



International Conference on

The Fishing Community of Guet Ndar in

Saint Louis du Sénégal: between singularity and universality

March 15-17, 2021 at the CRDS in Saint-Louis du Sénégal (Senegal)

CALL FOR PAPERS

The Fishing Community of Guet Ndar in Saint Louis du Senegal: between singularity and universality

Framework and Rationale

At the beginning of February 2020, as the signing of the fishing agreements between Senegal and Mauritania was suspended and the fishing licenses, expected from this neighbouring nation, were not issued, the community of Guet Ndar exploded in anger in Saint-Louis, on the Island and the Langue de Barbarie. As a result, skirmishes occurred between demonstrators and law enforcement, and buildings were ransacked during the day and in the early evening of February 4, 2020. In addition, on Tuesday, April 7, 2020, clashes between fishermen from the village of Hann and fishermen from Grande Côte (Saint Louis and Fass Boye) broke out in the Yarakh district of the *commune* of Hann-Bel Air in Dakar. A pirogue and several nets belonging to the fishermen from Grande Côte were burned.

The entire community of the Bay of Hann stood up to condemn the recent events and violent clashes. This community advocates for dialogue and the preservation of "positive bridges between seafarers who all share the same difficulties, fears and will to live off the fruits of their labor, everywhere". It is this state of mind that animates the people of Guet Ndar and that has allowed them to forge matrimonial ties in the area over several generations.

Similar unfortunate incidents opposing various fishing communities are frequent on the Great West Atlantic Coast. Very often the protagonists are the fishermen from Saint-Louis, who have always migrated according to the seasons and the movements of fish schools, and who compete against the natives.

The occurrence of such problems challenges researchers and decision-makers to analyze these costly conflicts, to dialogue with the fishing community of Guet Ndar, and to try to find solutions to this crisis.

The conference will seek to place the crisis in the economic and political history of the Saint-Louis region of Senegal, in the evolution of fishing in this country and in globalization, since fishing agreements are co-signed by several nations. However, the conference will mainly focus on the analysis of the roles played by the local actors, namely, the seafarers of Guet Ndar; it will also assess the changes and continuities in the evolution of the fishing resource and the labor market.

Preliminary lines of thought

Established on the Langue de Barbarie around the 10th century, according to tradition, that is to say before the long-lasting establishment of European trading posts on the island near the mouth of the Senegal River, the inhabitants of this strip of land wedged between the river and the Atlantic Ocean migrated from the northern regions of Ganar, from Walo in the lower river valley, from Toubé in the east, and from Gandiolais in the south.

Fishing emerged as a real economic activity and responded to a market that took shape around the Island of Saint Louis in the middle of the 19th century; it is at first a river fishing, which extended throughout the delta on perimeters allotted by families. It reached its climax with the

conflict between the *caxal tubab*¹ and the fishermen of the river's mouth area, a conflict that was terminated by the Saint Louis magistrate's court (1908).

The history of the Guet ndarian community can also be understood in relation to its environment. On this incongruous stretch of land, the community of Guet Ndar has built a local society that commands respect and consideration; the sea has forged the strong character that we recognize in it. Indeed, according to historian Abdoulaye Ly, it is undoubtedly also in the daily fight against the sea that Guet ndarians, removed from the industrial society and bathing in a tradition coming from Saint-Louis, have acquired a personality full of tenacity².

It is clear, that the explanations that put forward the bellicose nature of the Guet Ndarians or their perpetual bad luck are insufficient to explain the past and present conflicts they are involved in.

In fact, the Mauritanian-Senegalese historian and writer Abdurahmane Ngaidé *drew* up a portrait of the inhabitants of Guet Ndar that is in complete opposition with what is said to have been peddled behind the scene **in** the Administration to describe the Guet Ndarians³. A neighborhood distinct from the rest of the city of Saint-Louis du Sénégal, Guet Ndar proudly displays its "identity". Life there resembles a social chaos with its high population density, its intertwined alleys, its colorful and multigenerational houses. This society is diverse and open to dialogue.

Guet Ndar is a safe haven, a refuge and a home where one finds security, food and solidarity in times of hardship, and where religion and work have shaped the community's culture. Thanks to this culture, forged in the principles of Islam and a strong sense of patriotism, Guet Ndar stood up to the colonial onslaught.

Identity and profession are so intertwined that unemployment is not tolerated in the community; home, sea, mosque and *mbâr*⁴ punctuate the fisherman's daily life; any other place is perceived as a place of debauchery, perdition and escape. Local culture is defined in opposition to European culture, but spaces of negotiation and bridges to modernity were opened with the participation of the first elected Guet Ndarian leaders in the Major Council of the city of Saint-Louis in the XIXth century and the establishment of public school in Guet Ndar in 1948. Regattas on the river and hand-to-hand wrestling are traditional games in this community. The values honored in collective social relations are hard work, solidarity, hospitality and dignity.

For Guet ndarians fishing is an exclusive line of work: they are workers of the sea only, hence their propensity to migrate all along the central-eastern Atlantic coast, from Mauritania to Guinea Conakry, up to Angola. Maritime fishing on pirogues has become a lot more diversified and a process of social and economic transformation is underway, leading to divisions within the community. This is evidenced by the different types of fishing and their professional organizations.

¹ Caxal tubab (beach seine), an efficient tool for fish catches, introduced in the first phase of colonization, will clash with other fishing techniques. This conflict will be resolved by a Saint-Louisian court. This is the first known conflict in the history of fishing in Senegal.

² Fall, B. et al, 2001, *Dialogue avec Abdoulaye LY, Historien et Homme politique Sénégalais*, Dakar, IFAN Ch. A. Diop, ENS & Sud FM, p.125

³ Ngaidé, A., 2010, *Le BIVOUAC Suivi de FRESQUES D'EXIL*, Dakar, L'Harmattan, p.83

⁴ Le *mbâr* is a location for socialization, endowed with a shelter where palaver takes place at various times of the day, depending on the generations involved.

Sea fishing has benefited from the navigation technology of river trade and ventured along the coast in the Saint Louis - Rufisque - Gunjur - Ziguinchor-Conakry axis. After WW II, with the decline of the colonial economy, it turned into a migratory sea fishing that gradually moved towards the ocean. The sites of Kayar, Joal and Mbour took to fishing with the opening of motor roads that facilitated access to urban markets⁵ and the sale of fish products there. Those itineraries enabled the fishermen from Guet Ndar to disseminate their knowledge in Senegal and in the West African region.

In the 1950s, pirogues with sails were supplanted by motorized pirogues; maritime pirogue fishing took off and fulfilled the national demand for fish. The production tools began diversifying, as demand increased for specific products.

This evolution of sea fishing, which raised the status of the artisanal sector to such a point that it can now compete honorably with the industrial sector, bears unquestionably the mark of the fishermen of Guet Ndar. They have demonstrated their mastery of the purse seine nets (for maximal fish catches) and motorized their pirogues in order to gain more autonomy for themselves, and cross more easily the bar at the mouth of the Senegal river. They are pioneers in matters of fishing.

However, this fishing community is faced with the scarcity of the fishing resource, and the constraints imposed by the regulations of marine waters that match the contours of the neighboring countries' maritime borders: Mauritania, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Guinea and Cape Verde. In addition, the effects of the 2003 opening of the breach at the mouth of the river, which include the erosion of habitats, the disruption of fishing activities and market gardening, brought a new reason for dissatisfaction to the fishermen, now more and more inclined to emigrate illegally to the Canary Islands or to other European countries.

In the current context, marked by the forthcoming exploitation of the Grande Tortue gas fields and the widening of the breach at the mouth of the Senegal River (2003), the survival of the Languede Barbarie and the Guet Ndar district remains a major concern.

Conference Themes

On the basis of these lines of reflection, communications could address the following themes (Please note that the list below is non-exhaustive):

- Historicity of the Guet Ndar neighborhood: singularity, sociology, major historical figures of the Guet Ndar neighborhood, land issues, perception of the Guet Ndarian fishermen by the other communities of Saint-Louis and by the fishing communities of the Atlantic Coast of West Africa
- Understanding the historical behavior of the seafront (from Nouadhibou to the Gulf of Guinea) and the cause of the erosion (effects of global warming, rise in the level of the Atlantic Ocean, etc.)
- A singular fishing community? Comparative approach with other fishing communities in Senegal, in Africa and in the world.

⁵ Sène, A.1985, *Les transformations sociales dans la pêche maritime piroguière. Conditions de travail et modes de vie des pêcheurs de Guet Ndar de Saint-Louis du Sénégal*. Thèse de 3e cycle en sociologie, Université Toulouse le Mirail, 706 p.

- Maritime and river fishing activities and their future: evolution of the resource, challenges related to the granting of fishing licenses (Mauritania, Gambia, Guinea, etc.), fishing agreements (European Union, Russia, Japan, etc.);
- The future of Guet Ndar:
 - What are possible development scenarios for sustainable human development in the fishing community of Guet Ndar?
 - A golden future with the outcome of the exploitation of the Grande Tortue deposits, or the departure and/or ruin of the fishermen's activities? Disappearance of the mouth of the river with the widening of the breach, a catastrophic scenario that would consecrate the submersion of Ndar, the memory-island of local European presence?

Conference Format

The conference will be held under two formats: a series of papers presentations by speakers and a forum that will bring together the conference's participants and the opinion leaders of the Guet Ndar neighborhood, in order to compare analyses and ideas formulated during the sessions, and to learn about the perspectives of the members of the Guet Ndar community. Recommendations will be made and addressed to municipal and national authorities.

ABSTRACT SUBMISSION AND COMMUNICATION PROTOCOL

Please submit a single combined file in Word or PDF including an abstract of no more than 500 words, accompanied by a brief CV and send it no later than February 01, 2021 by email to conferences@iea-saintlouis.sn with the subject line : **"The fishing community of Guet Ndar in Saint Louis du Sénégal: between singularity and universality"**.

The abstract can be written in English or French.

Paper proposals will be reviewed by the conference's scientific committee, chaired by Professor Abdoulaye Sène, Institute of Environmental Sciences and outgoing Chairman of the Board of Directors of the National Authority for Quality Assurance in Higher Education of Senegal (ANAQ-Sup).

The working languages of the conference will be English and French. Selected papers will be published in the conference proceedings.

COORDINATION:

Under the direction of Professor Abdoulaye Sène, President of the Scientific Committee, a coordination committee will be set up for the follow-up and organization of the conference. Mr. Mohamed Fall will serve as the Assistant Secretary on behalf of the IEA of Saint-Louis of Senegal.

The scientific committee includes Professor Abdoulaye Sène, Cheikh Anta Diop University of Dakar, Professor Babacar Diop Buuba, Deputy General Coordinator of the Association for the Rewriting of the General History of Senegal, Professor Mame Moussé Diagne, Cheikh Anta Diop University of Dakar, Dr. Moussé Diagne and Dr. Moussé Diagne. Cheikh Oumar Ba, Initiative Prospective Agricole et Rurale - IPAR, Mr. Ahmet Bachir Diop, Initiative Prospective Agricole et Rurale - IPAR, Mrs. Rougyatou Ka, IPAR, Professor Baydalaye Kane,

Gaston Berger University of Saint-Louis, Alioune Sall, Executive Director of the Institute of African Futures, Pretoria, South Africa, Mr. Amadou Diaw, President of the Saint-Louis Forum of Senegal, Mr. Mouhamed Naby Kane, Dakar School of Architecture, Colonel Moumar Gueye, Association of Writers of Senegal, Mr. Arona Fall, consultant, Mr. Alpha Amadou SY, Senegalese Section of the African Community of Culture (CACSEN) Mr. Ababacar Gaye Fall, IEA Saint-Louis, Mr. Malamine Savané, Sahélienne Ingéniering Qualité -SIQ, Professor Papa Ndiaye, IFAN Cheikh Anta Diop, UCAD, Professor Cheikh Ly, National Academy of Science and Technology of Senegal, Professor Cheikh Bécaye Gaye, National Academy of Science and Technology of Senegal, Professor Jean-Pierre Dozon, Fondation de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Paris, France, Professor Isabelle Surun, University of Lille, France, Mrs. Fatima Fall, Director of the Centre de Recherche et de Documentation du Sénégal (CRDS), Professor Sylvie Kandé, Suny Old Westbury, New York, Professor Massal Fall, University of Sine Saloum Elhadji Ibrahima Niassé, Mrs. Maty Ndiaye Sy, (IEA Saint-Louis), Mr. Pape Touty Sow, IEA Saint-Louis, Mr. Aladj Dieng, Consultant, Mr. Yaya Dia, Consultant, Dr. Yaya Dia. Dr. Samba Ka, Consultant, Mrs. Khadidiatou Tall Thiam, IEA Saint-Louis, Mr. Babacar Ndiaye, Business Manager, Mr. Ababacar Sène, Traditionalist, Mr. Mbaye Sar, National Confederation of the Employers in Senegal, Dr Chérif Salif Sy, Association des Economistes Sénégalais, Prof. Babacar Fall, IEA Saint-Louis.

The Organizing Committee is made up of the following volunteers: Mrs. Fatima Fall, Professor Abdoulaye Sène, Mrs. Maty Ndiaye Sy, Mr. Mohamed Fall, Dr. Cheikh Oumar Ba, Mr. Ababacar Gaye Fall, Professor Babacar Buuba Diop, Mr. Babacar Ndiaye, Mr. Mouhamed Naby Kane, Professor Dah Dieng, Professor Massal Fall, Mr. Yaya Dia, Mr. Malamine Savané, Ababacar Sène, Mr. Arona Fall, Professor Babacar Fall.