

work, especially not in the settlement of the many land and boundary conflicts, where the knowledge rests with the traditional chiefs and land owners.

It is also felt that decentralisation is an administrative measure to shift expenditure - for administration, and services such as schools and health centres - away from the central treasury to the communities, and that development of services will come to a halt.

It is also felt that the implementation of decentralisation is premature and that a pilot experiment should have been conducted with selected communes.

Financing of the new communes is seen by most as the crucial problem, and it is believed that many communes and municipalities will not be economically and financially viable; in the existing municipalities there is a widespread sell-out of domain land, in order to finance costs without a transparent process where the revenues are going and how they are spent (plots are sold in Mopti at an unofficial price one third higher than the official price but buyers only get receipts for the latter).

In most municipalities the citizens decry the domain administration by the mayors and the lack of state control thereof.

The ruling party employs considerable resources to get majorities in the municipality councils, and eliminate the opposition in its strongholds. It seems to have postponed the communal elections for this reason and the many resource problems which will face the new communes, especially since rural incomes and tax collection efficiency are low.

Donors have shown a willingness to support the Malian government in its decentralisation strategy and have funded advisory projects to the decentralisation mission, and pilot measures - like training for local councillors - in selected communes. They have mainly concentrated on measures to make the administration more efficient. But the corollary of an efficient local government - namely the strengthening of a) the local authorities, including the traditional ones, and b) economic development plans and their implementation with the creation of revenue-generating measures and an economic and tax base - has up to date been seriously neglected.

Donors mainly think in terms of strengthening bureaucracy - as bureaucrats relate to bureaucrats - and state services (water and electricity supply, health care, school admin.) but seriously lack understanding of the need to strengthen the local community and its structures, so that it can run and fund these services on the long run by itself.

- census-taking où les erreurs sont déjà courantes et dans la mesure où la non bonne tenue du cahier de recensement discrédite l'administration et rend peu crédible tout ce qu'elle fait ;
 - civil status registration, births and deaths
 - accounting for the management of community budgets.
 - management of community tax collection and domain management
- The management of communal lands can become an explosive issue for the décentralisation and could reawaken in the Pondori old land conflicts. the Administration should stay apart and exclusively responsabilise the traditional chiefs. To succeed there must be registration of private land too in a cataster and, in case of expropriation, a lawregulating compensation must be passed
 - A council of elders (composed of traditional chiefs who know the land perfectly), should be installed with the mission :
 - to assist the population to solve its problèms ;
 - to help the Administration in its tasks;
 - to settle conflicts amicably ;
 - to contrôl communal administration

Conclusions

The Decentralisation law foresees the creation, besides the existing urban municipalities, of new municipalities and 700 odd rural communes.

all of these communes will be administered by an elected mayor, assisted by an elected council.

The communes will have the authority to to raise a number of local taxes in order to finance themselfe, but will be largely dependent on central treasury allocations.

while elections have taken place in the existing municipalities in 1998, the new municipalities have not been created and the local elections in the rural communes have been postponed twice.

by implication, the previous administration of the countryside by appointed chefs d'arrondissement is to be abolished, as they will be replaced by the mayors. It is unclear what will become of the President-nominated commandants de cercle (district commanders).

The elections will be party dominated - that is candidates will have to belong to one of the parties to get the necessary support for election campaigning. It is unclear how those communes which will not be members of the party in government will receive central financing.

There is no role foreseen by the decentralisation law for the traditional elements, who are presently selected by the people and have their trust, the chefs de village, the chefs de quartier and other traditional rulers.

The 3 urban case studies show the opinions of many administrators and citizens that these traditional chiefs are given no political role, even though they influence the opinions and are often used by the politicians to bring the members of their constituency out to vote but they will have no chance to become mayor or councillors.(unless enrolled in a party or running as independents).

It is the belief of many - including the present administrators, of course - that the traditional authoprities have not been (sufficiently) consulted, that decentralisation has been imposed from outside and will not

These are problems common to all our municipalities: absence of contrôle of the financial management, difficulties related to the collection of taxes from certain state corporation called Congo which own more than 200 concessions at Mopti-Sévaré of which officially 150 are rented out.

1. Absence of contrôle. At Mopti like in other communities, the Mayor's office resembles a state within a state. and manages the common properties like they deem fit, without informing and being accountable to anyone. The municipal authorities waste public resources and taxes in an unheard manner at the expense of necessary investments.

2. A difficult political context At Mopti like elsewhere the arrival of democracy has unfortunately aggravated the lack of civil spirit. The citizen does not see tax payment as his duty and an obligation, but as a question of liberty. As a result many taxpayers have accumulated two to three years of arrears, and the Mairie sees no means of coercion to collect these arrears. This represents serious loss of revenue for the municipality.

CONSTATS AND RECOMMANDATIONS for the management of the future rural communes (Mopti)

1. with regard to traditional structures and politics

- At Mopti, there is a "chef de village", whose office is traditionally held by the eldest of the founding clan, his function is purely ceremonial and does not convey real power;

- there are also several heads of professional associations, one around each profession, but none of these associations has real power;

- only the chefs de quartier have real political power in the Commune; they can influence the élections by mobilising the electorate, but afterwards the political powers do not give them any importance. To their real status corresponds no legal or political status. Those who become party candidates for the municipal council are rather fonctionnaires (teachers, administrators, policemen) who may have a party following but only a limited basis in the population.

2. links between traditional structures and decentralisation

- the chef de village claims to have never been consulted on the issue of décentralisation;

- but due to the links between his family and those of the former chefs de Cantons outside Mopti, he may play an important rôle

- the resources - water, land, pastures - are a source of friction in and between the Communes Rurales;

- The chiefs of the traditional socio-professional associations (chefs des Bozo, blacksmiths, herdsmen), can play important rôles in the décentralisation via the régions, in the problems related to the administrative borders, in the settlement of conflicts of water and pastures because they know the land, are respected and heard or feared by the population.

- décentralisation will create very small Communes (3 to 4 villages), and of feeble economic capacity économique.

- the future elected councillors of the Rural Communes will lack training and may be of low economic status.

(Djenné)

(under present conditions, Djenné would first become a 'commune rurale')

- it is necessary to involve the families of the old chefs de canton,
- in order to mobilise the population and a wider dissemination of political décisions, because these families are well listened to;
- in order to pass messages of the administration and political decisions (like that to erect Djenné as commune de plein exercice)
- in order to avoid mistakes, the intensified training of the future councillors is necessary in certain priority domains:

la Mairie

there is the lack of infrastructure, the lack of building land, the physical constraints of a river settlement (erosion, inundation, high ground water table), collection of municipal taxes.

1. Lack of infrastructure and équipement: Mopti connaît de sérieux problèmes 'infrastructures et d'équipements: infrastructures scolaires, infrastructures sanitaires. The town infrastructures are vastly insufficient in number, capacity and quality: schools, health centers, markets. More serious is the insufficiency of water supply, power supply - not to speak of communications équipement. Even though Mopti is built on the water, it lacks seriously drinking water. At most 1/5 of the houses has piped water, the rest is served by wells, like most of the concessions at Madina-Coura, Sévaré and in Taï kry. Only about 8% of the houses have electricity.

2. High density: As Mopti is on a river dam, the population is crowded, 50 000 habitants on a few hectares. There are on average 11,3 people per house, in some live more than 40 persons. Lack of space makes that even big children, boys and girls, have to share the same room, a common phenomenon in the oldest quarters like Komoguel, Gangal.

3. Migrant population: along the port, the river banks, sometimes in the streets, on unlotted and unprepared land lives and important floating population, generally in tents or straw huts. These have often left difficult conditions elsewhere and are urban squatters. ailleurs. who put up spontaneous housing and has to be accommodated without paying anything for the services.

4. Land problems aggravated by physical constraints: rapide growth, insular position and high density lead to an enormous demand for building land: terrains à usage d'habitation. Les demandes de terrain sont entassées à la Mairie, tandis que les distributions de terrain se font à compte gouttes. Ainsi, au cours de cette année 1996, seulement dans la couche des fonctionnaires, les services de la santé avaient déposé 198 demandes dont seulement 6 ont été satisfaites. Quant à la coordination régionale des Sans-Abris qui compte plus de 600 membres, elle n'a obtenu depuis sa création que 3 lots alors qu'elle a déposé 132 demandes en tout, selon le Président de l'Association, Monsieur Amadou GUINDO, Directeur d'école à la retraite.

Eu égard au nombre de demandes dont elle est assaillie, la Mairie a finalement décidé de faire des distributions par quota: un quota pour les agents des services publiques et un quota pour le reste de la population.

Cette situation est courageuse, bien attendu la spéculation foncière, même si à Mopti, celle-ci revêt une dimension moindre à cause des contraintes physiques du milieu. Il nous a été particulièrement difficile de percer le mystère. Le seul renseignement que nous avons obtenu, est qu'à chaque distribution, chaque Conseiller municipal bénéficierait de 5 lots et que l'ensemble des spéculations foncières se passent entre la Mairie et un riche commerçant de la place (voir verso). Le prix officiel des terrains à usage d'habitation est le suivant par zone de lotissement:

- zone Sévaré: (25 m x 20 m): =	250 000 FCFA
- zone Tibo: (25 m x 20 m): =	252 000 FCFA
- Côté Stade: (25 m x 20 m): =	300 000 FCFA
- Bas-fond (titre foncier):	4 550 F/m ²

En vue de pallier les problèmes de logement à Mopti, une ONG du nom de Galou, financée par la Coopération française avait commencé la construction d'habitats économiques, sans utilisation de bois, cela sur le long de l'axe Mopti-Sévaré. Mais les responsables de ladite ONG viennent d'être arrêtés pour détournement de 7 million de FCFA. Les prix inofficiels de cession dépassent le prix officiel du double, sans que des reçus soient issus pour la différence.

B. Les problèmes relevant de la responsabilité de l'Etat

Traditional Structures and décentralisation at Mopti

Chefs de quartier and chef de village seem forgotten as far as the consultations and decisions with regard décentralisation are concerned. Only fonctionnaires and politicians were consulted, they say. "Is it because we are urban dwellers and those in the offices at Bamako, Ségou, Mopti think they know our region better than us?" These are the questions asked by Mr Baba CISSE, notable from Toguel. Asked about the current décentralisation policy, Mr CISSE added «La décentralisation dont on parle, n'est pas adaptée aux réalités de Mopti. Depuis plus de cent ans, les choses marchaient ici suivant le Code de Cheikou Amadou. Les Toubab sont restés ici pendant 80 ans. Ils ont respecté ce Code. Maintenant, on veut l'ignorer. Voilà pourquoi moi je ne suis pas d'accord avec la décentralisation. Elle ne tient pas compte de notre passé, de notre histoire».

when we asked him what the application of the décentralisation decisions to the Mopti region would change, he answered «Il y aura assez de difficultés. Je ne vois pas comment tout cela peut marcher lorsque les gens ne s'entendent pas, lorsque les villages ne s'entendent pas. C'est le cas des habitants de Sossobé et Salsalbé qui, il y a 3 ou 4 ans, ont pris des armes les uns contre les autres. C'est aussi le cas de Bodi et Djolobé dont les habitants continuent à se convoquer devant les autorités. Ces villages peuvent s'entendre sur quoi? Dans notre région, les populations s'entendent difficilement sur trois choses: la terre, l'eau et les pâturages. Pour ce qui concerne la terre, la décentralisation va exproprier les propriétaires de terre, eux ils n'accepteront jamais cela. Pour ce qui concerne l'eau, chaque mare a aussi son propriétaire. Pour l'exploiter, il faut payer une redevance à ce propriétaire. Ce dernier acceptera-t-il que ceux qui, hier leur payaient des redevances, gèrent cette eau à sa place demain?».

Beside these less optimistic viewpoints expressed by certain representatives of traditional society, dont they also see advantages?

Mr. M'Bodi BOCOUM, notable from Mossinkoré, and former chef d'Arrondissement, today 2^e Adjoint Mayor de Mopti. Il répond: «Avec la décentralisation, si on s'appuyait sur les chefs traditionnels, précisément ceux qui ne sont pas nommés par le Maire et le Commandant de cercle, cela permettrait de résoudre un certain nombre de problèmes qui pourraient surgir, dont ceux qui seront liés au découpage administratif. Ces chefs qui sont écoutés, qui connaissent le terrain, pourraient facilement influencer les populations, les calmer, et au besoin donner des conseils aux représentants de l'Administration». It is estimated that the traditional authorities could counterbalance the politicians.

«La décentralisation connaîtra entre autres, trois problèmes graves ici. Le premier problème, c'est qu'on a respecté la volonté des populations dans le découpage des Communes Rurales. Souvent, 3 ou 4 villages seulement ont décidé de s'associer. Ceux-ci peuvent-ils former une Commune viable par rapport à certaines qui vont regrouper 40 à 50 villages? Pour l'administration, pour constituer un Arrondissement, il faut 18.000 habitants; pour constituer une Région, il faut 3 à 4 Cercles. Par contre, aucun seuil n'a été retenu pour former une Commune Rurale. Le deuxième problème est qu'aucun niveau n'est exigé pour être Maire d'une Commune Rurale. Or, je sais par expérience qu'il est plus facile d'être Commandant de cercle que d'être Maire. Comment un élu qui sait tout juste écrire son nom, peut-il établir et exécuter le budget d'une Commune ou juger de la légalité d'un acte?"

"Il sera souvent obligé de s'en remettre au représentant de l'Etat et dans ce cas, ce ne sera plus la décentralisation. Le troisième problème est d'ordre financier. Une Commune c'est avant tout le fisc. Quelles ressources pourrait dégager une Commune de 3 à 4 villages pour se prendre en charge? Ceci est aussi vrai pour les futures Communes Rurales de la Région de Mopti que pour celles des Régions du Nord de notre pays».

HIGHLIGHT ON THE PROBLEMS OF THE ACTUAL COMMUNE DE MOPTI

The Commune faces several problems, related to the Mayor, the State and the actors.

STRUCTURES TRADITIONNELLES - VIE POLITIQUE ET DECENTRALISATION A MOPTI

Les structures traditionnelles à caractère administratif et la vie politique à Mopti

Do the representatives of the traditional structures have real political power in Mopti?

Monsieur M'Bodi BOCOUM, 2^e Adjoint to the Mayor of Mopti says "no", they are there to apply the will of the political majority party, and have to do what the Commandant de Cercle or the Mayor. Often the most adaptive, often young men, are chosen as chefs de quartiers, even though they know little about social realities..

But Mahamane Ibrahim TOURE, the chef de village, declared:

"All the chefs de Canton came to our house, when they had to take important decisions: Bouréma Adou chef du Canton de Kounari, Kayéri KAMPO, chef du Canton de Kona, Hambagana DIORO, chef de Canton de Sendigué, Yaya Somatlé KATLE, chef du Canton de Korientzé, Oumar BORE, chef du Canton de Boré. collection of taxes, recrutement of soldiers for the colonial army. and applying decisions of the colonial administration. That's why the government of Modibo KEITA took away the chieftaincy from my uncle Nouhoun Mahamane TOURE and even forbade my relative Bamoye to sit outside his house and discuss with other men. The 'UDPM put us back into our place by naming him chef de village".

Mahamane Ibrahim TOURE answered our question whether the chefs de quartier played a role during the last elections:

" C'est nous qui avons nommé le Maire actuel de Mopti Amadou Kisso CISSE. Mais en le choisissant, nous nous sommes mis le doigt dans l'oeil. Après l'élection de ce Maire, lorsque le Président Alpha est venu à Mopti, il lui a dit de ne rien faire sans nous consulter. Mais aujourd'hui, nous ne sommes au courant de rien, on ne nous dit rien. Nous n'avons que 5.000 FCFA par mois. Sous le régime de Moussa TRAORE, même si l'on récupérait 500 FCFA, on en percevait les 20%. Aujourd'hui, le Maire nous a coupé tout cela, c'est parce qu'il n'est pas de Mopti. Il est de Ouro-Modi. Le 1^{er} et le 2^e Adjoint au Maire, qui sont eux de Mopti, le laissent faire. Cependant, en 1992, quand les Conseillers municipaux avaient tenté de relever le Maire de ses fonctions, ils avaient écrit à Bamako au nom des notables de la ville, sans nous consulter. Nous ferons tout la prochaine fois pour que ce Maire et la plupart de ses compagnons ne soient pas réélus. Déjà nous avons commencé des démarches dans ce sens. Ils utiliseront certainement de l'argent dont ils se sont enrichis pour corrompre. Mais nous dirons aux gens de prendre cet argent et de ne pas les suivre".

Mr M'Bodi BOCOUM, le 2^e Adjoint au Maire de Mopti told us:

"From 24 to 28 June 1996 I participated in Niamey at a meeting of the traditional chiefs traditionnels of the West-african sub-region, where except Senegal and Mauritania, at the initiative of the traditional chefferie from Niger. I was embarrassed because contrary to other countries we had no organisation of the traditional chiefs here and I was only there as representative of the administration. In their interventions numerous delegates underlined the absolute necessity that the chefferie traditionnelle takes part in the functioning of our states. Those from Cameroun and Nigéria even said that if **they** been consulted in the border conflict about the Bagassa peninsula, they would have found an appropriate solution".

Socio-professionnal structures and political life at Mopti

They are solicited for the settlement of conflicts, disputes about land and water rights. Contrary to the administrative and political authorities, they always arrive at a solution, because they know the traditional owners of the ressources and know the limits and boundaries of these.

Mr Bocar SABE, chef of the Bozo of Komoguel told us:

"Nous ne sommes jamais consultés comme structures traditionnelles. Ici, chaque Bozo milite dans le parti de son choix. Mais pour la politique, on ne vient nous voir que pour voter; nous ne savons que voter. On nous fait chaque fois voter" et on nous oublie après chaque vote. Nous n'avons jamais proposé quelqu'un aux élections des Députés, parce que nous n'avons jamais fait de cela notre préoccupation. Pour nous, ce travail revient à notre chef de quartier".

- Sidi TOURE
- Bagna TOURE
- Bouréhima TOURE

«Seul celui à qui j'ai immédiatement succédé, n'a pas été chef de canton. Il s'agit de Bamoye TOURE».

b) Chefs de quartiers are proposed by the populations and nominated by the Mayor. This function can be entrusted to anybody, given that he has the confidence of the population of the quartier.

2. The socio-professional groups

We have here the groups or associations of the Bozo, as fishermen and artisans, and of the Peuls as herdsmen. Each association has a chef, with a given title and role e.g. "Dioro" for the Peulh.

a) The Bozo are associated by quarter or village, each having its headman, who can be simultaneously traditional chief, chef of the Coopérative des pêcheurs and chef of a division of the Association Nationale des Pêcheurs du Mali (APRAM).

One of these traditional Bozo chiefs has told us: " Je suis Bocar SABE. Je suis le chef Bozo de Sabéla. Sabéla est l'une des familles fondatrices Bozo de Mopti dans le premier quartier qu'on appelle Komoguel. Ici, on devient chef de Bozo par succession, de père en fils. Dans la ville, nous sommes plusieurs groupes de Bozo ou "Ton" (= association), environ quatre. Chaque groupe a son organisation interne, chaque groupe travaille indépendamment des autres. Chaque village environnant a aussi son association de Bozo. Tous les Bozo sont membres de la Coopérative des Pêcheurs ou APRAM. Chaque groupe bénéficie de l'aide de la Coopérative des Pêcheurs qui nous donne à crédit: aliments, pirogues, filets, hameçons, etc.. Chaque groupe bénéficie aussi de l'appui de l'Opération Pêche qui nous enseigne les techniques de la pêche, les techniques de conservation des produits de la pêche."

b) The blacksmiths these «Waybile» are not a homogeneous group but are part of the «Nienube» or artisans' in local language, those whose work require a certain technicity. The groups with the most artisans are Bambara, Songhaï, Dogon and Bozo. The blacksmiths are «denda» (cousins or «Senenku» in Bambara) of the Fulani.

According to Bokar N'DIAYE traditions says that the ancestors of the Peul had made friends with the artisans and had entrusted them the younger of his children where they learnt to work metals and ore extraction methods. This apprentice which was called Noum became the ancestor of the blacksmiths and gave his name to the profession: «noumou» (blacksmiths) in Bambara. The second son called «Foula» also became ancestor of the peul, and since then all of them were called «Foula» by the Bambara. The blacksmiths are considered artisans with magic powers which require that their secrets are kept within hereditary and endogamous groups. Like elsewhere they are feared, respected, and kept apart as people who may do damage to others. This is due to the fact that they are the 'grand masters' of the "Komo", and "Nama", secret associations which symbolize invisible spirits, and initiate and circumcise boys into their round. The Mopti blacksmiths are Niamakala like the 'griots', without them no agricultural tools, weapons or harnesses, hoofs for horses, no harvest, no war and no ceremonies against the evil spirits. Therefore they are at the top of the hierarchy. They make a clear distinction between the 'ferblantiers' and the 'forgerons', i.e. those who smelt and form iron in the fire and those of cold metal transformation.

Their wives make pottery, vases, water jars, and other containers. The potters and blacksmiths of Mopti are closely related to those of Djenné and often originate from there. The blacksmiths do not play a political role as a group, but rather a social role: they make litigants sweat on their hammer and anvil, and as healers also treat wounds, fractures and snake bites.

c) The herdsmen. They have several groupings and several chiefs, like the fishermen, who are all descendants of the representatives which Cheikh Amadou placed in the region, Fulani or Toucouleur administrators, called "Dioro", whose position was transmitted from father to son. Even today these "Dioro" direct the corporate and syndicate groups of the herders.

The Commune Mixte de Mopti was created by Arrêté Général du 23 Décembre 1919. but this decree was only applied in 1922 by the Colonial Gouverneur -General, Brunat. Its organs were an Administrateur-Maire and Commission Municipale which was composed by a) nomination, b) election by restricted suffrage and c) élection by universal suffrage .

The members were named by arrêté of the Gouverneur, proposed by the Commandant de cercle and Administrateur-Maire, and had to consist of 5 French citizens français and 2 French subjects. This was in négation of principle of décentralisation. The Commune Mixte could not even seize justice but by authorisation of the Gouverneur. It was not allowed Communal property (domaines) despite the large number of property taxed: head tax, estate and land taxes, patents and licences, market dues.

The Commune de Plein Exercice

Erected in Commune de Plein Exercice since 1955, its statute was only confirmed after indépendance by the Law 66-9 and Ordonnance 77-44. Now, management autonomy and means of action were accorded to the elected municipal organs. The first municipal council was elected in Octobre 1956 and présidé by an elected Mayor who was also Secrétaire Général of the Section US-RDA of Mopti. By Arrêté N°72/Mi/DI3, of 23 Janvier 1961, the National Assembly adopted law N°61 - 36 deciding attachment of the villages of Sévaré, Tiaboli, Banguétaba to the Commune de Mopti.

From November 1968 until 1979, when the One-Party structures of the UDPM were installed, the Commune de Mopti was, like others, administered by Délégation Spéciale (3 to 7 members under a Président) in charge of communal affairs. During this time, Mali was ruled by a military junta and the little décentralisation there was left lost all its rights. The members of Délégation Spéciale were appointed by the central government. When in 1979 a new decentralisation law was passed, under the UDPM, population was divided between indifference (l'UDPM) and relief due to renewed décentralisation.

The 70's saw an increased economic development through the Opérations de Développement Rural (ODR), the construction of the casiers Sud and Nord and of the Opération Riz Mopti (ORM); Opération Mil Mopti, Opération Pêche Mopti and the Opération pour le Développement de l'Elevage (ODEM), the rice mill the airport, which were all established in Sévaré.

Mopti's traditional structures

Let us distinguish the traditional structures which are administrative from those which are socio-professionnal. Among the former are the chef de village and the chefs de quartiers. They are appointed (or rather confirmed after suggestion by the notables) respectively by the Commandant de Cercle and the Mayor.

a) Le chef de village is a purely honorific and ceremonial function, assumed by the représentative of the foundatrice of the village. Who is "chef de village" of Mopti? The person concerned has replied to out question

" Je m'appelle Mahamane Ibrahim TOURE. Je suis le chef de village de Mopti. Je suis aussi le chef du premier quartier, celui de Komoguel. C'est nous qui sommes fondateurs de Mopti. La chefferie n'a jamais quitté notre concession, aussi bien avant l'arrivée des Français qu'après l'arrivée de ces derniers. Je suis chef de village et chef de quartier depuis 1984. J'ai fait des études coraniques pendant 20 ans à Tambeyna chez le chef Alpha Amadou, dans l'Arrondissement de Korientzé. C'est chez moi que tous les chefs de quartiers se retrouvent pour prendre des décisions concernant la ville. Le Maire passe également par moi pour distribuer les lettres circulaires".

«Mes prédécesseurs qui ont été à la fois chefs de village et chefs de Canton en partant du plus ancien, sont:

- Asékou TOURE
- Haman TOURE
- Dabass TOURE

The précolonial states did not use the site. Only El Hadj Omar realized the strategic interest of Mopti at the Niger-Bani confluence and created a surveillance post against the Peul of Macina in 1862. His successeur Tidiani, concentrated here numerous Bozo charging their villages with the maintenance of his war fleet to control the Macina frontier. Throughout the 19th century Mopti consisted only of "daga" (campements pêcheurs) or "Ouro" (campements peul), and a market for fish, grain and cattle.

The Pastoral Code of Cheikou Amadou

The Code of Cheikou Amadou regulated the rights and ways of passage of the pastoralists through the fields of the rice cultivators, and defined the pasture areas which are still respected to the present day.

The first colonial activity at Mopti was to join the "toggué" by landfills toggué, the two toggué thus formed were the center of commerce for the establishment of trading houses, European and Lebanese. This was relayed by digue to the north, then named Charlotville, and connected in the South with Komoguel which housed the immigrant African population. Komoguel was developed by layout of residential plots during 1910 - 1930 ; 22% of present concessions date from this period. The 2nd quarter Gangal was filled up and plots laid out between 1920 and 1930, roads and schools constructed around 1926, while the second axis was begun after 1945 and extended till Taï kiry.

To the left and right of this axis the 3rd and 4th quarters, Mossinkoré and Bougouffé were divided into plots in 1945 and 1950, the 5th quarter, Toguel, followed in 1950. These 5 are the oldest and most important residential quarters. Chef lieu de cercle since 1923, Mopti has increased its population over the years.

1923 :	3 516 hts
1938 :	5 000 hts
1948 :	8 210 hts
1956 - 58:	12 000 hts
1960 :	15 à 20 000 hts.

After indépendance, Mopti became régional capital, a regional trade centre and crossroads, continuing to grow:

1970:	35 400 hts
1976:	53 322 hts.

Thus between 1956 - 58 et 1976 - 77, the town grew by 6,88% p.a., growing faster than Kita (6,25%) and Ségou (6,19%) and slightly slower than Bamako (8,23%),.

The Delta peoples (Peul, Rimaï bé, Marka, Bozo/Somono et Bambara), représented 34 245 hts in 1976, or 77,8% of the population, against 69% in 1958. The migrants from the North (Sonraï , Bella) représented 3 904 hts, or 8,8% of the population while diverse immigrants from the East and West du Sud (Mossi, Samogo, Ouolof, Kassonké, Dogon) corresponded to 13% .

The 'diagnostic régional' evaluated the population of Mopti à 70 000 inhabitants in 1985, without 18 000 in réfugié camps (Mauritaniens and Tuareg affected by drought).

Mopti as a Municipality

Créated in 1919, suppressed in 1938 and re-established in 1952, the Commune Mixte de Mopti advanced to the statute of Commune de Plein Exercice in 1955.

1. La Commune Mixte de Mopti

To the question what to do now that the decision is taken: the answers are varied and undetermined . They are résumés below:

There will be nothing but difficulties due to the fact that the people ignore everything about décentralisation, difficulties due to ignorance and illiteracy. There is a feeling that the mayors want to appropriate the lands inherited from the ancestors, to the benefit of other persons. This will create hatred and divisions in the population. Décentralisation is imposed, not for the interests of the local population but for the interest of the State which wants to shed its responsibility at the expense of the local community. Décentralisation is an idea coming from outside like socialism.

According to Mr Baliki Kontao, ex-chef d'arrondissement à la retraite, the crucial problem is insufficiency of local resources. It is this reason, according to him, which explains why Djenné did not want to adopt the statute of commune. In the 1960's, the Pongori provided 50% of the dried fish of the entire région, today the quantity of fish has diminished by 60% leaving not enough taxes to finance a municipality. With this the irony, that the town with the longest tradition of self-rule and autonomy in Mali does not have a (official) local government in modern times

For Mr Kontao, former administrator illiteracy is not a handicap for a future municipal council member, they can deliberate in Bamana, and under colonisation many illiterate chiefs were made chefs de canton, and even under indépendance in the First République, certain chefs de cantons were named chefs d'arrondissement. A municipal council member who is illiterate but honest is better than an intellectual but corrupt member. My father was chef de Canton, and his father who was not literate was it during 44 years.

And even if the municipal councillors are illiterate, they can surround themselves with honest and literate advisors, and can be trained in their task.

Mopti, contrary to San and Djenné, is a new settlement but an old municipality: in 1828 described by René Caillié it had no more than 800 inhabitants, mostly in Bozo fishing camps and surrounding Fulani cattle camps. It has grown around a Health Post created after 1893 and as an administrative center following linking with the mainland by a dyke since 1910-12. Nevertheless it is now the third largest city in Mali with an immense density in the limited space available on the raised river banks (toggué).

Oral sources credit the NACIRE family with the title of the oldest one passed for the plus anciennement établie à Mopti. A Sorkho fisherman had escaped the hostilities of the destruction of the Sonrhay empire, crossed Lake Débo, passing by Tindirima, Konokono et Kami and installed himself à Sagan-Siré, bank of the future Mopti. He took the name Kiampo NACIRE, the former signifying and NACIRE, reference to an old cow he had with him.

In the 7th year Yao KANTA came from Mandé passing via Dia, installed himself between Diallangu and Sagan-Siré, and fished in the pond of Siégué, nourished Nacire's Kiampo's dog with the rest of the fish. Yao attached one day a sack filled with ashes and followed the dog to Kiampo's . The two decided to live together and exchanged kolas.

A year later an Arma from Tombouctou named Mahamane Yarawane TOURE, accompanied by his slaves, asked for land to settle. The inhabitants decided to name a chef de village. Bozo and Somonos refused the office, claiming it would disturb their daily fishing. Finally, Mahamane TOURE was invested and a bullock was sacrificed as a sign of mutual confidence.

Testimony reports that the Bozo families TAPO et Niantao de Mopti, came from the neighboring village of Saouna; and that the Koraké, who furnished the idols, came from Coubay, while the DJENEPO came from Djenné, and the CONDO and KAMPO originated from Guibé. Other indigenous families are the Sabé, SAMASSEKOU (according to others from the Yatenga Mossi) , and TANAPO. The Marka are said to have arrived after the commercial and urban development .

We also ask for the welfare of the inhabitants of Djenné at the occasion of religious festivals. We have organised collective prayers when the cholera and meningitis epidemics de choléra had threatened the population.

We have to recognize that they are far from absents in the political life, which they influence directly and indirectly because: their advice is asked before any decision, each politician has his own marabout whom he consults, each political party asks the consent of the marabouts

From the First to the Third Republic

Djenné seems to have been consistently on the side of the ruling party: during the first Republic - 1958-68, the US-RDA of Modibo Keita, later the only party, was represented by Ba; under Moussa Traoré, the central party UDPM, nominated the deputies to the legislature, and after the transition of 1994, the ADEMA has held all the deputies's seats.

Today 4 men dominated political life : Sory Ibrahima Sylla, Mahamane Santara, Sékou Touré et Bagourou Noumanzana. The examination of origins and socio-professionnal career shows that the traditional chiefs support those of a certain social standing. Mr Boua Touré, Directeur de l'Ecole Franco-Arabe de Djenné, explains that for this reason the number of parties in Djenné is less than in other towns : ADEMA, US-RDA, MIRIA, BDIA, et PSP.

Mr. Sory Ibrahima Sylla is a former Army-Général, former Gouverneur and former Minister of de Territorial Administration; today a militant of ADEMA, he has held all these functions under the 2nd République.

Similarly Mr Santara was Secrétaire Général of the UDPM in town, today he Secrétaire Général of ADEMA for Djenné and deputy of the legislature. He belongs to a well-to-do family which has kept excellent links with the population, and has invested in Djenné.

Mr Sékou Touré, also a former Secrétaire Général of the UDPM, is the son of a former well known veterinary Doctor, and owes his popularity to his family links. Today he is Secrétaire Général US-RDA.

Mr Bagourou Noumanzana is native of Sofara. He is former Directeur de l'Opération Arachide et Cultures Vivrières (OACV), and owes his popularity to the investments made for Djenné and the jobs created for its inhabitants. Mr Noumanzana is today militant of the US-RDA but also the uncle of Mahamane Santara.

Thanks to his personal effort his party obtained the second position in the 1992 élections after ADEMA PASJ.

The majority agricultural and fishing population of Djenné is dominated by the commercial families and their wealth, and one can say that the former is not adequately represented politically, unlike in the newer town of Mopti which we come to describe after a few lines.

Traditional structures and décentralisation

Like in San and Mopti, the traditional structures and socio-professionnal are rather sceptical with regard to décentralisation.

When asked whether they had been consulted before the decisions, they all said that they had not been consulted as individuals or associations, but as general assembly of the quartier; and that it was not to ask their advice but to communicate them a decision. The traditional chiefs and representatives of the associations say that if they had been listened to, one would have taken somewhat more time to make the population understand what was intended by 'décentralisation'.

Associations

There are presently still 20 to 40 coranic schools mostly in the homes of the marabouts.

Djenné takes part in two principal muslim associations, and has sections of the Association Malienne pour l'Unité et le Progrès de l'Islam (A.M.U.P.I.) and the Association pour le Développement de l'Islam à Djenné (A.D.I.D.).

AMUPI is a national association : it was criticized for having transformed its members into tourist guides to make visits of the mosque and other sanctuaries and that they perceived money without the imam, the muezzins, or the mosque receiving any bénéfices. It seems that ADID was founded in reaction to this, and is at the origin of the ruling forbidding access to the mosque to non-muslims, apparently following unacceptable behavior inside by two tourists (ils se sont embrassés à l'intérieur de la mosquée).

The président of ADID is El Hadj Marafa Touré. Mr. Abdoulaye Yattara, member, ravows that it groups militants of all political parties, but that it does not engage in politics but rather endeavors to rise money for the maintenance of the grande mosque.

Coopératives of fishermen and herders

Both fishermen and herdsman have Coopératives : the former is directed by a président and 12 members from Djenné and surroundings. The Coopérative des éleveurs, founded in 1962, is directed by a Conseil d'Administration.

Main objective of those two coopératives is the defense of the material and moral intérêts matériels of their members. They struggle to overcome the problems such lack of water, pastures, markets, lack of equipment and low revenues.

The artisans, blacksmiths and potters, have numerous workshops for production of traditional tools and vessels, but are also engaged in the repair and building of boats (nails); as members of the noumou, they are mostly Bozo and organized through the fishermen's association, without having their own professional groups. The attempt to create an association/cooperative for the production of improved stoves was, unlike in Mopti, San and other malian towns, unsuccessful in Djenné

Political Structures and local political life

Do traditional chiefs and marabouts influence political life of Djenné?

Ousmane Kantao, ex-chef de canton of Djenné could, according to his son Sekou Kantao, mobilise all the Bozo of the région in one morning and réquisition what he wanted and received a portion of the catch of any fisherman. Presently, the family is well respected and heard by the entire Bozo population. But the family has been completely bereft of all power after indépendance, without ever being consulted about any political decision including décentralisation.

The chef de village says he adheres to no political party, plays the rôle of intermédiaire between the population and the administration. He recognizes that he was consulted for the Décentralisation, not individually, but as part of a group of notables and chefs de quartier. He says, however, this was not to ask our advice but to inform us of a decision taken elsewhere.

The chief of the morrocan descendants says that he lives apart of all political activities, that he is only the guarduan of the morrocan traditions.

The marabouts qualify their work as apolitical. "Our concern is only to make religion respected where it should. We are consulted by the politicians but this is mainly to ask our benediction for what they want to undertake. Our politics is to make our religious principles and cultural values respected plus. (e.g.in the entire town outside the campement touristique the serving of alcohol is forbidden).

2. Kouyétindé	400	
3. Alkasba	126	Sonrhai
4. Farmantala	79	
5. Konofia	135	Marka
6. Kanafa	113	Bambara
7. Yoboucaina	181	Peul
8. Djoboro	144	Bozo
9. Seymani	76	Bozo
10. Samsey	100	Bozo

1674 x 6 = 10.044

chef de village and chefs de quartiers :

Maï ga Hasseye is the actuel chef de village. This function is héréditary within that family, since the Bozo relinquished that office (we don't know when and for which reasons - we were told they found it incompatible with their daily work as fishermen and boatmen).

The chefs de quartiers are nominated by the administration - i.e. commandant de cercle - following their proposal by the oldest families of each quarter. The descendants of the Sonrhay, the Maiga, we have seen have the chefferie de village, the descendants of the Morocans are the Touré iin Sankoré.

5.3. Party Politics since Indépendance

The Kontao have the control over the Bozo - but have been ecarted from politics by the first government of Modibo Keita and the USRDA since they were chefs de Canton and as such seen to be of the party of the Colonisateur and the opposition - which rallied the traditional chiefs under F:Sissoko -

The Iman and religious chiefs

The latter (marabouts et dignitaires musulmans) constitute indoubtably the most important element of Djenné. On peut affirmer sans risque de se tromper, que ce sont eux qui rythment la vie de Djenné. Nothing can be done without their consent and their consultation. If they feel someone's presence undesirable, they make him leave: according to an old marabout known as Biya Biya, a true sage, fonctionnaires or administrators who did not get along with the population, had to pack without ever to return.

Without being organized in groups , the marabouts and muslim leaders meet, participate jointly in the various cérémonies: marriages, baptisms, funerals.

The imam of the grande mosquée, l'imam Korobara, enjoys great respect without being religious guide or spiritual chief, he was authorised by the marabouts to take over from his father the imamat and is still relatively young.

According to my interview with the Chef de Village Ba Hasseye Maiga, the Maiga are "chefs de village" in the 8th generation (since around 1819, the beginning of the Fulani empire of Macina). Bassoumaila Maiga, senior brother of Ba Hasseye's grandfather, lived at the time of Sekou Amadou and was the first of the 8 chiefs, before Almamy Siaka Traore; Ba Hassi's great-grandfather governed the village since Al Haj Oumar's time. Hasseye Ahmadou Maiga, his grandfather died in 1906. Shekou Asseye Maiga, his father, was chosen as a guide to accompany the French to Tombouctou and received a medal of honor from the Ministère des Colonies .

According to Monteil, Colonel Archinard sent - through the person of Almamy Tera from San - a letter to the chief of Djenné with orders to lay down resistance. But the letter arrived first at the Almamy of Pondori, Moussa, who was an ally of Tidjani and tried to incite the Djennénke to resist with the help of the rimaibé of the Mourari. But Archinard appeared the 11 april 1893 before the town which surrendered (Archinard, Journal de marche et des opérations de la colonne Bonnier sur Tombouctou, Archives de France). Amadou Alfa Abdoulay Cissé, chief of the Peulh, encountered the Colonel in the name of the Peulh and Djennenké. Monteil says that the chef de village Hasey was in hiding, and therefore the French considered Cissé as real chef de village. When he died he désignated Amadou Kisso Cissé, the husband of his daughter, chef de ville et of the quartier Peul (Yoboukaina). But Hasey made himself indispensable to the commandant de cercle et kept Amadou Kisso aside and transferred the command to his son Cheikou Hasey en 1906.

5.1. Djenné under military government (1893-1903)

From the campaign of Archinard in 1893 till 1903, the appointment of the first civil commander, there was effective military government, even though some form of indirect rule was instituted under the nominal authority of the roi du Macina, Aguibou Tall. But in 1902, the French government décided upon direct rule under French civil administrators assisted by military detachments. Djenné was made the first cercle in 1903, before Bandiagara in 1905 and Mopti in 1912, and was only then fully integrated into the colonial territorial administration, under its first administrator Ch.Monteil (1900-03)

5.2. Les Cantons et la chefferie dans le Cercle.

Ousmane Kantao, chief of the Bozo, was made chef de canton in 1894 and stayed in this position till his death in 1944. He was named chef des groupements indépendants du Niger in 1894 and décorated chevalier de la Légion d'honneur à Ségou en 1929 par le Gouverneur Général des Colonies. According to his son, Sékou Kantao, fonctionnaire à la retraite, the Bozo still ensured most of the river transport, even though French steamships began to ply the Niger from Koulikoro to Mopti since the 30's. It appears that the Koutao remained the incumbents of the position of chef de canton until independence.

3.4. Present Population

The principal ethnic groups are bozo, peulh, bambara, and sonraï ; marka, dogon and arma are of secondary importance.

Between 1976 and 1987, the population has passed from 10 275 to 11 785 inhabitants. The average growth rate was not more than 1,3 % p.a., smaller than the general Malian growth rate (1,7 %) and largely inferior to that of other cities 5 % (the g.r. of Bamako is estimated at 10 %).

Nbre.of Families : 1674 (Recensement Administratif 1994/95)
 Nbre. of Households: 2305 (d'après le Recensement Général de 1987-90)
 Total Population env.12500

Quartier	Secteur	Nbr of Families
1. Sankoré		320
		Sonrhai

according to Monteil were Wakoré, Wangara, Marka (and also Sanhaja from the Tagant, Hodhna) and as traders from the north-west, partly via Dia (Djenné meaning 'Dia-ni' or 'little Dia') and founded their own quarters - Kanafa, Konofia - somewhat north and had their own chiefs. Nevertheless, the Djenné-wèrè continued to be Bozo well after the introduction of Islam. These Nono were at first pagans and concluded a pact with the Bozo sealed by the sacrifice of Tapama Jenepo, but Islam was the religion of the trading community since the late 12th century. There were, like elsewhere, distinct communities of local Bozo and immigrant traders, and it was only with the conversion of the Bozo chief to Islam, by the end of the 6 c. A.H. (perhaps contemporaneous with the conversion of the king of Mali, Mari Jata, around 1250). According to legend Komboro called 4 200 Ulémas to Djenné to witness his abandonment of paganism and conversion to Islam. He asked them to pray to God to grant 3 things to Djenné :

"- que celui qui, chassé de son pays par l'indigence et la misère viendrait habiter cette ville, y trouvât en échange grâce à Dieu, abondance et richesse, de façon qu'il oubliât son ancienne patrie ;

- que la ville fut peuplée d'étrangers d'un nombre supérieur à celui de ses nationaux ;

- que Dieu privât de patience tous ceux qui viendraient y trafiquer leurs marchandises, de sorte qu'envoyés pour séjourner en cet endroit, ils vendissent à vil prix leurs pacotilles, ce dont bénéficieraient les habitants".

The T.es Soudan reports that Djenné was besieged by the forces of Mali 99 times but that it was never subjected until Sonni Ali's Sonrhay conquest of 1468. Yet, the Djenné-koi was according to the Tarikh el Fettash "one of the most humble of the king's subjects, and one of his lowest functionaries. He was only admitted in the presence of the wife of the Malli-koi and it was to her that he paid the tax for the Djenné region." In fact, according to Ibn Batuta, the Mali king's wife was on an even par with the king, and Djenné paid with a tribute for her commercial freedom.

With the Bozo having the entire monopoly of river transport, the surrounding territories depended on them for the movements and for trade. On his return from Mecca, Mansa Musa's entire convoy was attacked and pillaged by the Djenné Were. Safety of the land routes was increasingly jeopardized by the Mossi who repeatedly pillaged Mali.

However, the appointment of a *cadi* to judge the increasingly large community of believers (la Souna) according to Islamic law came only gradually, by the middle of the 15th century. Before, the foreigners had been judged by the council of the elders of the different quarters. The legal scholars (ulema) formed an upper and lower council, with the *cadi* and the imam of the mosque having presiding roles.

Djenné - for almost 400 years the twin city of Tombouctou in the Sudan-Sahara trade - lost its independence to the Songhay who appointed their own administrator - the *mondyo* - and imprisoned the Djenné Were. About Bekr, called Ouaiibo Ali, who married the daughter of the Djenne wèrè, ruled till 1590, when the Moroccans appointed their own chiefs and *cadis*. (the party of the Bozo and Sonrhay, loyal to the last ruling dynasty continued to rebel). The wealth of the commerce made it possible for the Souna to fund a sizeable defensive army, whose commander in chief was the Dejnne wèrè. This permitted Djenné to become independent again in the Bambara period (1650-1750) and remain so under the Fulani of the Macina and even under the Dina of AlHaj Oumar.

Djenne was destroyed briefly by Al Haj Oumar (1862-63), who established his capital Hamdallaye some 60 km away, but was rebuilt and remained loyal to its partisans, the Fulani from the Macina under Ba Lobo and the Kounta under Cheikh Bekkay. After Ba Lobbo's death in 1880 and the defeat of Cheikh El Bekkay in the battle of Sarédina, Tidjani, ElAhj Oumar's nephew, conquered the Macina, but not Djenne. Only Mounirou Tidjanis son re-established authority over Djenné after the battle of Moura (1891), in which the Kounta leader, Cheikh El Bekkay's son Abidin, fell. For 2 years until the arrival of the French Djenné paid tribute to the Toucouleur at Bandiagara.

the création of the Communes Rurales was premature and done without prior studies or consultation of the population by the politicians.

The State gives no financial aid to the municipality, with the result that it has to resort to all kinds of expedients like the sale of land without any transparent financial management of receipts and expenditures.

The texts of the décentralisation law are unclear with regard to financing the mayors budget, and perceiving and managing receipts fiscales and taxes.

Neither the secrétaire général of the Mairie, nor the chefs de quartier have any statute reflected in the decentralisation law.

Present management of the Mairie is unsatisfactory, the management of the municipality lands is disastrous, with wholesale distribution of public lands without transparency where the collected funds have remained.

Recommendations

1. with regard to traditional structures,

the decentralized structures should take into account the traditional structures and respect them as elements of local culture;

but there should be a counterbalance to them, in order to prevent them from influencing on the elections and on the composition of decentralized structures, which should be democratic dynamism

the texts on décentralisation should contain dispositions mitigating the influence of the mayors on the chefs de quartiers, and the procedures of their nomination by the Mairies be reevaluated.

2. with regard to décentralisation

the lawmaker should first address the problems of functioning of the existing Communes urbaines, and find solutions before creating Communes Rurales.

measures should be taken to improve first the management of the existing Communes urbaines. The municipal councillors should be held accountable of their management of communal affairs to the voters, they should be controlled and punished if necessary according to the law like in the advanced democracies .

the experience of the application of the law should be made in a test zone in order to convince the rest of the country before applying decentralisation to the Communes Rurales,

contrary to what is reality for the Communes Urbaines, the State should aid financially the futurs Communes Rurales during the startup phase, because the survival of most of them depends on it.

The traditional and religious structures could be of great help in solving whatever problems of the populations et authorities of the Communes Rurales seraient.

The failure of most to pay taxes and dues in the Communes Urbaines risks to make stillborn creations out of the Communes Rurales; consequently appropriate measures must be taken (i.e. better tax collection).

4 B. Djenné has an urban history for at least one millennium and formed an autonomous republic it was founded in the 2nd century A.H. by the Bozo, chiefs of the waters, on a hill called Djoboro along a canal between the Bani and the Niger. Later, around 1043, came the Guirga ('reds') or Nono - who

consequently the personnel of the Territorial Administration does not believe that decentralization will work - but not the regional governors who are mostly highranking military officers - be scrapped in favor of the mayors and councillors.

2. Mali's decentralization mission - directly responsible to the prime minister - spent the first 4 years in defining the laws and the boundaries of the future Communes (délimitation) and holding discussions with the constituencies into which Commune they wanted to be included. In many cases the results of these discussions did not square with the stipulation of the law that a Commune Rurale should be made up of 7 to 10 villages and only took superficial account of the actual living and historically grown communities. The rural population especially wanted their village and related settlements to constitute a Commune by itself and refused to be included in the same Commune with other villages nearby with whom historical relations had been strained in the past. The result was that Communes which were really based on historical links were often too small to be viable, or when they were large and potentially viable - based on population and tax base - were too heterogeneous to avoid friction. Anyway, our paper is not concerned here with rural communes but with urban ones.

3. Many of Mali's urban settlements have a millenarian tradition which implies that they have been self-governing and autonomous for centuries, and we were interested in two complementary aspects of the decentralization policy:

- a. to what extent does the decentralization law and the administration of it take account of local traditional structures of self-government;
- b. to what extent do or have the traditional structures influence(d) the new law, or is the law needed for local government to be effective in areas which have governed themselves.

For this purpose 3 case studies were conducted - in connection with the 'Ancrage Historique de la Décentralisation' of the Dec. Mission and we have to thank Prof. T. that he has facilitated the mission - in cities which have self-governed themselves and have had different forms of local government: San, Djenné, and Mopti.

4. The detailed case studies are presented in the Annexes (in French) but the main results are presented here.

4 A. San has a long history of self-rule due to its central market position: governed in the past by the leaders of the most important families, the Traore, the Tera, the Santara, the Koita, besides the religious authority of the Almamy, San has been divided since the colonial era into two parties, essentially hostile to each other, the partisans of the Traore and those of the Tera. The colonial administrator created the office of chef de canton and gave it to the Traore family. Since 1959 San is a municipality under a Mayor, but has had only 3 elected mayors since 1966, and been governed more by special delegations appointed by the government in Bamako. Since the transition it has been more under the influence of political parties which however have discreetly constituted themselves along traditional divisions. Moreover, the opposition UFDP (ex USRDA) has been in the majority, and the governing party ADEMA has had only 5 out of 36 seats in 1993 and even in the 1997 parliamentary elections has had to compete for a second tour with an UFD candidate.(we ignore the results of the last local elections of 1998).

The chef de village and the chefs de quartier are not represented in the municipal council even though they are regularly 'employed' by the parties to mobilize voters, collect local taxes and levies, and bring to the population government and mayoral decisions. The religious leaders - imam, parish priests and pastors - are quite influential in the social and political life without being directly represented in the local bodies. The deficiencies of the decentralization system recognized are the following:

43rd Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association, Nashville, Nov. 16-19, 2000

Paper Abstract Decentralization Policy and Traditional Authority in Mali: San, Mopti, Djenné.

1. Three urban case studies presented in this paper are based on fieldwork done under the Mali Decentralization Mission, The Historical Framework, in 1998 in cooperation with Prof. Sidiki Traoré, of the Ecole Nationale Supérieure.
2. The 3 case studies document that political authority which has real influence on day to day politics and voter decisions not only seems to be ignored in practice but has no place in the decentralization law of the country: the chefs de quartier who yield real influence and bring voters have no status within the communes urbaines (or rurales).
3. Multi-million dollar donor programs to foster decentralization and local government take little notice of traditional and ongoing political structures, but give one-sided attention to 'modern' party and administrative structures, whereas everywhere in Africa it is evident that ignoring local and regional structures has led to the demise of central government.
4. An outline of the Malian decentralization law is followed by the presentation of the local political authorities under previous governments, and the roles of mayors in the new communes to be created under the new decentralization law. A comparison with laws on decentralization in neighboring countries such as Ghana and Burkina Faso concludes the descriptive part.
5. The analytical part of the paper argues that - optimistic proclamations by donors and UN or other international institutions involved in decentralization notwithstanding - West African governments, including the more liberal one of Mali, show no real interest in devolving power and self-government to local constituencies - and contrary to the fact that the Malian cities along the Niger have governed themselves for centuries - but prefer to rule through administrative and party hierarchies, where decisions are made in the center and in the capital. Special emphasis is given to show how Konare's party has even tempted to prevent the emergence of local opposition strongholds.
6. The result are persisting dual power structures: local elites and decision-making groups which decide on traditional legal and customary issues, as opposed to a thin layer of bureaucrats (formerly commandants de cercle and chefs d'arrondissements, or police chiefs, in future party committees and mayors) who have no real roots in the community, and rule by administrative decision rather than political consent.
7. Instead of donor support going to local communities or towards political reform, the bulk of IT goes to central bureaucratic structures, which implement administrative decentralization (bringing down administrative functions and services to local level in order to reduce the burden on central treasuries at the expense at the local communities) rather than political decentralization, on the contrary local autonomy is reduced and centralization reinforced in communities which have been self-ruling for centuries. In our view such type of decentralization does not merit the high level financial international donor support, as it rigidifies rather than loosens central power structures.

Main Text of the Paper

1. In 1995 the government of Mali's third Republic has passed a decentralization law which foresees the creation of about 20 urban and 800 rural communities and the devolution of power to the mayors and communal councils. It was foreseen that some structures derived from the French Colonial (military) administration, kept under the One-Party System of Modibo and Moussa, namely the Commandants de Cercle and the Chefs d'Arrondissement - (and