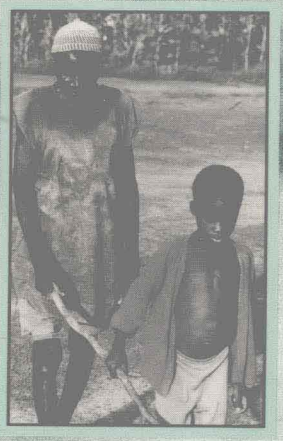
Sahel Visions

Planned Settlement and River Blindness Control in Burkina Faso

Della E. McMillan



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Sahel Visions

Arizona Studies in Human Ecology

This book is dedicated to the memory of
Abdoul-Kader Zampaligré, warehouse manager;
Michel Compaoré, bloc chief; and
Sommaila Sawadogo, sociologist.

All three men played a key role in reshaping the AVV vision
of development at V3 and in the other AVV villages
where they worked.

Foreword

In 1972 the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) funded the feasibility study of an Onchocerciasis (river blindness) Control Programme (OCP) in West Africa. The visionary development leaders of OCP saw clear linkages between disease control, poverty alleviation, food production, and environmental protection of the vast areas affected by this dreaded disease. Operational activities commenced in 1974.

By the twentieth anniversary of OCP in 1994, the battle against river blindness had been won in the eleven participating countries thanks to the unwavering support of African governments, the Sponsoring Agencies (UNDP, the World Bank, WHO and FAO), and the donor community. Up to 25 million hectares of rich agricultural lands have been liberated from river blindness. Migration to some of these areas has been rapid, and the expanded utilization of agricultural lands is increasing production.

In 1988, UNDP funded the Land Settlement Review, which examined land settlement activities and developed policy recommendations to facilitate sustainable development practices in the OCP areas. This review provided the basis for an African Ministerial Meeting in 1994, which resulted in an agreement on a set of guiding principles for sustainable settlement to promote long-term social and economic gains from the "development dividend" of OCP.

Settlement is very much central to the UNDP's mission of forging sustain-

able development around human development concerns. From the UNDP perspective, the sustainable human development paradigm sees the overall success of a national economy as measured in terms of improved health conditions, employment creation, and access to productive assets. Sustainable human development is equally measured by its vision, by the regeneration of the environment for future generations, and by the empowerment of people to participate in the decisions that affect their lives. Sustainable human development is thus people centered and gender sensitive, environmentally sound and participatory.

The dynamics of settlement provide their own special challenges. Settlement, the link of people to land, the most important asset of the rural poor, lies at the heart of people's lives, involving potentially creative and disruptive tensions. Visions of progress may differ between settlers and development facilitators.

Sahel Visions provides a personal assessment of the land settlement experience in Burkina Faso over a period of fifteen years. It is an important contribution to the field of development anthropology in Africa. The UNDP is pleased to provide support to the publication of a paperback edition of this volume. While welcoming research that enhances an understanding of sustainable human development strategies, policies, and programs, the views of the author are entirely her own and do not necessarily reflect those of the UNDP or of the World Health Organization as Executing Agency of OCP.

New York,
New York

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
UNDP Assistant Administrator
and Director, Regional Bureau
for Africa

Ouagadouguo,
Burkina Faso

Ebrahim Samba
Director, Onchocerciasis
Control Programme

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank a few of the people who influenced my thinking and without whom this study would never have been completed. The man who turned my initial intrigue with Burkina Faso into an interest in the AVV (Autorité des Aménagements des Vallées des Volta) and the much broader issue of development planning in areas covered by disease control is Professor Bill Morris of the Department of Agricultural Economics at Purdue University. It is largely because of his informed vision and the sound methodological advice of Dr. Josette Murphy, then country director of the West Africa Farming Systems Project in Burkina and now at the World Bank, that I did research in one of the traditional "home" villages as well as in the AVV project villages.

The distinctive imprint of Professor George Dalton is highly visible in every part of my early fieldwork and in the very way I think about development. Dalton's legacy has been obscured by his championing of the so-called substantivist side of the substantivist-formalist debate that divided economic anthropology in the 1960s. In the wake of this rancorous debate, some of the key and still vital insights of the substantivists were discounted by succeeding generations of development anthropologists. It is indeed ironic that the first groups to rediscover the utility of concepts like reciprocity and redistribution and the social context of economic systems in the early stages

of market integration were economists, political scientists, and so-called Marxist anthropologists rather than development anthropologists. Dalton was at least twenty years ahead of his time in arguing that anthropologists should participate in multidisciplinary field research. He was also firmly committed to the concept that anthropologists specializing in development have a strong grounding in at least one related field (such as agricultural economics, soil science, animal science, public health, or nutrition). In the absence of such training, he caustically advised us to carry calling cards that read, "Have frame of reference, will travel." Dalton's emphasis on multidisciplinary training and team work was rare in most departments of social anthropology in the 1970s, when the "Lone Ranger" anthropologist setting off for exotic sunsets, taking along a portable typewriter, a bottle of gin, and lots of notepaper, was still lionized. Dalton also believed that one could not expect concrete, genuine social and economic change in periods of less than fifteen years.

Thayer Scudder, currently a codirector of the Institute for Development Anthropology and professor of anthropology at the California Institute for Technology, is the person who formalized the planning concept of resettlement stages. The genius of this simple four- or five-stage model is that it translates the complex anthropological concept of socially embedded economic systems described by Dalton and others into a meaningful policy tool. This particular tool helps explain why the painful experience of reconstituting community ties after resettlement influences how settlers respond to development policies. Scudder's model allows policy makers to anticipate the problems and opportunities that are likely to prevail at each stage of resettlement and community reconstitution. This is precisely the sort of theoretically informed policy model that anthropology needs. Good social theory should influence policy, and the evaluation of policy initiatives should provide the raw material for revising basic theory.

My field research was greatly enriched by the steadfast cooperation of the AVV. I am especially indebted to Emmanuel Nikiema, general director of the Office National d'Aménagement des Terroirs (ONAT), formerly the AVV, and Frédéric Guira, Arthur-Felix Yanogo, Benjamin Tabsoba, Michel Compaoré, Abdoul Kader Zampaligré, and Sommaila Sawadogo, who were also associated with the former AVV. In the Onchocerciasis Control Programme (OCP), I wish to express my deep appreciation to Dr. Ebrahim Samba, the general director, and Jean-Baptiste Zongo of the OCP Economic Unit, who freely shared their considerable knowledge, enthusiasm, and support. In the World Bank, I wish to thank Bruce Benton and John Elder, the coordinator

and sociologist of the Oncho Unit, Scott Guggenheim, Michael Cernea, and Cynthia Cook; and in UNDP, Ben Gurman.

The 1983 and 1987 restudies could not have been completed without the generous support and friendship I received from various sympathetic staff at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Ouagadougou—especially Bonaventure Traoré (from 1983 to 1987) and Al Smith (in 1983).

At different times, I benefited from the very able fieldwork assistance of Tinga Ouédraogo, who grew up at V3 and is now a student at the University of Ouagadougou, and Salifo Boena, an outstanding researcher with the Institut d'Etudes et des Recherches Agricoles (INERA) in Ouagadougou. Tinga and his comrade Lucien Ouédraogo, both sons of Damesma settlers living in the AVV, are (as far as I know) the first two children from Damesma to attend the university. This further attests to the success of the early AVV settlers and the long-term legacy of the AVV.

Kimseyinga Savadogo, associate professor of economics and dean for research at the School of Economics at the University of Ouagadougou, and David Brokensha, codirector of the Institute for Development Anthropology, were steadfast, reliable colleagues during the 1989 restudy. Jean-Baptiste Nana and Thayer Scudder helped me to look at the data in new ways. I want also to thank Anne Doizé, Christina Gladwin, Art Hansen, Martin Meltzer, Robert Netting, Mehir Saul, Thayer Scudder, Elliott Skinner, and Carol Lauriault for their detailed and careful comments on all or sections of the manuscript. I would like to thank the University of Arizona Press for its willingness to support this project through two rounds of outside review and two revisions. A special note of thanks is due to Virginia Croft, Alan Schroder, and Christine Szuter. Lonnie Harrison deserves credit for making my home a peaceful haven during the final editing and production.

I am forever indebted to my hosts, the Damesma naba and his family; his provincial chief, the Sanmatenga naba in Kaya; and Boukary Ouédraogo. All three men gave me invaluable guidance. Frédéric Guira of ONAT (formerly AVV) and Moustapha Ouédraogo have been my closest field comrades since 1977 and 1983, respectively, and the source of a great deal of the information that appears in this book. Credit for the visions concept in the title must go to Victoria Bernal, a fellow graduate student at Northwestern, who came up with the title when we shared a brisk walk through the hills of upstate New York at a reunion in 1988.

I wish to thank again my parents, who have encouraged me at every step. Neither my maternal grandfather nor my father ever shied from exposing me

to the raw side of poverty and prejudice or the role of public policy in attempting to reverse these trends in the rural and small-town Georgia, where I grew up. In their own way, my mother and maternal grandmother taught me the importance that a people attach to their noble vision of a vanquished past when the present is less than noble. These were valuable lessons that I had to learn once again in Burkina. Last, I want to thank my beloved husband, David Wilson, who has subsidized me, as well as this project, both financially and emotionally.

Introduction

This book describes the first attempt by a West African government to develop a comprehensive land-use plan for its river basins covered by the Onchocerciasis (meaning "river blindness") Control Programme (map 1). The agency charged with the coordination of this plan was the Volta Valley Authority (Autorité des Aménagements des Vallées des Volta), or AVV. River blindness disease control was one of the great development visions to emerge from the 1968–74 drought in West Africa. By controlling river blindness, foreign donors felt they could create vast new settlement opportunities; the associated increase in food and cash crop production would improve living standards, raise the gross national product, and reduce the severity of future droughts. For Burkina Faso (then known as Upper Volta), the program appeared to offer an unprecedented opportunity to resettle one-tenth of the country's population on more productive land and at the same time triple cotton production.

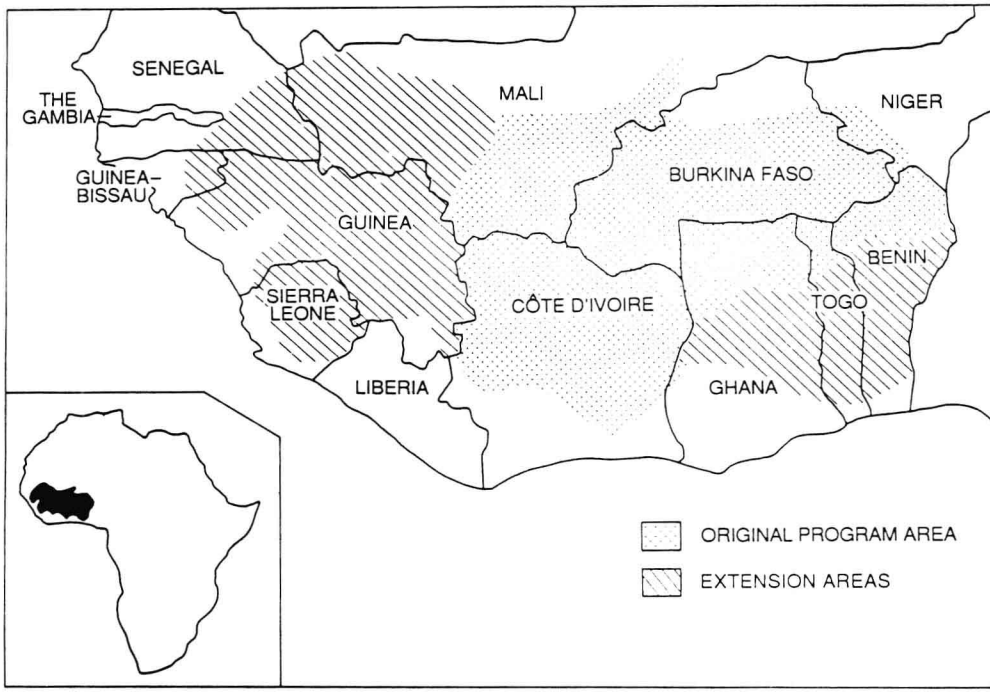
When I began this research in 1977 as a second-year graduate student, my initial idea was to describe the impact of the AVV's planned settlements on settlers from Burkina's densely settled Mossi plateau. I anticipated that the study would describe the rationale behind the project's design, delineate the project's goals, and discuss how and why the settlers' responded as they did to the project's proposed policies. On the advice of Bill Morris and Josette Murphy of Purdue University, two of the senior researchers on the

grant that funded the initial research, I determined to compare farmers who had remained in one of the "traditional" home villages with settlers from this same village who had moved to an AVV project village.

My first one-week visit "up country" to the home villages was organized by the AVV Migration and Transfer Service. As part of this trip, the service director took me to two traditional villages with high rates of immigration to the project. One of these villages was Damesma, a village established sometime in the seventeenth or eighteenth century by Mossi immigrants spreading north out of their capital, Ouagadougou. Damesma is located outside the regional capital of Kaya (map 2). The following year I received two letters from the chief of Damesma. The chief, or *naba*, scion of a powerful old family, was quick to see the political advantage of receiving a foreign anthropologist. It was his hope that my work would direct foreign donor and national attention to the declining crop yields, low income, and impoverished soils that were causing his villagers to leave what had been a densely settled village. I succumbed to the naba's charm and chose Damesma and the settlers who immigrated from Damesma to the AVV as the focus of my dissertation research.

In May 1978, I returned to Damesma and, at the chief's urging, constructed a small house attached to his court. This arrangement made it blatantly obvious that I was his guest and therefore under his protection. I think the chief saw me as an overeducated, somewhat naive daughter. To his mind he was doing my father a great service. He was. It is a debt I still owe. Locked into daily morning tea with the chief, his seven wives, and a few others, I was ideally placed to observe the function of the chieftaincy persist despite new lands settlement and the emergence of a modern nation state. Almost daily the naba received delegations from different migrant communities and surrounding villages seeking or bringing brides to the village. From his position as village chief, as well as head of his chiefly clan, the naba was entitled to award many brides. He would also be asked to approve arranged marriages. The evenings were filled with discreet private, and occasionally public, hearings. Through this close linkage to the chief, I met several AVV settlers who were to become a part of the study before I ever moved to the project.

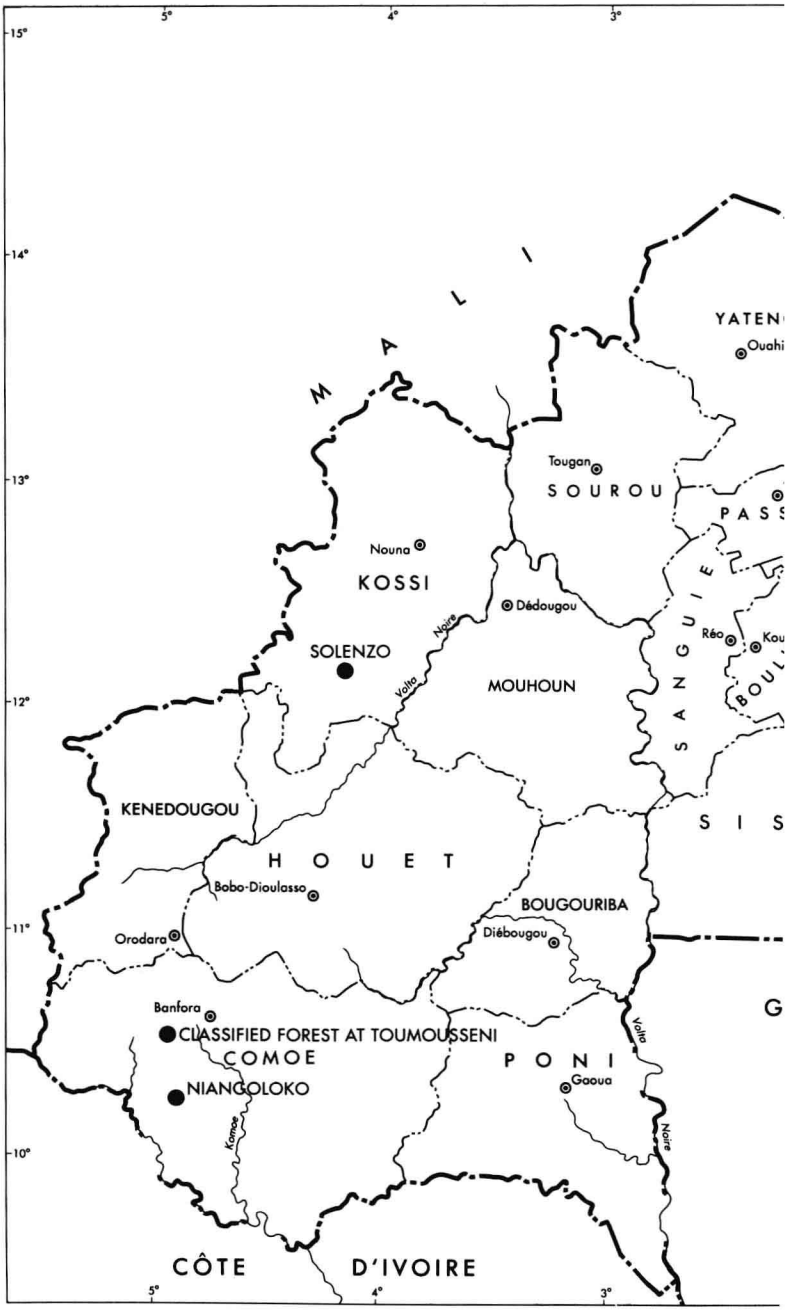
The chief's protection served me well when I moved to the AVV project village in 1979. He was a wise man who was well aware of the social and economic changes that were transforming his people at the project. Rather than choosing a member of his own extended family for me to live with, he selected the household of one of the three richest farmers, a family that historically had not been eligible for the chieftaincy and had never inter-



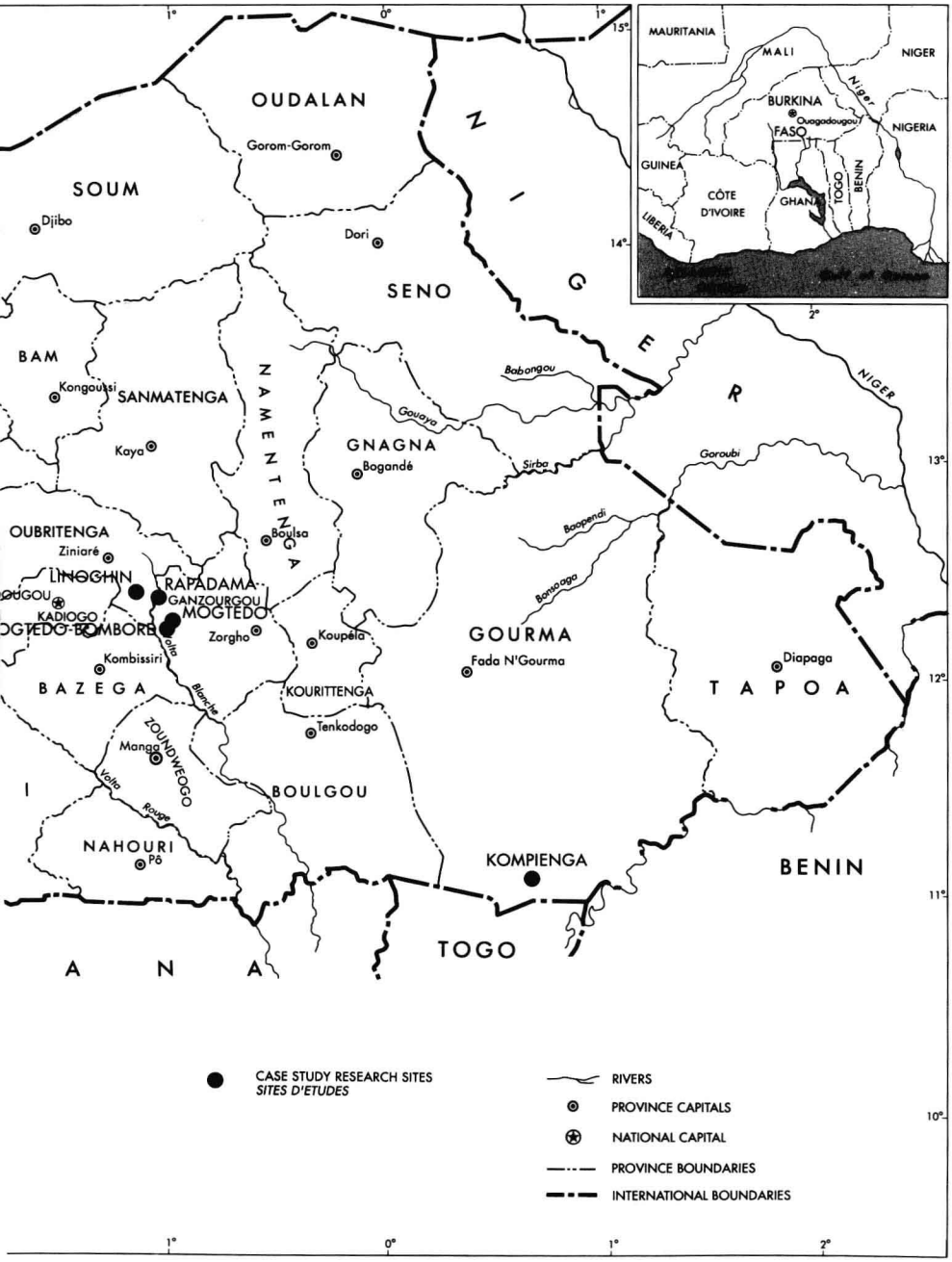
Map 1. The Onchocerciasis Control Programme. (McMillan, Painter, and Scudder 1990)

married with the chief's family. From their position of newfound wealth in the AVV, this family was now weaving a new, highly prestigious relationship with the chief. Once again I was the grateful, albeit unwitting, beneficiary of a turn of the social tables. The head of the family, Boukary, like the chief, took me under his aegis and, just as Alimata, one of the chief's daughters by his first wife, lived with me in Damesma from May 1978 to May 1979, so did Boukary's two fourteen-year-old daughters share my quarters in Village 3 in the AVV-sponsored settlements located outside Mogtedo (map 2). These people, along with my four research assistants and the elementary school teachers and extension agents posted to the villages, were the eyes through which I first saw the events described in this book.

In early April 1980, I returned to Purdue and Northwestern universities. In late June 1983, I finished the final editing of my dissertation, and the next morning I caught a flight to Burkina Faso, which was still known as Upper Volta. Because I was unwilling to face the chief and settlers alone and still unmarried, I asked one of my three younger brothers, Charles, to



Map 2. Case study research sites. (McMillan, Nana, and Savadogo 1993: appendix; reprinted courtesy of the World Bank Cartography Section. The boundaries, denominations, and any other information shown on



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