market in Guéné. These bulls (kalkaldê) were specifically selected and satisfied some important reproductive qualities. A small truck was hired with some other traders and the bulls were taken to a small village just south of Gogounou. From this point, Mayema and his friends started to go around the pastoralist villages and cattle camps to present the animals to interested pastoralists. After a week, 3 clients had been found and the 3 kalkaldê bulls were exchanged for 6 animals (2 small bulls, 2 cows and 2 bullocks). This small herd was subsequently taken to Pari market as well as to the market in Tchicanda where the animals were sold to traders. The gross profit of this particular transaction amounted to 75,000 CFA francs.

Not surprisingly, the trade system traditionally used to be the privileged domain of Fulani traders. Their comparative advantage in the field of livestock keeping as well as the fact that most clients used to be Fulani led to a situation in which the participation of other ethnic groups was extremely limited. In line with the general situation in the cattle trade, the initial batta participants used to be 'foreign' Fulani traders. To a large extent, the situation persists until today. Foreign Fulani traders still dominate in terms of absolute numbers of traders. Over the years, however, some important shifts have occurred in the composition of the group of batta traders. First of all, many young immigrant Fulani traders from Niger have become actively involved after the 1984-1985 drought period in their home country. In Section 8.2 it was revealed that part of this group of (seasonal) trader migrants benefited from the 'Borgou boom' by carrying out transactions at the local level, i.e. between (newly emerging) markets on the one hand and pastoral villages and farms on the other. Others extended their activities to a regional level and specialised in the batta exchange system.
According to some of the foreign Fulani, the local Fulani of northern Benin do not possess the appropriate qualities to engage in it. As one trader put it: '... les Peuls d'ici sont trop sédentaires et moins vulgarisés au niveau du commerce..' (the local Fulani are too sedentary and less instructed in trade), that means not inclined to move a lot and not experienced enough in commercial activities, which relates to earlier statements on the relatively late stage at which the local Fulani in northern Benin entered commercial activities. Other participants refer to the 'appropriate identity' of the Fulani traders from Niger. They are considered to be the Fulani 'of the bush', used to living in isolated conditions and being 'pure' pastoralists, i.e. living on a diet which predominantly consists of milk. As a separate group, they are consistently referred to as revendeurs nigériens. The Borgou Fulani are too occupied with agriculture and 'too close to towns and villages' to be involved in batta.

In summary, a group of foreign traders has been able to maintain a dominant position in one particular market sector, while the remaining part of the cattle trade 'opened up' to contain large numbers of a variety of traders. The dominant position was based on the combination of knowledge capital (herding skills, quality assessment skills, trekking skills and knowledge of market functioning), lifestyle (living en brousse for several days or weeks) and social capital (contacts with pastoralists), which formed too high an entry barrier for other traders. Moreover, the ideological capital was employed to further 'claim' their privileged position in this field.

Nevertheless, over the years, there have been 'attempts' to challenge this position. Adopting the idea of the batta trade but adjusting some of its practical features, some traders have attempted to enter the profitable exchange of cattle. Although their number has remained low, these traders included local Bariba and Gando cattle traders. With respect to the latter two groups, this can be attributed not only to generally increased experience with livestock keeping but to a strong identification with pastoral trading strategies on behalf of a small group of cattle traders as well. From the biographies of these traders, it appears that they have increasingly experimented with strategies which revolved around herd management, cattle fattening or batta exchange. In many respects, livestock keeping has come to occupy a prominent position in their livelihoods. One of these traders is El Hadj Ibrahim, a Bariba, who already figured in one of our case studies (cf. Section 6.2). During the 1970s, Ibrahim experimented with the batta exchange system. Instead of going around cattle camps for days or weeks, he exclusively traded 'on delivery'. Due to his well-established relations with Fulani pastoralists in the pastoral villages near Banikoara, he was informed of their specific demands. The substantial knowledge of and experience with cattle he had accumulated over the years facilitated his search for the right type of animals at the Karimama and Guéné markets. These animals were subsequently exchanged with neighbouring pastoralists. El Hadj Ibrahim can be seen as the exponent of a group of pioneering Bariba and Gando traders who attempted to challenge traditional ethnic 'monopolies' on certain trading strategies. In this light, some of them have tried to capitalise on their historically strong links with farmers. El Hadj Ouassou, a Gando trader, used to go around farms in the north-eastern part of the Borgou region to purchase reproductive bulls that farmers were willing to sell. Like his Fulani counterparts, he would exchange the animals obtained in the southern Borgou region. All traders claimed that the Fulani pastoralists they exchanged with were co-operative once they understood that they were dealing with someone who knew as much about the required qualities of an animal as the Fulani traders. In fact, some pastoralists considered the Bariba and Gando traders to be equally close, or distant, to them as they considered the foreign Fulani to be.
The bartering of reproductive bulls can thus be seen as part of the traditional, highly personal exchange configurations between cattle traders and Fulani pastoralists.

Interestingly, the Bariba and Gando traders were among the first to capitalise on the opportunities that were provided by the expanding temporary and permanent influx of Nigerian pastoralists in the regions south of Parakou and around Abomey and Bohicon in the second half of the 1980s. The breeds of Nigerian pastoralists appeared to be particularly in demand by their southern Borgou counterparts. Thus, in addition to the north-south flows, the *batta* acquired a reversed south-north component. This flow was, and still is, particularly busy during the dry season when the presence of Nigerian herds peaks. Again, El Hadj Ibrahim was involved. The reproductive bulls he purchased in the cattle camps around Bohicon are transported by train to Parakou and then by truck to Kandi and Banikoara. The south-north flow not only concerns the animals which are part of the *batta* system but cattle which are purchased for sale to farmers as well. In fact, the search for and purchase of animals with those specific qualities required for use in animal traction, very much resemble the *batta* practices in the sense that very specific skills as well as time and flexibility are required in order for this strategy to be carried out effectively.

Strategies based on agriculture

The discussion of various entry modes to trade illuminated the historical links between agriculture and the cattle trade in Benin. The Bariba and Dendi farmers used their harvest proceeds for investment in cattle. Subsequently, some of them became involved in cattle trading. Here, we will address the role of agriculture for established traders.

Agriculture is a supportive activity for the cattle trade and the cattle trade is a supportive activity for agriculture. At least it is for those traders who cultivate cash crops such as cotton (by far the most important), groundnuts, yams or rice. Several traders claimed to have never neglected their fields ('...je n’avais pas oublié le champ ...'). At the start of the agricultural season traders invest part of their working capital in the purchase of agricultural inputs (seed, fertiliser and pesticides), in the hiring of seasonal labour, and in the purchase of draught power animals. At the end of the agricultural season, some of the draught power animals are sold in order to help cover the period until the first payment of cotton revenues by the state cotton marketing board. When revenues start to be paid out from the month of January onwards, they are directly added to the working capital employed in cattle-trading activities. The notion of year-round circulation of capital is seen as being crucial for cattle-trading activities. As a cattle trader from Banikoara stated: '... le capital circule entre le champ, le commerce et la concession .' (capital circulates between the field, the trade and the homestead). This statement, which was consistently employed by the traders for whom agriculture was an important secondary activity, also refers to the homestead. Most traders considered it very important not only to cultivate cash crops but to grow food crops as well. In order to diminish the reliance on food-grain purchases, attempts were constantly made to find an equilibrium between the number of hectares destined at food and cash crops respectively. Food crops such as maize, millet and sorghum were only rarely cultivated for sales purposes. This is just 'not done'. The status position of

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26 The innovative capacity of these traders is illustrated by the case of El Hadj Abdulaye. When Abdulaye encounters a good quality reproductive bull at the Cotonou market (brought there initially for slaughter purposes), he purchases it and sends it back by train and truck to his Banikoara home region for exchange with a pastoralist.
a trader within his village does not 'allow' him to sell food. Instead, food grains should be used for household consumption or should be kept in stock so that fellow villagers could claim some in times of hardship.

The seriousness with which agricultural activities are dealt as an integral part of the cattle trade is further reflected by the impact they have on the frequency of trading during the agricultural season. In general, the cattle trade and agriculture are both time-consuming activities. The purchase of inputs, the employment of seasonal labour and the supervision of work done by employees and family members require the regular presence of a cattle trader. Some of them were even observed carrying out agricultural labour themselves, not so much out of necessity but rather because they were used to doing so and because they attached considerable importance to it. Consequently, trading strategies were adapted to these circumstances mainly through a specific choice of destination market. Traders explained that during peak periods of agricultural work they prefer to send cattle to markets in Nigeria or to the Parakou market in Benin. The advantages of this choice are twofold: the debt repayment time at these markets is much shorter when compared to Cotonou or Lomé, which reduces the period of absence from home, and the type of cattle preferably conveyed to these markets (cows and bullocks instead of bulls) is comparatively cheap. This is advantageous in view of the temporary reduction in working capital due to agricultural expenses. Other traders just send someone else, an apprentice or one of their sons for instance, or choose to collaborate with another trader. Both strategies facilitate the trader's stay in his home area. Collaborating with another trader, who is not constrained by agricultural work to the same extent, has the additional advantage of keeping available family labour at home. The costs of cattle trekking are paid in cash to the other trader in proportion to the number of animals entrusted to him. Still, the trading frequency will be generally lower when compared to other seasons and one trader declared trading just enough in order to "entretenir la maison." (take care of the household). Having completed the harvest-related activities, more time is devoted to the cattle trade. In fact, some traders are particularly active during this period of the year selling their draught animals as well as the draught animals of neighbouring farmers. The annual cycle is completed when cotton revenues are paid out and time can be fully devoted to the trade in cattle. Using farming as a deliberate strategy to support the trade in cattle was almost exclusively observed among traders belonging to the Bariba and Gando ethnic groups. Very much attached to a rural/farming way of life and often carrying out agricultural labour themselves, these traders consider agriculture and the cattle trade as inseparable activities.

In a more direct fashion, the cattle-trading strategies which have a background in agricultural knowledge or skills are predominantly related to draught animals. Over the years, the cattle traders have developed a wide range of strategies in order to capitalise on the ever-rising demand for draught animals. The type of strategies clearly reflect their skills in livestock keeping, agriculture or marketing. It will be argued that the outcome of these traction-induced trade strategies has been crystallised in new trade patterns.

In order to be involved in the trade of draught animals, a trader has to acquire particular skills in the field of animal traction. The experiences of farmers with the use of draught power have increased over the years and their demand is now very specific with respect to the qualities of the animal. A trader has to be aware of these qualities which include the strength of the animal, its docility and aptitude to be trained. Moreover, the qualities of an animal to be applied in ploughing fields differ from the required qualities of an animal to be used for transport purposes, i.e. pulling carts. The specificity of demand explains the
observation that in approximately one third of all draught animal transactions at the cattle market, the buyer as well as the seller were found to be a farmer (cf. Section 5.1). Transactions between farmers not only reflect their full participation in the cattle market, but are likely to benefit from their shared knowledge of particular qualities of draught animals as well. Moreover, the cattle supplied by farmers primarily consist of animals with experience in traction. This exempts the purchasing farmer from having to train the animal and from taking the risk of buying an animal which will eventually prove unmanageable. In addition to the 'farmers supply farmers' phenomenon, the results of the market survey revealed the proportionally high share of traders who supply farmers. In fact, this finding mirrors the strategies which traders have developed over the years in order to satisfy and capitalise on the demand for draught animals.

The most obvious and straightforward activity concerns the spatial arbitrage in a particular region. It was demonstrated in Section 5.4 that the opportunities for spatial arbitrage have increased with the emergence of new cattle markets. Hence, the strategy to capitalise on price differentials between formal and informal markets was equally applied in the area of draught animals. In addition to this, it has been the more innovative traders who have expanded their scope with regard to the geographical area in which they carried out transactions. Their strategy was to locate cattle markets where the dry-season price level was attractively lower compared with the price levels at the markets situated in the major cotton-producing areas. Hence, they started to visit cattle markets such as Kolokondé, Parakou and Tchaourou. The Tchaourou market in particular proved to be attractive in many respects, most of which were dealt with above. On top of this, the Nigerian breeds proved suitable for animal traction as well. For the traders involved, it appeared relatively easy to arrange for truck transport to the north. In contrast to the difficulties cattle traders experienced in hiring trucks after the cotton harvest for cattle transport southwards, no such problems existed for traders who wanted to hire a truck northwards back to the cotton-producing areas. These trucks would otherwise have returned empty. Today, the Tchaourou link increasingly receives the attention of cattle traders in northern Benin. Interestingly, this was put forward as an argument by one of the first cattle traders who 'discovered' this route, to shift his strategy again. Instead of purchasing cattle in Tchaourou, he started to purchase bullocks at the Parakou market just after the rainy season. The animals were not directly transported to the north but pastured in the region around Parakou. When news arrived of attractive prices at the Goumori and Founougo markets, the cattle were immediately taken in that direction.

For a long time, the trade in draught animals used to be the privileged domain of Bariba cattle traders who had a strong background in agriculture in general and in animal traction in particular. However, the participation of Fulani cattle traders in the draught animal trade has progressively risen. It has been particularly the younger Fulani and the (young) immigrant Fulani traders from Niger who, since the late 1980s, were observed as having the type of strategies outlined above. In general, the younger Fulani have a less reluctant attitude towards cotton production and the use of draught power. This has certainly facilitated their familiarity with this sector of the market. Nowadays, several of the Fulani cattle traders are perfectly aware of the required qualities of draught animals and the farmers appear to have confidence in purchasing their draught animals from Fulani traders. With regard to the immigrant Fulani traders from Niger, their familiarity with the draught animal trade can partly be attributed to the herding contracts they used to carry out for local farmers and partly to their apprenticeships with local cattle traders, which they
started upon arrival in Benin. In both cases, they were able not only to witness the purchase, sale and use of draught animals but equally to earn money with which they were able to enter the cattle trade independently. Nowadays, the specific group of migrant traders from Niger increasingly makes use of both pastoral and agricultural skills to capitalise on opportunities provided by an expanding draught animal market. For instance, a small group of immigrant Fulani traders has created a link between the recently established cattle market in Kérou and the village of Sinendé. They were informed about Sinendé-based farmers purchasing their draught animals from pastoralists in the region. Anticipating this demand, they purchase potential draught animals at and around the Kérou market which are consequently transported towards Sinendé for direct sale to farmers. The new trade patterns cross the Alibori river national park where the Niger traders know all the tracks and watering points.

The strategy of pioneering cattle traders searching for new sources of supply for draught animals has put new trade patterns on the map. The Tchaourou market has become linked to Pari, Gogounou and Guéné, the same is true for the Parakou market, and the Kolokondé market has come to supply cattle to Kérou, Goumori and Founougo (cf. Maps 5.1 and 5.5). As a recent phenomenon, the seasonal south-north trade involves relatively small numbers of cattle at the moment. What is more interesting, though, is the combination of factors that have facilitated its emergence: firstly, the increasing demand for draught animals; secondly, the new cattle markets and thirdly, the competence of cattle traders to capitalise on it.
The most obvious and straightforward strategy was to select a particular region. It was demonstrated in Section 3.9 that the opportunities for grazing and recuperation were excellent. However, the all-year-round grassland conditions were found to be excellent. The argument was further strengthened by the fact that the local economy was well-organized and conducive to a successful livestock enterprise. The local economy was characterized by a high level of livestock management and a well-organized grazing system.

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For a long time, the trade in drought animals used to be the privilege of the cattle traders who had a strong background in speculate in general and in animal trading in particular. However, the participation of Fulani cattle traders in the drought animal trade has progressively risen. It has been particularly the younger Fulani and the new immigrant Fulani traders from Niger who, since the late 1980s, have observed to have developed the type of strategies outlined above. In general, the younger Fulani have a less relaxed attitude towards cattle production and the use of drought power. This has certain facilitated their participation in the sector of the market. Nonetheless, a great deal of the Fulani cattle traders are perfectly aware of the required qualities of drought animals and accordingly appear to have concentrated in purchasing the drought animals from Fulani cattle traders. With regard to the immigrant Fulani traders from Niger, their familiarity with the drought animal trade can partly be attributed to the breeding contracts they used to carry out with local cattle traders, which led...