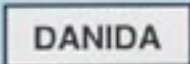
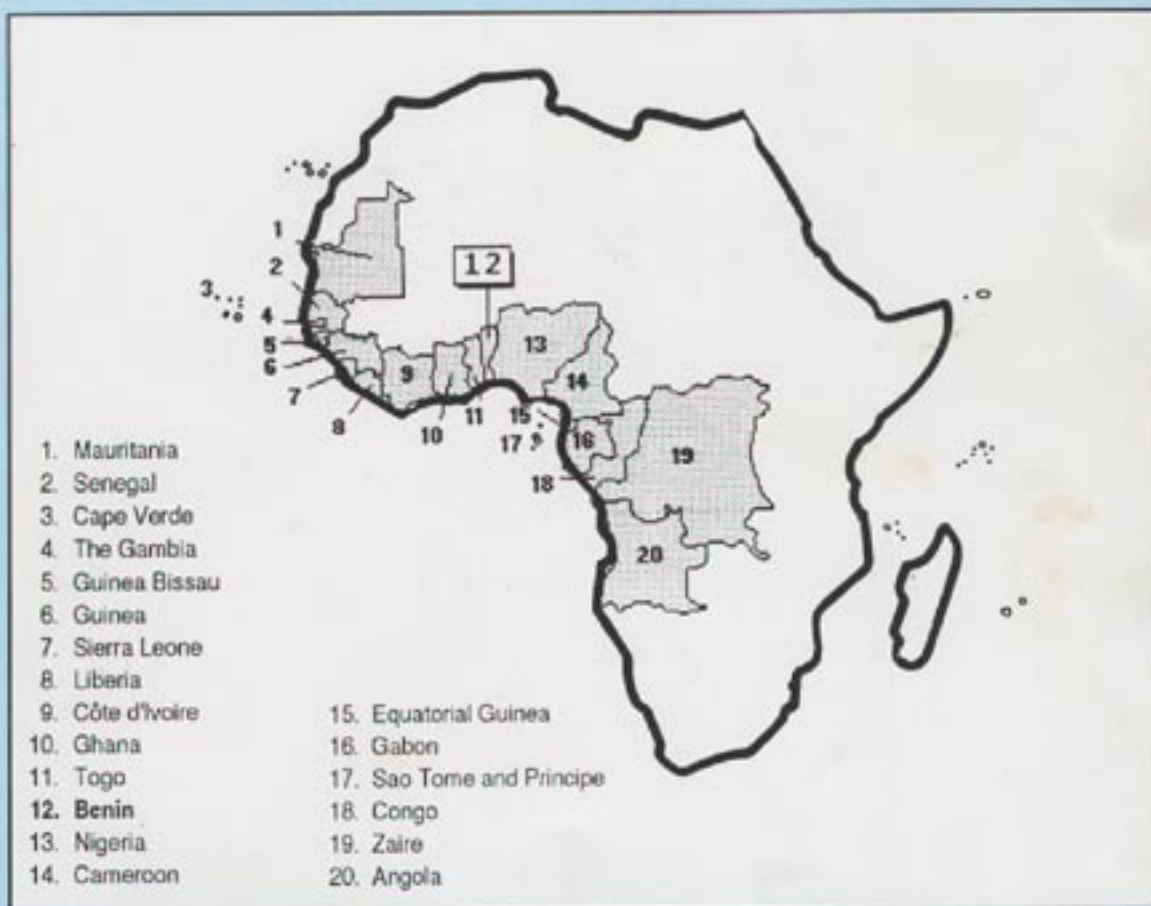
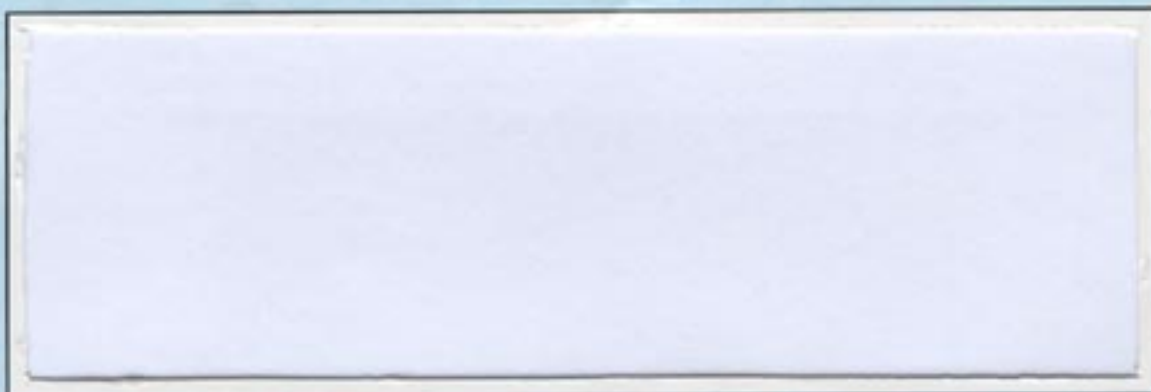




PROGRAMME FOR INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT OF
ARTISANAL FISHERIES IN WEST AFRICA

IDAF PROGRAMME



DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION OF DENMARK



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

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**Migrant Fishermen in Pointe-Noire (Congo):
Continuity and Continuous Change.**

by

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**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
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1 Other papers and articles are Jul-Larsen 1993 and forthcoming. In addition a more comprehensive work is being prepared and planned finalized by the end of 1994.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is mainly to present a systematic analysis of the background, the establishment and the development of the so-called Popo fisheries around the town of Pointe-Noire in Congo. The 'Popo' in Pointe-Noire is an easily identifiable group of fishermen originally from Benin who live and work in two village clusters on the beach only some kilometres from the town centre. Both in relation to Popo fishery in Benin as well to local canoe fishery in Congo, their production is characterized by a high level of specialization and market oriented production based on capital intensive technology and in this respect they are a typical case and part of what is now generally known as the West African migrant canoe fisheries which to a large extent dominate the coastal fisheries from Mauritania to Congo².

Although a relatively large amount of literature explicitly deals with the West African fishermen in Congo, mainly due to the existence of a long term ORSTOM fisheries research programme in Pointe-Noire, few works have systematically dealt with its historical development³. Most of them describe and analyze production (and to a minor extent the community) at a specific period of time. Such studies may provide interesting knowledge, but in order to grasp the more fundamental factors behind the dynamic aspects of the fishery, a more processual frame of analysis of the fishing community is required.

The literature has also had a tendency to concentrate on physical and quantitative aspects of Popo fishery rather than on qualitative relational aspects. On basis of the existing literature it is fairly simple to get a satisfactory picture of the demographic development in the community or the development in means of production like eg. numbers of canoes, nets and outboard engines. Much more difficult though, is to get a picture of eg. how wealth and power have been distributed or what types of institutions exist to solve different types of problems and how they function.

Furthermore, the available literature reflects what may be termed a certain production and male centrism. It mainly focuses the production aspect including means and organization of production and since it is the men who go to sea and who operate the canoes little attention has been paid to the role of women even in cases focusing distribution and trade. In view of the relatively large literature emphasising the economic role and influence of women in West African fisheries, this lack of interest is somewhat surprising. The scope of this paper is broader in the sense that all aspects of social life found important for a proper understanding of what Popo fishery is all about, are included.

² For a general description and analysis of the migrant canoe fisheries in West Africa, see e.g. Chauveau 1991.

³ Nguinguiri 1991b is one of the few exceptions where the internal development is explicitly being described and discussed. However, due to lack of data, there are several inaccuracies in the presentation, particularly related to the last 10 years.

The major problem caused by the weaknesses just referred to, has been the creation of certain myths concerning the character of Popo production. Simple observations related to growth in captures and means of production (particularly in the 1970s) has led authors to conclude that Popo fishery is highly dynamic. However, since no investigations exist as to the character of this dynamism, the overall interpretation has been to link it to the high degree of market orientation and capital intensity and thereby refer to the fishery performed by the West Africans as a kind of pseudo-capitalistic venture. Formulations like 'increased accumulation of capital', 'high level of reinvestment' and 'intensification of production' are often used to characterize the Popo and distinguish the migrants from the local Vili fishermen. However, the documentation given, if any, is problematic and our aim is to challenge such representations which seem to become increasingly widespread particularly among agents connected to development aid and technical assistance⁴.

We do in no way deny the well documented fact that Popo fishing units dispose of far more means of production than those belonging to Vili or that their direct level of reinvestment in means of production is much higher in financial terms⁵. Nor is there any reason to doubt that increased market integration has affected their production. However, the formulations referred to above, particularly when they appear in combination with other formulations like 'very dynamic production systems' easily and almost unavoidably lead our interpretation towards a dynamism of steady growth, more and more accumulation, more and more means of production and steady increase in fishing effort according to traditional western growth concepts. As will be shown, the main factors affecting the dynamism in Popo fishery are often others than the laws of the market. From a somewhat different perspective we have earlier (Jul-Larsen 1992) at a more general level argued along the same lines. However, only an in depth empirical analysis can provide the knowledge required to understand the specific logic of Popo fishermen's exploitation of resources.

An historical analysis of the Popo Pointe-Noire community, also gives us an opportunity to relate our findings to discussions which in later years have been forwarded concerning the underlying factors behind the migration and specialization processes in West African canoe fisheries as such. Literature dealing with the Popo people is understandably mainly focusing on and referring to their situation in Benin and we are therefore faced with a situation where little has been done to analyze the situation at home in light of what happens abroad⁶ or vice-versa. P.J.M. Jorion (1985 and 1988) are among the few who explicitly has connected what happens abroad to the situation in Benin and argues that the migration and specialization processes only can be understood in light of marginalization of people in their original home areas. G.K. Nukunya (1989) in a reply to Jorion argues with reference to another group of fishermen, the Anlo Ewe,

⁴ J-C. Nguingui has at several occasions (eg 1990 and 1993) pointed at how consultants (and to some extent also researchers) in their attempt to distinguish the migrant Popo from the local Vili fishermen according to such categories (Popo-dynamism versus Vili-stagnation), misunderstand the Vili fishery. As will be demonstrated here, they also misunderstand that of the Popo.

⁵ See e.g. Niel 1973, Chaboud 1982, Gobert 1985b.

⁶ Beside Pointe-Noire, there are important settlements of Popo fishermen in Libreville, Port-Gentil, in two towns near Douala and near Abidjan.

that although marginalisation may have played a role, it is mainly pull factors like increased availability of fish, market outlets etc., combined with entrepreneurial qualities among the fishermen which have led to the new migration and specialization patterns in the industry. The empirical evidence they present is however often unsatisfactory in order to draw the type of conclusions they do. The following case study may in this way contribute to a better understanding of this important question.

Nevertheless, although the existing literature in our view often demonstrates certain weaknesses it must immediately be added that the present paper could not have been produced without heavily relying upon data presented at different periods of time in the same literature.

The Popo Community of today

Before entering the question of its development there is a need for a summary description of the Popo community as it appears today. The community as such counts a little less than 500 fishermen and almost as many adult women. Together with some of their children they are all located in two villages on the northern beach of Pointe-Noire. Except for some very few exceptions all men are full-time fishermen in that they either own and/or work in a particular type of canoe fishery connected to their name. The great majority of the women smoke and sell fish either as wholesalers or as retailers on the different markets in Pointe-Noire. The ethnonym Popo makes reference to the European name of the village Grand Popo in the Lower Mono region in South West Benin. Only a part of the Popo come from Grand Popo as the community includes people of different ethnic groups. The great majority are either Xwla who originally come from different villages along the coastline between the Togolese border and Djegbadji near the town of Ouidah, or Xweda from Ouidah town or villages around or close to Lac Ahémé. Two Mina households of Togolese (Anecho) origin are also part of the community as well as one Anlo Ewe household and a small number of young Anlo Ewe workers. The latter group who originally come from the Anlo peninsula in Eastern Ghana, have all lived and worked in Benin before they migrated to Congo⁷. Almost all community members are directly or indirectly related to each other through links of kinship and/or marriage. This, however, does not necessarily mean that kinship is considered of great relevance in all types of internal relations.

The Popo are specialized in drift net fishery for pelagic sardinella and ethmalosis species which they perform from the big motorized Ghanaian type of canoes. They occasionally fish for demersal species with lines or bottom gill nets. However, the latter fishery is mainly connected with the local Vili fishermen who are scattered all along the 170km Congolese coastline. In Pointe-Noire the local fishermen are in minority compared to the Popo, and they are less easily identified in that many live in the town suburbs and not on the beach and in

⁷ The general literature on West African migrant fisheries has had a tendency to reiterate an old truth: that the Popo in Pointe-Noire are a mixture of people of Ghanaian Ewe, Togolese Mina and Beninois Xwla and Xweda origin. Although this once was the case, the community must now be considered as constituted more or less exclusively by Xwla and Xweda people.

that most of them are part-time fishermen. A relatively high number (between 200-300) of young Vili⁸ work with the Popo, often on a more or less occasional basis.

The best known institution among the Popo is the male production unit, commonly referred to as the "company"⁹. At present there are 107 units, owing around 120 big canoes in addition to a small number of smaller local dug-outs. The units are either owned individually or collectively by Popo fishermen. About 50% are individually owned¹⁰. In collectively owned units the number of owners varies from 2 to 8 persons where one always is referred to as its leader or chief. About 40% of the Popo fishermen in Pointe-Noire have status as owners. Depending on the number of owners who actually go fishing, the units need an additional labour force. The vast majority of companies therefore have a certain number of Popo workers attached to the unit who stay in different types of client relationships to one of the owners. The workers represent the remaining 60% of the adult male population. The common pattern is however, that the units also need additional non-Popo labour which is covered by the presence of the young Vili. The latter are not clients in the same way as the Popo workers, and their mobility in terms of switching between different units is much higher than in the former group. Hence, the socio-economic composition of the companies vary considerably. One extreme is that all members in a unit are Popo and owners, another is one Popo owner works exclusively with Vili labour. Both cases may be observed, but the great majority of units have one or more Popo owners in addition to both Popo and Vili workers.

A result of the close kinship network in the community is that kinship relations between Popo members in a company always can be traced. However, no specific kinship principle for recruitment of members is possible to trace. Relations (among owners as well as between owners and workers) seem to be fairly random and include agnatic, matrilineal as well as in-law relations (often several at the time). On the other hand a father may work together with friends and cousins, while his sons or brothers work in other companies.

The companies sell their catch immediately when landed on the beach. Far the greatest part is sold to Popo women according to certain principles of division. The sale is considered the concern of all crew members and the internal share system is formally based on a 50-50 share between means of production and labour. The owners take their part in the labour share provided they participate in production. Accounts between owners and workers are completed once a week and no difference is made among workers except for minor bonuses to the captain and the mechanic. The share of means of production is in cases of co-ownership kept aside and the co-

⁸ Many of the young Vili are migrants as the Popo coming from nearby Cabinda. The group also includes people with Zaïrian nationality and Congolese with other ethnic origins. They should for many purposes not be considered as a uniform group. More or less detailed descriptions of the Vili and their fisheries are found in the same literature as that dealing with the Popo in Pointe-Noire.

⁹ The use of the term 'company' varies considerably in the literature on West African Canoe fisheries. Some authors use it for analytical purposes, attributed with well defined characteristics (see eg. Jorion 1988 and Atti Mama 1991). Gobert, in his works in Pointe Noire (eg. 1985a) use it to discern collectively owned units from those owned individually. Both definitions are problematic and in this paper the term simply used to describe any Popo fishing unit. This is also the way it is used by the Popo themselves.

¹⁰ One unit is owned by a Popo woman.

owners occasionally meet (eg once a year) to decide how the money should be used. Groups of owners often have their own treasurer(s) and accountants, or the money is kept with the leader. The principles behind owner's internal rights are not easy to describe as they always will tend to be defined contextually, although it is sometimes easy to associate them with some of the formal principles in a modern share holding enterprise (rights and interests according to level of investments etc).

The assets in the companies vary considerably, although we estimate that FCFA 4 million¹¹ is the minimum required to establish a viable unit. The wealthiest companies may possess values only in production equipment near FCFA 20 million (new price), but the average is far less and probably somewhere between 6 and 8 million¹². Canoes are always bought in Ghana and transported to Pointe-Noire on liners, often after they have been navigated to Benin. Nets and engines are sometimes bought in Congo, but according to the network of the owner in question they may come from all over West Africa. No fisherman or group of fishermen wishing to establish a new unit are normally able to provide the necessary financial means by themselves. They always rely on support in terms of some kind of credits.

Units are steadily being dissolved and recreated with new ownership relations. One of the reasons is obviously that the management principles give ample room for manipulation and conflicts, particularly when we know that formal accountancy knowledge is very limited among owners as well as among workers. Furthermore, co-owners steadily seek to achieve higher social (and economic) prestige through establishing themselves as chiefs of company.

In cases when demersal gill net or line fishery is practised, the social relations are different in that many workers themselves own nets or lines privately. Since not all owners allow or are interested in this type of fishing and many workers do not own their own gear, the formation of the crews changes completely. We will not describe the share system for this fishery here¹³, but only point at the fact that demersal fisheries in relative terms are less interesting from the point of view of the owners.

When the fish is sold on the beach the price is normally set by Congolese traders early in the morning. However the majority of the catch is sold to the wives of the crew members at a somewhat lower price (FCFA 500/20 kg) than what the market is willing to pay. In principle every woman married to some of the crew members has the right to the same amount of fish from the canoe of her husband, but it is well known that it is an advantage to be the wife of a company leader or at least of one of the owners. Although many other factors influence marriage structures, this dilemma is clearly reflected in that 70% of the Popo women are married to

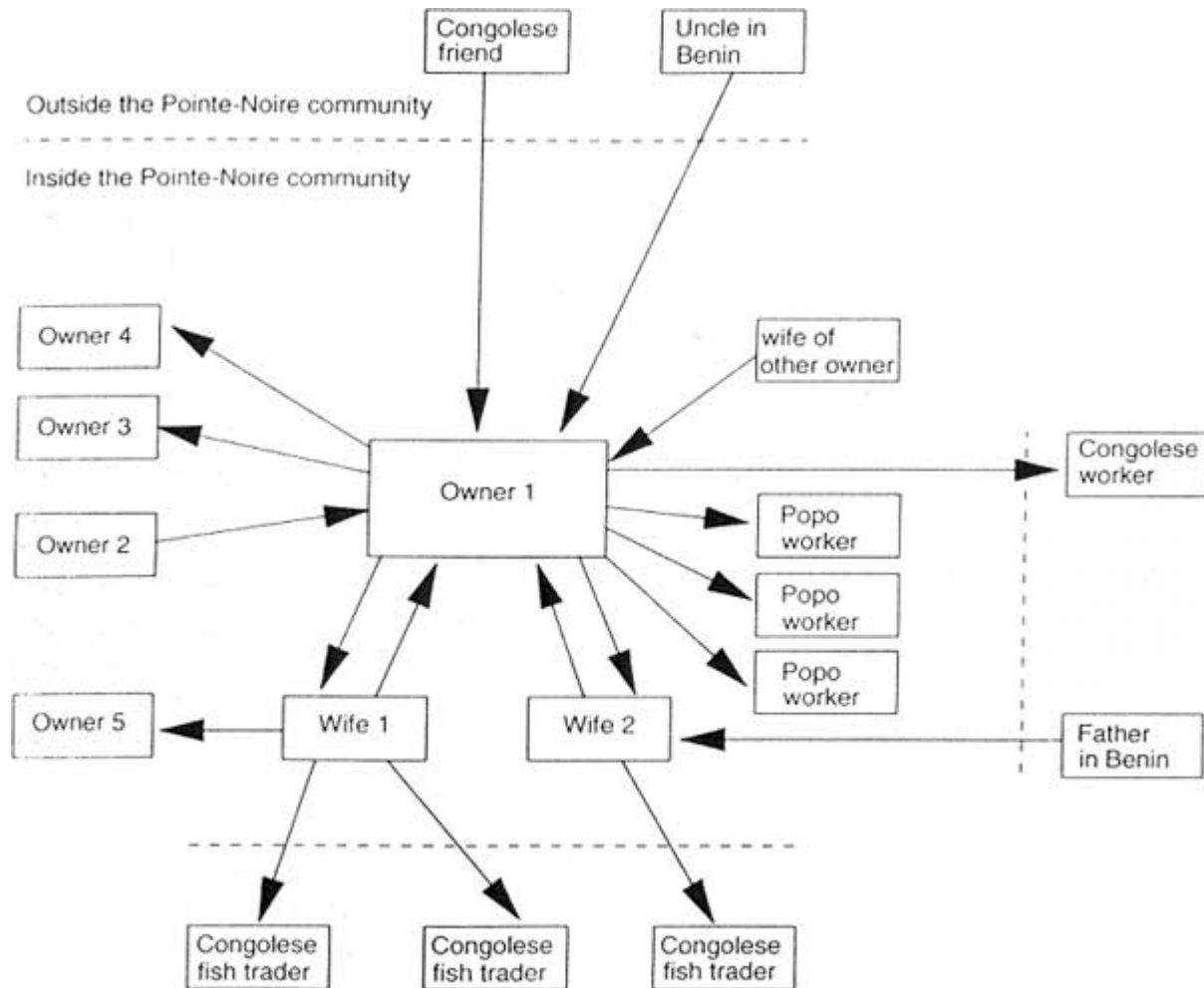
¹¹ At the time of study the fix exchange rate was 50 FCFA= 1 FRF.

¹² The figures are based on 'official' prices and should be handled with great caution. In real life people often find much cheaper ways of providing means of production. However, in relative terms they give an approximate picture of the variability.

¹³ The system is described eg by Chaboud. 1982 p.25 , Gobert 1985b p.255 and Makaya 1983. Minor changes in the system have occurred since then.

owners and that 60% of the Popo workers remain without a Popo wife in Pointe-Noire.

Figure 1. Credit chart oriented from the point of view of one Popo owner and his two wives¹⁴.



¹⁴ The chart takes a concrete case as its starting point, but has been somewhat modified in order to demonstrate the variability in types of credits found.

Each woman, independent of whether she is a single- or a co-wife constitutes her own economic unit. She has her own ovens where she smoke the fish she buys and her own staff of young Congolese workers who help her in the work¹⁵. She then either sells the fish herself in the town markets or she sends the smoked fish by rail to Congolese clients living and selling the fish in all the major population centres from Pointe-Noire to Brazzaville. For every processor the access to pelagic fish is of major concern¹⁶. In order to increase her supplies she can buy pelagic fish from a small industrial fleet or she can get access to fish in other canoes than that of her husband by providing financial support through credits. Simple observations on the beach of which women who receives fish in which companies, demonstrate that many women operate as creditors in other units than that of her husband. Information on the credit situation in a certain number of fishing units indicates that Popo women in Pointe-Noire provide at least half of all credits to the companies. Other creditors are often old well-established owners and Congolese businessmen or civil servants with whom some of the fishermen have particular relations of friendship. Fig.1 gives an idea about the complexity of credit relations in which Popo individuals, male or female, take part. One should notice that credits often may go two ways between the same persons. Each type of credit (eg. credit from processor to company owner, or from owner to workers/ clients) has its own rules and logic and within each type, context remain important to the extent that very few credit relations are equal in terms of interests, repayment periods etc.

The Popo households in Pointe-Noire mainly function as reproduction units and the overwhelming majority is based on marriages between Popo although there is no prohibition for Popo men nor women to marry a Congolese. In some few cases this may be observed. The marriage structure is polygynous and the number of wives at the beach reaches four at a maximum. Many of the fishermen also have wives living in their village of origin and there is a certain mobility among the women between Congo and Benin. To some extent this mobility is connected with the fact that a large number of couples choose to send their children to Benin for schooling when they reach a certain age. The age structure in the community shows a very clear deficit of young people (particularly boys) between 15 and 25 years of age.

As shown husbands and wives work in different economic units and they also keep separate accounts where each of them contribute to household expenses. There is great variability as to who contributes with what and how much. In such a situation one could expect the households to be of minor economic importance. To some extent this is true, but spouses are found to have important influence upon each others economic activities. Credits to the companies from wives has just been mentioned and our investigations on credit demonstrate that a woman who provides credits to fishermen, almost without exception, primarily provides loans to the company of her husband. Furthermore a wife can not decide on her economic dispositions completely in isolation from her husband. Particularly in relation to in-community

¹⁵ A thorough description of the smoking processes are presented by B. Adrien (1981).

¹⁶ It is mostly pelagic fish which is smoked. Simple estimations of the profitability of processing and trade of different species demonstrate that smoking of pelagic fish is by far the most profitable option for Popo women.

economic transactions the wife needs the approval of her husband and in some of the wealthiest households husband and wife operate *de facto* as a corporate economic unit.

Still one of the most important features to notice regarding the household structure among the Popo is the fact that 36% of the men, in spite of having reached normal age of marriage have not established their own units¹⁷. They are all workers and live single or as members in the household of their patron.

For a certain number of purposes the Popo in Pointe-Noire are organized according to a system combining agnatic descent and village/territory of origin and in order to simplify a bit, may be termed the extended family system¹⁸. The system is intimately connected to Popo religious ways of thought. Extended family identity is first of all defined according to commonly agreed genealogies which trace descent 6 to 8 generations back and on myths which connect the lineage to certain mythical forefathers, which have their place in the more general and extended pantheon of the woodoos. Lineage woodoos and other forefathers may intervene actively in everyday life to give protection and support against other woodoos or living persons who often seek to attack or render your life difficult. Protection is most efficiently sought from those with whom oneself is identified and with whom some people in the group has direct means of communication. Forefathers and woodoos are intimately connected to territories and in Benin the distribution of access to land and waters are intimately related to lineage identity. However since people from different lineages often are living in the same areas, collaboration between forefathers is important and besides, some woodoos are connected to a territory more than to lineages.

As must be expected the extended families are not formal political fora in the sense that their leaders are elected and easily identifiable. The way they work is always contextually defined in the sense that it is the nature of the matter to be handled which defines who become involved in solving it. The more general and serious a matter is, the higher is the level at which it is treated. If it concerns affairs between patrilineal cousins, only the immediate family will be involved, and if it is a minor affair between two persons of different lineages it may be solved without the mobilisation of the whole extended family. Only the most important matters are taken to the top of the hierarchy which classifies the Popo community into three main segments, often referred to as 'the three communities'. One involves those who come from the village of Gbéfa (Agonékamé) and other closely located villages in Grand Popo and the members are almost exclusively Xwla. The second group includes people who come from 9 villages located on the inner side of the lagoons stretching from Grand Popo towards the Ouidah lagoon. There are people claiming both Xwla and Xweda descent in this group. The third and less organized of the segments is exclusively constituted by Xweda who come from Ouidah town or the villages in the southern end of Lac Ahémé. It is only at the highest levels that it is possible to talk of a defined leadership. According to the matter to be solved and the group set to solve it, leadership often emerges in context and is given the person who is considered the most competent. Seniority is

¹⁷ Many of them may have a wife in Benin, but they are not in a position to bring her with him.

¹⁸ Although it is the agnatic lineage which dominate as the organizing principle in Popo kinship organisation, there are so many modifications to this, that it would be misleading to use the term lineage to describe it. We therefore prefer in this paper to use the more imprecise term 'extended family'.

always, although only one part of the considerations, and formally speaking, decisions are always taken by men.

General matters like birth, marriage and death is always a concern of the extended family and in Pointe-Noire it is mainly the family institutions which regulate the relations between the fishermen and their kin in Benin. One of the tasks most easy to observe concerns cases of the death of close kin living in Benin. In such cases that of the three segments concerned will allow for the organization of a ceremony in order to collect money to help the family at home. All adult members of the segment are in principle obliged¹⁹ to contribute with at least FCFA 1000 which is collected by the close family of the deceased person. People from the other segments equally contribute, but that is more based on voluntary participation. Such collection ceremonies are frequently organized and may include as many as three or four in one week²⁰.

In addition, the extended families organize a range of different religious ceremonies which are important parts of Popo life abroad. Community members outside the family in question participate in great number. The information of when to organize certain ceremonies comes from the family elders in Benin and is executed by the elders in Pointe-Noire.

Besides, the extended families are always involved in matters related to all types of internal conflicts in the Popo community, but as will be demonstrated below other and slightly different institutions are far more influential in this respect.

In addition to the family system, but also to a large extent as an integrated part of it, political life in the Popo community is dominated by an institution generally referred to as 'l'Association des ressortissants du Bénin' (ARB). Formally ARB appears as a sort of voluntary organisation for all Beninois residents in Pointe-Noire. It has its general board of elected men with background in trade as well as fishing and it has close connections to the newly established Benin Consulate in the town. At the beach however, ARB is organized with its own locally elected boards in the two fishing villages and where only the fishing community is concerned. This separate branch of ARB has its own regulations and rules²¹, besides of having functions which are far more

¹⁹ There is no formal sanctions against one who does not participate, except that in cases of deaths in the family of someone who does not participate, the segment will refuse to organize a similar ceremony. One of the segments have even elaborated written regulations concerning which kin in Benin are 'eligible' for ceremonies and who in Pointe-Noire who should participate.

²⁰ Estimations based on the public accounts of twenty of these ceremonies indicate that may-be as much as FCFA 30 million or more are collected annually in the Popo community in Pointe Noire for these purposes. However, it is probably not more than one fourth which actually is sent to Benin. As a thumb rule the remaining three fourths seems to be spent on ceremony costs (about 2/4) and some (the last fourth) are more or less secretly kept by the close family in Pointe Noire.

²¹ The famous written regulations of 1967 have already been presented both by Makaya 1983 and Nguinguiri 1991.

comprehensive than what is found in the community of the Benin trading population in town²². An analysis of ARBs functions at the beach shows that it is the dominating institution in relation to the following tasks:

a) All external relations which concerns the general situation of the Popo fishermen in Congo. This is mainly related to contacts with representatives from a long range of local units in the administration, like immigration, customs, port authorities, police and others, but includes also the relations to the Vili fishermen and to representatives of the Congolese residents in the fishing villages. Keeping good relations to the Congolese community also includes the organization of internal money collections for Congolese charity purposes or purposes related to beach infrastructure. The different contacts are sometimes handled through the general ARB in town, but more frequently the contacts are established directly by the fishermen.

b) ARB has both legislative, judicial and executive powers related to the internal social order of the community. Phenomena like public disturbance, theft, physical fighting, adultery and offenses related many other aspects of community life are regulated and sanctioned by the ARB leadership. In the most serious cases people are repatriated, sometimes at the expense of the community. Probably around 20 Popo men or more have been forced to leave the community during the last 10 years.

In cases where members offend or enter in open conflict with people from the Congolese community or with Government authorities, ARB will normally have a role to play either as defender, mediator or simply by taking over the person concerned and judge him internally.

c) All matters concerning the security of community members. This is illustrated through ARBs role in coordinating rescue operations at sea when canoes are missing and in an internal system of money collection to repatriate members who get seriously ill. The travel costs are in such instances covered by the community. If a person dies in Congo a similar system for covering the funeral costs exist. All money collection organized by ARB is compulsory.

d) ARB also plays a major role in regulating and judging in internal conflicts of a more economic nature. Generally these conflicts concern disputes between production units over the control of Popo labour, internal conflicts between owners and workers or pure economic conflicts between co-owners or in credit relations. In order to fulfil this judicial function a system often referred to as 'the transparency' has been established. This implies that major economic transactions or agreements always take place with the presence of a person "accepted"²³ as an ARB witness in order for ARB to get involved.

²² According to our information, the fishing population represent close to 2/3 of the total Beninois population in the town.

²³ Acceptance is misleading in the meaning of formally appointed people. However, the community knows perfectly well which persons are acceptable or not.

ARB involvement in internal economic matters normally requires that one of the parties in the conflict ask for the case being brought before the ARB. In most cases such conflicts are handled and resolved within the extended family system. It is important to notice that ARB regulations concerning economic transactions are far more particularistic in their character than what is generally the basis for conflict solving within the family system. Very simplified we may say that for ARB an economic transaction is an economic transaction independent of the other statuses held by the persons involved. A consequence of this is that ARB jurisdiction is considered by the fishermen to be more based on rules rather than on achieving compromise which often is considered to be the case within the families.

One of the most striking aspects concerning ARB at the beach is the very high degree of authority it exercises. When a decision first has been reached (that may in many instances take time) the decision is generally executed promptly and there does not seem to exist many possibilities for members to escape their jurisdiction. In money collections written documentation shows that 97 or 98% of the population contributes and estimations based on written sources for 1991 and 92 indicate that ARB collect more than FCFA 5 million annually²⁴. Investigations of judgements in economic conflicts show that a person judged to settle his or her debt generally does so with short delays, although the sums in question may be considerable. Even indirectly ARB manages to impose its authority. Although economic conflicts most often find their solutions at the extended family level, the fishermen say that ARBs more particularistic regulations have influenced and modified the way the families solve such conflicts. The fact that any person in principle can claim to have his case judged by the ARB, provided he has followed the principle of transparency has forced the family elders to take the ARB regulations into consideration and more or less employ them in their search for viable solutions.

On the basis of what has been said it becomes evident that ARB can not be considered a voluntary organisation. Its power is omnipresent and includes every Popo living on the beach indispensable of whether he or she 'joins' the organisation or not. In many ways ARB must be considered as an integrated part and the highest level of the extended family system. The only way for a Popo to escape ARB control is to move out of its control area. A study of the internal power basis of ARB shows that the organisation in terms of lineage identity is based on full representation and consensus or at least a heavy majority among them. However, in terms of socio-economic statuses the association is completely dominated by the owners. External institutions like the overall ARB in town and the Beninois Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Consulate, also have direct influence on the politics of ARB at the beach.

The above description has demonstrated that the Popo community must be considered as an internally strong and well organised social entity where economic, political and religious institutions all have a function in relation to their particular type of adaptation. Nevertheless, it

²⁴ Our estimations show the following distribution of collected money:

Congolese purposes:	800,000 FCFA
Repatriations:	2,000,000 "
Funerals:	3,000,000 "

also shows that people's relations to individuals and institutions external to the Pointe-Noire community are numerous and in some instances crucial for the survival of the unit. The relations to the Congolese authorities are evident in this respect, but also their relations to people in Benin emerge as an integrated part of the social system. Air traffic between Pointe-Noire and Cotonou is extensive, often including as many as 20-30 people from the community either coming or leaving in the same week, indicating that close contacts with people in the home areas are considered both necessary and interesting. Out of totally 87 owners in the 41 companies in the northern of the two beach villages, only 71 of them live in Congo. The remaining 16 have retired and now live in Benin, either in their village of origin or near Cotonou.

In spite of the fact that many community members have not seen their home country for a very long time (in some cases as much as 15 years) there can be no doubt that the Popo's objectives for staying abroad, is to be able one day to return to Benin with sufficient means to live materially at ease for the rest of their lives. However, the same fact challenges the realism, for many, of this intention. Investigations of those who already have returned home also show that most of them either have done so because of illness or because they realized that they would never become rich and left before they got so poor that they could not afford the travel expenses back home. Others have left because the community forced them to. Only a minority of those who have returned may be said to be wealthy persons. This is however, another matter; the important in this respect is that the Popo fishermen, to a large extent, live and continuously make dispositions according to the objectives of returning home in honour.

So far we have treated the contacts to Benin as an simple home-abroad relation. However, more detailed investigations show a need to differentiate in order to have a certain idea of what is meant about 'Benin' in this context. The home area, the Lower Mono, today emerge as a region severely struck by problems related to heavy population pressure and ecological deterioration. Land in the area is saline and unfertile and rivers and lagoons which earlier produced great quantities of fish, shellfish and mollusc (e.g. Gruvel 1906) are severely overfished to the extent that no-one can make a living exclusively relying on these resources. A visit to some of the villages also demonstrates that a great number of the population lives and works outside the area, in Benin as well as in a range of other West and Central African countries. The migrant fishermen probably only represent a minority of Popo migrants.

The relations of the migrants (whether they are Xwla or Xweda) to their villages are characterized in different ways. However, the most common feature is that the first thing a migrant Popo is expected to do, when in position, is to construct a concrete house in his home village. The result of this has been that in some of the home villages there are now more concrete houses than there are inhabitants to live in them. The construction of a house is mainly a symbolic act demonstrating at the same time, attachment at home as well as success abroad. To demonstrate attachment at home is important in that it demonstrates respect and affection for the forefathers and their territories. In order to have their protection, this symbolic act is crucial. To some extent it is within the same perspective we must understand sending home the children for schooling and socialization, but this has also to do with the fact that the Popo fishermen wish a better and a different future for their children, not in the home areas but through schooling and thereby carriers in other sectors of the society. In addition, most of the other relations to the families at home concern questions related to birth, marriage and death. All taken into account, very few of the relations of migrants to people in their home villages directly concern their economic life abroad. The only exception is the recruitment of labour to the companies which to

a large extent takes place at this level. This should however, not be understood in the sense that these relations are of minor economic importance. As just mentioned, religion and ideology continue to be an integrated part of the Popo production in Congo. It has not been possible to estimate the importance of the flow of money from Popo in Pointe-Noire to their kinsmen in the home area, any further than what has already been done in the case of collective money collections to deceased kin.

However, we have seen that in Pointe-Noire the fishermen also rely on the home country for a series of other services. Canoes must be bought in Ghana and transported to Congo, as well as other equipment like engines, nets, etc. Besides, some of those who have enough money often wish to invest, particularly in real estate, in order to secure their return to the country. Every owner or group of owners therefore has a network of 'confidants' in Benin, dealing with this type of economic affairs. But confidants appear only exceptionally to be close family members. Most of them live in or near Cotonou and are ideally people with some economic interests in Pointe-Noire. The already mentioned retired owners are crucial as confidants, but also other relations exist. Such combinations of interests give people a certain mutual control in economic transactions which always are considered delicate and risky and where numerous stories about how fishermen have been fooled, are told. There are no institutions like eg. the ARB which can handle such types of insecurity in the Benin/Congo relations and the family system or the formal judicial system of the state are both considered inefficient and not adapted for this type of transactions.

The description just presented raises a range of questions. Some of those which will be dealt with in the continuation and which are connected to the development of the Pointe-Noire community are: How did the Popo production system and the different institutions develop? Who controls what in the Popo community and how is power and authority established, exercised and maintained? How has the role of women in economic transactions become so important and what has been the consequences? Through the attempt to find answers to these in themselves important questions it is our hope that they also will contribute to the more general understanding of what Popo fishery in Congo is all about. However as a start we shall address the question of why the Popo are in Congo in the first place.

Why are the Popo in Pointe-Noire?

One of the most widely known contributions to the answer of this question which also seems to have had a certain spreading in the interpretation of the development of West African migrant fisheries in general, is found in the works of P.J.M. Jorion (1988 and to a certain extent 1985). In the analysis of two specialisation processes in West African canoe fisheries (those of the Xwla and the Ghanaian Anlo Ewe), Jorion emphasises ecological deterioration and social marginalisation (loss of access to resources) in the home areas as key factors to understand people's turn from part time lagoon fishery combined with horticulture and salt production, to full time open sea fisheries. Based on assumptions borrowed from individual risk avoidance theories, his argument leads to a general conclusion concerning specialisation in fisheries that

"no one ever becomes a full time maritime fisherman other than under duress; necessity and necessity alone can force anyone to exercise such a tough, dangerous and economically risky activity" (1988 pp.152-3). Geographical mobility (either as seasonal moves or more permanent migrations) appears hence as a new and alternative measure to minimize economic risks. When one is deprived of land "*diversification of occupations becomes impossible and risk minimisation strategies need to take an altogether different direction: mobility in following the fish wherever they go.*" (Ibid.). Hence according to Jorion the Popo in Pointe-Noire are there *a*) as a result of their loss of land at home and *b*) as a reflection of a new risk minimisation strategy "*exiling oneself for a time under more favourable skies, where fish are plenty and buyers rich.*" (Ibid)

We have elsewhere (Jul-Larsen 1992) argued that phenomena like ecologic deterioration seem to constitute an important element for the interpretation of the development in the West African canoe fisheries. However, like is the case in Jorion's work, there is a considerable danger in staring oneself blind on certain specific explanatory aspects and leaving all others apart. The result is that far too simplified pictures of specific change processes are created and that generalizations far from the reality and with little explanatory value are drawn on the basis of such simplifications and are allowed to dominate the debates. Jorion's empirical analysis of the Xwla demonstrates serious weaknesses. In spite of interesting and valuable data presented, his analysis tends sometimes to be tautological, sometimes it is unclear and in general it is ahistoric in that historical processes from very different periods of time are taken to explain the same phenomenon²⁵. In this light it could be useful to confront Jorion's general conclusions to what historical literature and the case of the Pointe-Noire fishermen may tell us on this question.

Careful reading of available literature on the history of the peoples of the Lower Mono²⁶, first of all demonstrates the close cultural, political and socio-economic relations which have existed among the so-called Aja peoples²⁷ during the last 500 years. With an internally agreed and recognized common descent and a commonly shared religio-conceptual universe, the different tribes which constitute the Aja nucleus have a history characterized by interdependence more than by distinctiveness in spite of different geographical areas of dominance and historical phases where one or more of the groups have tended to have had a political dominance at the expense of the others. In the Lower Mono, the Danxome kingdom of the Fon people which lasted from the beginning of the 18th. century until the French colonisation in the 1890s, probably represent the most important of these phases in spite of the fact that most of the Lower Mono area lies just outside what is generally conceived to have been under Danxome territorial control

²⁵ For a critique of a somewhat different kind and connected to changes in the Anlo Ewe fisheries, see Nukunya 1989.

²⁶ See e.g. articles of Karl-Augustt, Merlo & Vidaud, Wilson and others in De Medeiros 1984.

²⁷ Two traditions of historians either talk of the Aja-Tado group (Tado being the village of common descent) or the Aja-Ewe group. The latter include the different Ewe peoples (and also to some extent the Mina) in the nucleus, while the former delimits the nucleus to peoples like the Aja, Aizo, Gun, Fon, Xwla, Xweda, Toffin, Watchi and others. These are the ones who is considered to descend from the Aja people in Tado at the 16th and 17th century.

(Manning 1982). It is noteworthy that e.g. the Xweda after the defeat of their kingdom against Fon expansion in 1727, maintained certain religious functions and a politico-religious authority in relation to all of the Aja peoples through the whole period of Fon political domination; functions and authority which, as we shall see, continue to be of relevance today.

The economic development in the region during the time of Danxome, characterised first by the expansion in slave export, later substituted by palm-oil exports and increased trade and commercialisation of imported as well as local produces, affected the Xwla and the Xweda just as much as it affected the Fon, although not necessarily in the same way. The economic development in the Lower Mono must be considered within this regional context and not, like Jorion tends to do, on the basis of production in what he calls the subsistence economy of the Lower Mono.

As mentioned by Jorion, work migrations among the Xwla are not of a new date. In fact there are evidence of such migrations at least as long back as the first part of the 18th century. From the Ghanaian Fante, some of whom settled in what became known as Petit Popo (Anecho) and later became the Mina, they learned to cross the surf with canoes and soon became known as competent canoemen loading and unloading European vessels, not only in Grand Popo, but also in most of the other stations or factories along the Slave Coast. Unfortunately, no data on the number of people involved in this business are available. With the steady growth in trade and commercialisation during the last century, Patrick Manning (1985 and 89) has shown that both Xwla and Xweda also came to play a crucial role as canoe transporters in a lagoon transport system which developed in parallel to the open sea transport. At the end of last century, Manning has estimated that as many as 10.000 men (mainly Xwla, but also Xweda) were involved in this business in the whole of the Bight of Benin, and 5000 of them operated within the frontiers of present Benin (1985, p.62). This makes him consider all the coastal communities in Benin as part of a much broader regional system (1989). In addition many of the coastal people were probably also involved in the transportation of salt²⁸ northwards towards the savannah (Manning 1985), although no quantitative data as for the involvement of the coastal tribes are presented. Nevertheless, Mannings work clearly demonstrates that virtually all Xwla and an important number of Xweda families must have been involved in work migration by the end of the last century.

As interesting as the scale of Popo work migration is what Manning tells about the organization of the lagoon transport business. He quotes the agronomist Savariau (1906): "*Il existe dans tous les centres importants riverains des lagunes ou des cours d'eau de véritables corporations de piroguiers ayant chacune un chef auquel les intéressés s'adressent ...*"²⁹ and concludes that "*Among the boatmen, three labour systems coexisted. The lineage system ... the slave system ...[and] the wage system*" (1985,pp.71-2). Although one should be careful to draw too firm conclusion on the organisation of work in migration, it seems reasonable to assume that

²⁸ Salt has for centuries been produced locally in great quantities by the Xwla, but at the turn of the century imported salt was probably the most common.

²⁹ Quoted from Manning 1985, p.59.

work migration combined with alternative ways of organizing production compared to the horticultural, fish and salt producing activities in the lagoon villages at home, must have been a well known phenomenon and a commonly practised economic strategy among the Popo for at least more than a century.

The lagoon transport system collapsed in the early years of this century, mainly as a result of increased competition from roads and rail, following as results of the colonial conquest. But more or less at the same time new opportunities also emerged. The construction of piers in the main ports continued to request loaders/unloaders and the Popo now switched in their external occupations away from the lagoon transport towards work at the piers. Manning (1989, p.251) states that the labour requirements were considerably reduced as a result of this change which certainly must have been true, although not necessarily as much as Manning seems to indicate. He only mentions the pier in Cotonou as the option to turn to (see also Pliya 1980, p.98). However, personal stories from Xwla and Xweda fishermen both in Pointe-Noire and in Benin demonstrate that Cotonou only was one among several options. If we shall believe what numerous Popo told us, there must have been far more Xwla canoemen in the ports of Accra, Lomé and Lagos, than in Cotonou. Unfortunately we know little about the internal organization of this work migration, but according to stories from the fishermen there were specific Popo individuals who had specialized as a kind of work broker between the port companies and the Popo who was searching for work abroad, in each of the ports³⁰. At the same time others, both Xwla and Xweda from areas a bit more withdrawn from the coast had started to migrate in order to fish in the lagoons all the way from Anlo in Ghana in the west to Lagos and Nigeria in the east, and in freshwaters like on the Volta river and even far north on the Niger river³¹.

Just as for the lagoon transport system at the turn of this century, the migration to the piers met its end very rapidly with the construction of the modern ports. In a 15 years period from 1955 an important economic opportunity were reduced to virtually nil. A vast majority of the older Popo in Pointe-Noire as well as the fathers of the younger ones were - for longer or shorter periods of their lives - engaged in the work at the piers. Just as their fathers and grandfathers in great numbers switched from lagoon transport migration to work at the piers, the older Popo in Pointe-Noire (and certainly in many other places) were forced to seek new opportunities when the work at the piers came to a halt.

The alternative would have been to withdraw from migration and settle permanently at home, but this option was severely constrained by another process taking place more or less simultaneously. In spite of little 'hard' data, there can be no doubt that the Lower Mono since the 1950s³² has experienced a severe deterioration of its main natural resources, particularly the

³⁰ See also Manning 1982, p.144 and Gutkind 1989 pp.364-5.

³¹ A relatively important community of Popo is still reported located on the Niger river near Malanville (Lucien Zannou. personal communication).

³² The deterioration process probably started earlier, but most people seem to agree that the crisis was accentuated in the 1950s. See Pliya 1980. It has not been part of this study to seek the causes of this deterioration, which probably is a combination of many complex processes.

lagoon and river/lake fish stocks, and also to some extent arable land. Many authors others than Jorion (e.g. Surgy 1966, Houdenou 1971 and Pliya 1980) have put emphasis on this deterioration process in explaining the increase in migrating fishermen. It is of course not more than what must be expected that worsened conditions in the Lower Mono led more people to seek new for opportunities outside the area.

During the first half of this century the Popo also learned to fish in open sea. The first sea fishing Anlo Ewe companies arrived from Keta to the Lower Mono probably during the second decade where they established seasonal fishing camps with the approval of the local population who until then did not exploit the resources of the sea. As time passed, the seasonal camps of the Ewe in many cases became more or less permanent (Pliya 1980, Jorion 1985, Nukunya 1989)³³. Many Popo investigated and experimented in these opportunities and started moving along the coast first in seasonal moves. In Nigeria they were numerous as early as in the 1940s and may be even earlier. Work at the piers did not impede such experimentation as work there generally was limited to some years at the time combined with longer or shorter periods at home. Later some Popo chose to take up more long distance migration. In Pointe-Noire the first Popo must have arrived between 1955 and 1958. According to Dhont (1963) there was 10 Dahomeyans at the beach in 1962. However, it was only some years later, from the middle of the 1960s that work at the piers disappeared completely and that people in great numbers oriented themselves towards becoming migrating maritime fishermen. Contrary to what many authors seem to think, a considerable number of the Popo in Pointe-Noire (particularly among the Xweda) had no or very little previous experience in sea fisheries at their arrival. Gobert's reference (1985b p.251) to 23 company chiefs in Pointe-Noire where 10 of them are quoted to have been fishing in 9 different countries outside Benin before coming to Congo, support the general argument of migration as a well established institution in Popo life. However, it is more uncertain whether they had that much experience from sea fisheries abroad. Our own discussions with the same company owners reveal that many of them in fact had not been in these countries to fish in the sea, but rather fishing in the lagoons and/or worked at the piers.

The establishment process of the first Popo in Pointe-Noire from 1964 and onwards are also interesting in this respect. Again - contrary to what seems to be a general interpretation - the specialization in sea fisheries was not an automatic implication of their establishment in Congo. The economic activities undertaken by the Popo in the first years which in broad lasted until 1969 was in fact characterized by variation. The numerical growth of Popo men, mainly Xwla originating from the beaches or the lagoons around Grand Popo was slow and did probably not surpass 50 men in the summer of 1969. None of them arrived with sea-fishing equipment and it is symptomatic that they all started by buying or renting small Vili canoes from the local fishermen which they mainly used for the same type of fishing as the local Congolese population, whether it was in the immediate near shore areas, on the lagoons or the rivers. This implied that although Pointe-Noire served as a kind of pivot centre, many of the Popo were located for shorter or longer periods in areas far away from the town, both along the coast as well as a bit further

³³ The Anlo Ewe in Benin which in many cases have settled and taken Beninois citizenship are referred to as Keta. As shown in the previous section we also find some of them in Pointe Noire.

inland. They experimented all different types of work including trade, crafts and agriculture combined with lagoon or sea fishing near the shore³⁴. As late as in the middle of the 1970s at least 4 or 5 Popo fishermen still remained in the coastal areas north of Pointe-Noire, around the Konkouati lagoon close to the Gabonese border and in the Loango bay, practising a local Vili type of fishery combined with other productive activities.

We must assume that the Popo already at their first arrival knew about the possibilities and potentials in specialised open sea fisheries which had already been practised by other West Africans before their arrival. From the last part of the 1940s a community dominated by Ghanaian Anlo-Ewe fishermen, but also including a certain number of Xwla and Xweda had developed a specialized open sea fishery which they practised in combination with other types of fisheries from the same beach³⁵. This community was completely dissolved in November 1962 when political unrest in Congo led to the repatriation of virtually all its members. Very few of the Popo from the pre-1962 community returned to Pointe-Noire later, but their open sea fisheries was well known among the new migrants³⁶.

It was only in 1967 that the first Ghanaian canoe was ordered and equipped with outboard engine and drift nets, and two more years passed before the great majority had opted to invest in this type of fishery. That the new fishermen did not immediately invest in open sea fisheries, is probably due to several factors like lack of capital as well as general caution with regard to the political stability in the country. However, in relation to Jorions argument above, the actual course of the establishment process demonstrates that specialized open sea fisheries only was one of several options which the Popo originally had. Migration was for them, not a 'logical' result of specialisation; on the contrary specialisation followed as one of several options after their establishment in the new country. No indication exists that they were forced into open sea fishery. They could probably have continued a Vili type of part-time fishery similar to that they usually practised in the lagoons of Grand Popo.

If, in addition we investigate the relations the Popo fishermen in Pointe-Noire had to their home villages at the time of their arrival in the 1960s and early 70s, we find that they varied considerably. Some cases clearly demonstrate that some migrants were in trouble and had few possibilities to make a living at home³⁷. However, as many or even more of them would have

³⁴ Going to sea in the area around Point-Noire is very different from in Benin, as there is virtually no or a very weak surf many places in the bays of Pointe-Noire and Loango.

³⁵ For a description of the first West African fishing community, see Rossignol 1955, Venetier 1958, 1965 and undated, Dhont and Stauch 1962, and Dhont 1963.

³⁶ The literature on the Popo in Pointe Noire has not differentiated between the two West African communities and considers the development from the 1940s until today as a continuous evolution (see eg. Nguingiri 1991b). There are however few reasons to do so and the Popo of today all consider 1964 as the start of their history in Congo.

³⁷ Among those, many were found to have 'sold' their usufruct fishing rights in lagoons or rivers to others in order to pay for the preparations and the ticket. These rights may probably be returned to the person in question, provided he can return the money he originally was given, but we have no evidence of such reappropriations having taken place.

had few problems in taking up a normal village life in Benin if they so desired. Many of the Popo in Pointe-Noire belong to important families and lineages with lots of territorial rights and in Benin we were shown the particular fishing places of numerous of the Congolese residents. Simultaneously, many of the most influential people now living in the Lower Mono have previously lived and worked abroad.

On the basis of this it seems reasonable to conclude that the causes behind the migration of Popo fishermen which accelerated sharply in the 1960s and 70s, are much more complex than simply a result of marginalisation of people in the home areas due to ecological deterioration. The establishment in Congo and the turn towards full-time marine fishing among the Popo can certainly not be explained as exclusively a question of 'duress' as Jorion argues. Other factors are probably more significant and in order to understand them there is a need to reinterpret (compared to Jorions interpretation) the role that work migrations have played, both economically as well as culturally within the communities of the Xwla and Xweda. As we have tried to demonstrate, there is no evidence in the historical literature that work migrations developed as a consequence of people losing access to resources at home through losing rights to the territories of the lineage they belonged to. Nor is there any evidence that work migration as such, at any stage in history has led to a detachment of the migrants from the economic and cultural life in the home villages in the way Jorion seems to argue. On the contrary, work migration connected to possibilities emerging in the broader regional economic systems of the Aja peoples, which first developed in connection to increased trade contacts between the coastal and the northern savannah areas and the presence of the Europeans, and later as a result of the economic policies of the colonial powers, seems to have been a common economic strategy and a more or less integrated part of the Xwla and Xweda social organisation for centuries. Migration has always been combined with longer stays at home and when age prevents productive work abroad, the final return to the home village. In this respect migration has appeared as a means to increase individuals personal esteem and this together with increased economic possibilities have given them authority and power in the home communities. *Work at the 'outside' in order to bring assets to the 'inside' have been integrated in Popo social order and have functioned as a means to support and reproduce the particularities of the Xwla and the Xweda societies in the Lower Mono as such.*

In this perspective the move to Congo and the turn towards specialised maritime fishing become perfectly understandable. Work abroad is first of all a means to realize wealth which can be transferred back to the home community and converted into economic, political and religious 'projects' there. Migration which does not at the same time produce tangible results to be converted in the home community therefore in a sense becomes meaningless when looked upon from this perspective. The migration to Congo (and to other countries) which accelerated in the early 1960s is first of all a reflection of the sudden disappearance of other migrating opportunities, but also enforced by the problems of ecologic deterioration at home. Once established abroad, the main question for the Popo became that of finding a mode of work which as effectively as possible reflected the logic of their migration system. Part-time fishing similar to the mode of life in the Lower Mono was certainly not very suited for this purpose, and other opportunities in trade and craft production were probably limited and very different from what they had been doing before. On the other hand, both the pre-1962 experience as well as the experiments undertaken by some of them after 1967, showed promising results well suited to the social 'needs' of the Popo. Although the destiny of their predecessors also had demonstrated the insecurity connected to investing considerable sums abroad, the option in 1969 must have

appeared sufficiently promising. Besides, there were other means to reduce the risks of a repetition of the 1962 events and the remaining parts of this paper will to a large extent contribute to answering how this was done.

A new production system and consolidation of the community, developments in the 1970s.

The period from 1969 until 1977 was characterized by a considerable and accelerated growth in the Popo population. It started in fall 1969 when the arrival of around 60 Popo men more than doubled the male population and during the 70s the figure continued to increase. In 1973 they were 164 (Niel 1973) and in 1976 a survey done by the Port authorities in Pointe-Noire counted 470 Popo fishermen (Nguinguri 1991). The number of Ghanaian canoes shows a similar increase. In 1970 24 canoes are reported (Samba 1970) and this figure had reached 45 in 73 (Niel 1973) and around 120 in 1976. The presence of women is not given much attention in the literature. From our own investigations we know that not more than 5 Popo women lived at the beach in 1971³⁸, and according to the fishermen themselves the growth in number of women only started around 1973. In 1981 their number is reported to be 243 (Adrien 1981)³⁹, but this figure is not automatically comparable to the others since a repatriation of the Popo in September 1977 which led to an immediate decrease, had taken place in between. However on the basis of our own interviews we roughly estimate that the number of adult women in 1977 must have been situated somewhere between 200 and 300 individuals.

The total dominance of Xwla and the Xweda was strengthened during the 1970s. Although the main shift of origin and particularly the disappearance of the Anlo Ewe was a direct result of 1962 repatriation⁴⁰, Mina fishermen returned to Pointe-Noire about at the same time as the Xwla. Among the 164 fishermen surveyed by Niel in 1973, he reports that 153 are from Benin, 10 are from Togo and only one is Ghanaian. Three years later in the Congolese port authority survey, the number of Togolese was reduced to 8 (and no Ghanaians) while the presence of Beninois had tripled. Since then, the number of Mina companies and fishermen has continued to decrease with only one company and two fishermen left at present.

The growth of the Popo was almost exclusively based on the specialization in open sea fishery which, as we saw, started in the years immediately prior to 1969 and it may be worth while to investigate in some detail the patterns of recruitment which emerged in this first phase. Before the specialization process accelerated, most of the Popo collaborated in small groups of two or

³⁸ These women were named to us by several fishermen who already lived or arrived Pointe Noire that year.

³⁹ The figure only includes Popo fish smokers. Although some few women may not be included, it may be used for demographic purposes.

⁴⁰ Dhont reported (1963) the following background of the fishermen in 1962: Ghanaians 34, Togolese 21 and Dahomeyans 10. There is no need here to discuss the fact that these figures are not automatically coherent with those presented by Venetier (1958) four years earlier.

three persons. Generally these groups consisted of people who, already in Benin, had decided to migrate together and they were as often based on friendship than on formal relations of kinship. Confronted with the investment and labour needs required in order to operate an open sea canoe which demanded considerable sums of money and 5 to 6 persons as a minimum, the switch towards open sea fisheries did not lead to increased collaboration among the first residents. What happened was that each of the original groups sought an enlarged collaboration by calling for additional members in Benin. Looking at the activities among the first Popo in the years between 1967 to 1969, one discovers that representatives of virtually all the original groups revisited Benin in spite of the fact that many of them had only just arrived. It has not been possible to identify the number of original work groups in the 1960s, but based on the number of fishermen as well as the number of Ghanaian canoes which emerged at the end of the 60s, we assume that about 20 groups existed.

Case studies show that each of the groups mainly sought two things when revisiting Benin. One was money to finance the company and the other was sufficient additional labour to operate it⁴¹. To a certain extent money (credits) was found in the extended family system, but since money was scarce and Congo was far away, two or three persons were seldom able to raise enough. A common way to solve the problem seems to have been to combine the two different needs by inviting new members still in Benin to invest with them in co-ownership. In addition a certain number of younger men willing to join as labourers were included. This recruitment pattern is most probably the immediate cause behind the heavy 'invasion' of Popo men to Pointe-Noire in fall of 1969. It was however to a certain extent combined with the Clondyke syndrome of 'great opportunities in the south' which also led to the establishment of companies among people where none of the participants had been to Congo before. Many of the companies of Xweda from Lac Ahémé and Ouidah are examples of this effect.

No data exist as to how many companies existed around 1970, but we must assume that since none of them - or at least only some very few - consisted of more than one canoe at the outset, the total number must have been close to 24, equivalent to the reported number of canoes. If the adult male population was around 100 -110 this implies that there were approximately 4 Popo fishermen per canoe which is slightly more than it is to day (3.45). We can therefore assume that the newly established units already from the beginning must have had sufficient manpower to operate and that there was no need to increase their number. Besides, as will be demonstrated below, already very early in the 70s ARB established mechanisms aiming at reducing of the number of newcomers. In spite of this, the number of canoes, as has just been demonstrated, grew very fast and more or less proportionally with the number of men during the 1970s. If the companies had sufficient manpower to operate, and ARB tended to limit the establishment of newcomers there is a need to investigate why, in spite of this, the community grew so rapidly.

In order understand the underlying factors of the growth, one must focus on the organization of the companies. In 1970 virtually all the companies were co-owned with a leader who generally

⁴¹ In addition they had to make practical arrangements in order to buy canoes in Ghana as well as other equipment which was scarce in Congo.

was the man who had taken the initiative to create it. The group of co-owners were as we have shown only loosely connected through kinship and the 'rules' of authority and the sharing of assets and profits were new and floating⁴². Similar to what is the situation at present, the potential danger for economic conflicts among co-owners was considerable. For such reasons, but mainly because of the whole social logic behind migration which we described above, most of the 'younger' co-owners were eager to establish own units where they themselves figured as company chief.

These two elements, the search towards increased social esteem and economic control, are crucial factors for understanding the particular dynamism which characterized the population growth in the 1970s. Fig. 2 represents a typical case of company development from its creation in 1969 until today. It shows a pattern of continuous fissions which means that out of the first company with one canoe and six owners created in 1969 (on the basis of two persons who already had arrived in 1966), there exist today 9 companies with 12 canoes owned by 14 men. For each step during the 1970s one sees that one or more of the existing co-owners re-ally to form new units. However, in order to establish the new unit they needed financial support. Since credits mainly came from Benin, where they were difficultly available and most owners already had loans, the best way to solve the financial needs was (as in the start) to invite new people to participate as owners. In fig.2 we see that nine new owners were invited to participate in the period from 1971 to 1979. Most of them were already workers in the existing company who had performed well and who were able to raise additional funds. With new companies and new canoes each of the new group of owners also needed to provide new workers, both to cover the labour needs, but also as potential allies for future fissions. In this period the fishery was more differentiated than it appears today, and that allowed the workers to start their career by personally buying some bottom gill nets which enabled them to accumulate funds faster than through the pelagic driftnet business. Owners were also eager to initiate and organise saving societies (tontines) with their workers. In this way a system of steady upward mobility was established: young Popo came as workers, (some) were later invited to participate as co-owner, and finally established themselves as chiefs of company. Virtually all chiefs of company present in Pointe-Noire today and who arrived after 1970 started as workers in the company of someone else. It is in this perspective we must understand the growth of males in the Popo community in the 1970s. Very few came with established companies from Benin without prior involvement as workers.

In spite of a considerable lack of data, the patterns in the emergence of a new production system allows us to reflect a bit upon the question of the economic growth of the system. Numerous authors who talk about the Popo fisheries as highly dynamic substantiate their views by referring to data from the 1970s, but they do not critically discern what type of dynamism they talk about. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that the most striking feature is that the growth in the 1970s mainly was based on the demographic growth in general and that of owners in particular. The total increase in means of production (which was substantial) must to a large extent be seen as a

⁴² Companies based on co-ownership is rather unique among the West African migrant fishermen. No references in literature have been found indicating similar arrangements. Companies in Ghana or Senegal seem to be individually owned. It is interesting though that the quotation from Savariau (see p.--) concerning the lagoon transport canoes in Benin at the beginning of this century, may have been operated under similar conditions.

reflection of the increased number of people. There were as we already have mentioned approximately as many fishermen for each canoe in 1977 compared to 1970. However, this does not tell us very much about the economic development since no data exist on the exact number of owners and who owned what. Some data connected to Fig.2 may nevertheless give us some ideas about the situation. In 1969 there were six owners for the first company canoe. In 1979, 14 owners in 5 companies operated 6 canoes. That in itself means that the number of owners/canoe had been more than halved. When we also know that the average number of nets operated by the Popo canoes increased from between 150-400m in 1973 (Niel 1973) to between 500-700m in 1983 (Gobert 1985a)⁴³, it seems reasonable to assume that a certain increase of means of production/owner took place in the 1970s.

The increase in the male population combined with increases in means of production and catches⁴⁴ soon led to problems in the commercialization of the fish. In the early 70s most of the catch was sold to Congolese traders at the beach, but they were not very numerous, each of them only bought limited volumes of fish and they were difficult to control in terms of giving them credits. Many Popo present today recall that they themselves had to go to the market in town to sell fish at critical moments⁴⁵. This fact combined with the consolidation of the community which took place is one of the main reasons behind the increase in the number of women which accelerated from around 1973. Although many of the fishermen from the start had entered in alliances with Congolese women and lived in loosely established alliances with them, these women never became important actors in Popo economic life. On the contrary, the Popo women - already married to the fishermen, but having remained in Benin - immediately took up the smoking business which soon more or less solved the problem of commercialisation. Already in 1981 the number of smoking kilns at the beach had a smoking capacity far exceeding the needs in capture (Adrien 1981).

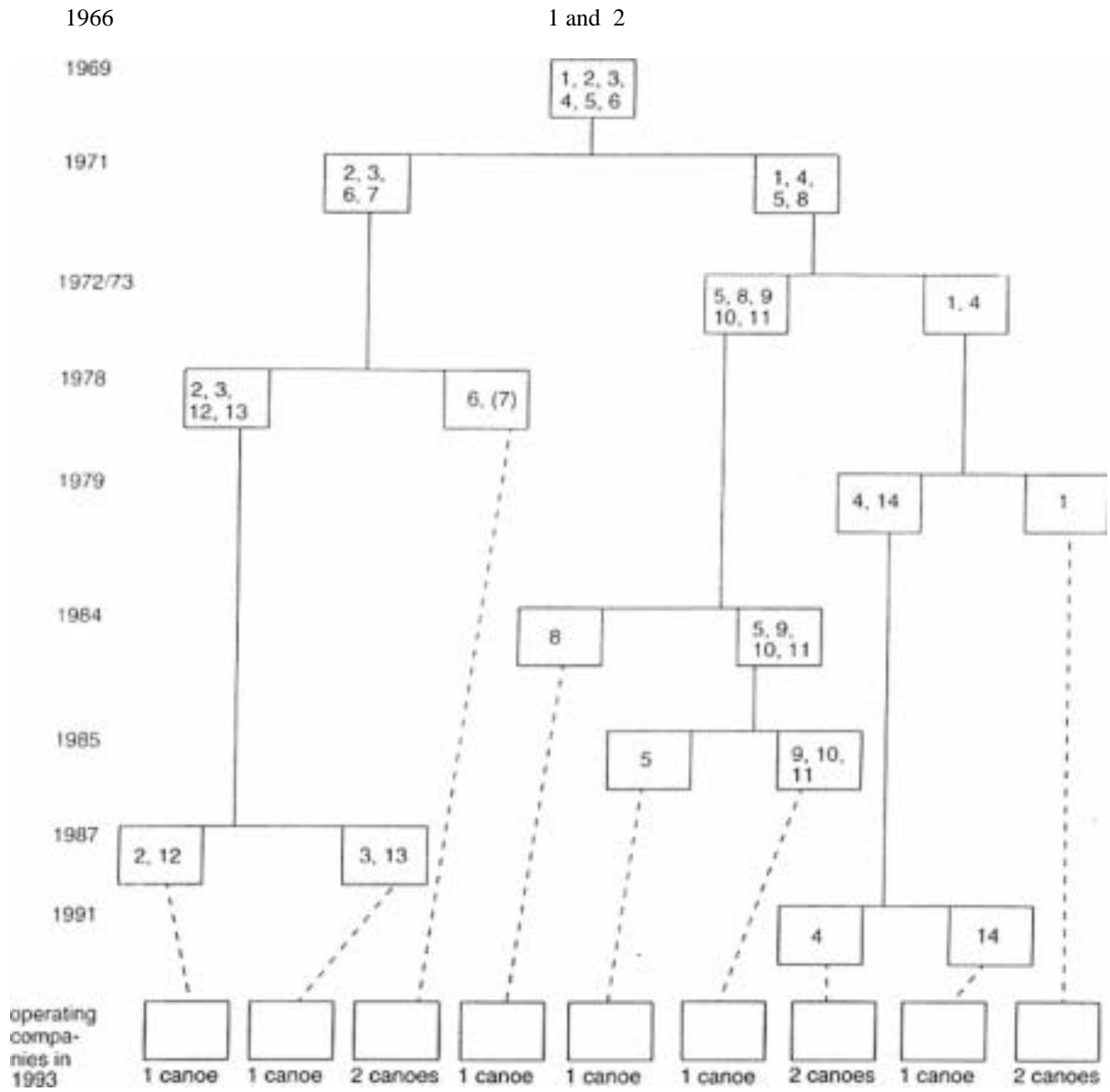
The development of a new production system and the considerable growth of people over a short period of time, represented considerable challenges. As has already been discussed, although the Popo in Benin have their institutions and ways of organizing community life, life and work in Pointe-Noire required its own institutions and social forms, different not only from those at home, but also from what they may have experienced in other migrating situations. It is probably not incorrect to say that in many ways a new community had to be created.

⁴³ These figures refer to the amount of nets operated on a fishing trip. They do not tell us about the volume of nets owned by the companies, although there normally will be a correlation between the two. No data on outboard engines allows comparisons during this time span.

⁴⁴ Catch statistics for the 1970s are virtually non-existent. Nevertheless there can be no doubt that catches increased substantially and reached their present level (varying between 5000 and 8000) tons already by the end of the 70s or the beginning of the 1980s. At the start of the ORSTOM's catch statistics programme in 1981, Popo catches are recorded at 4,756 tons (Anon. 1984).

⁴⁵ A parallel situation is referred to by Dhont (1963) in the pre-1962 community.

Fig 2. Development of one company from its creation until today.



Each box represents a company
 Each figure represents a company owner (co-owner or individual)

The first time we hear about ARB at the beach is in 1967. The initiative to create an association was external as much as internal. Beninois traders in the town mainly of Youruba (Nago) origin and other Beninois of different ethnic background, working as civil servants in the Congolese administration had lived and worked in Pointe-Noire for many years and already established an association at their level. The historical origin and development of this association is blurred and complicated. It may at least be traced back to the 1940s, probably longer and emerged at that time as an association embracing people from present Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria. The Ewe and Popo fishermen staying in Pointe-Noire before 1962 were connected to the association through an Ewe chief (Dhont 1963). Associations based on national identities only emerged in the 1960s after the independence of the different countries, but this development was gradual and slow. In 1967 the other foreigners pushed for the integration and organisation of the newly arrived fishermen. This led to the election of a chief, Kassa Sévi who rapidly elaborated the famous written regulations⁴⁶ which at a certain stage was approved by the Beninois Embassy in Kinshasa. However, it was mainly after the end of 1969, when the Popo population suddenly doubled, that ARB at the beach started to develop as a distinct and separate institution which on the one hand was part of the network of Beninois (and other West Africans) in Congo, and on the other had its own logical and consistent place in the old Popo system of extended families.

Both for the traders in town as well as for the Popo fishermen, the main preoccupation was to minimize conflicts with the Congolese society. This is clearly reflected in the ten general articles of the internal regulations. Since the risks for conflicts with the Congolese to a large extent depended on their ability to govern internally, ARB was given internal control functions from the outset. The way it deals with internal conflicts demonstrates very clearly its integration in the extended family system. What can be satisfactorily resolved at family level is never brought to ARB's attention. Only in cases when the 'lower levels' prove to fail in finding viable solutions or in cases which involves the whole population, will ARB as an institution get involved. First ARB at the beach, but if judged necessary, ARB leaders in town may also intervene, although this is exceptional.

The selection and recruitment of ARB leaders came gradually. There was no formal board in the first years, but as time passed a need for treasures, accountants and secretaries emerged and people were appointed. However, as important as the board members were a group of so-called consultants with whom Kassa conferred when he appointed people to the different positions and concerning all major decisions. These consultants were no-one else than the elders of from the different extended families and who also constituted the bulk of the chiefs of company.

The selection criteria of leaders to ARB were from the outset the same as those in the families; i.e. sex and seniority in the sense of broad personal competence. But the particularities in the new situation did that for recruitment to ARB, a person's individual capacity to establish and efficiently use the relations he established in the Congolese society became a crucial element of 'seniority'. ARB quickly developed efficient and direct links with pivot actors in the Congolese

⁴⁶ These regulations explicitly deal with the fishermen, and we are not aware of written regulations for any other group of foreigners at that time.

society, in civil society as well as in the state apparatus. The leader of the Congolese fishermen was a near friend of Kassa and actually influenced upon his appointment. Within the Congolese state apparatus they managed to establish close contacts within all the essential sectors which in the 1970s were the Party (PCT), the army and the police in particular, but also at the municipal level and in customs and port authorities did they have close contacts to individual persons. In this way ARB as an institution got a kind of *de facto* control of all the important external relations, also those connecting the fishermen to the rest of the Beninois and West African community in the town.

In spite of this monopoly, ARB was continuously controlled (and eventually sanctioned) by the extended family institutions through the system of consultants. ARBs internal authority depended to a certain extent on consensus, but with a range of diverging interests among the members and a constant need to organise things differently from how they were used to, consensus was both difficult to achieve and sometimes not the best tool with which to govern and a certain amount of "repression" was needed. The most obvious and already well experienced means in that respect was the 'management of fear' through active use of religion. ARB from the beginning, became able to use and manipulate the common ideology of the Popo in their internal governing, but since the ARB leaders often were younger and not necessarily qualified in religious matters, their use of religion always relied on support and blessing from at least a majority of the extended family leaders. Even today the 'consultants' remain with an important power basis in that it is them who legitimise the changes in commonly accepted norms of behaviour through the translation and reinterpretation of the Popo myths and basic values, but also who "adapt" the meaning of modern technology and forms of organisation into a particular Popo mode of work.

In this way an intricate system of power sharing developed between the two main political structures of the community. ARB leaders got their power through their network of external contacts which they used to serve the community. That power source was counterbalanced through the ideological control remaining in the hands of the extended family leaders. The power sharing and the history of the establishment of ARB also provides us with some of the key elements to understand another aspect of the demographic development: that of the increased numerical dominance of Xwla and Xweda people at the expense of Mina and Anlo Ewe.

The Togolese Mina and the Ewe fishermen who had been the dominant groups before 1962, were included in the same political framework as the rest. Although the Mina has a different origin than the Aja and the Ewe, they have lived in the same area than the others and are integrated in the Aja-Ewe way of life. However, they soon came in minority compared to the others and was mainly connected to ARB in a formal way as ARB more and more appeared as an organisation for the Beninois. It is symptomatic that no Mina or Ewe was appointed board-members, or

functioned as consultants⁴⁷. In minority and with little political influence the few who had arrived was not able to recruit new ones⁴⁸.

However, the Xweda were also in clear minority before 1970 and the traditional relationship between them and the Xwla has often been more problematic than that Xwla have had to Mina or Ewe. Nevertheless, the Xweda grew in number as much as the Xwla. One obvious reason is that the Xweda were Beninois and that the external ARB leaders pushed for the under communication of ethnic identities at the profit of the new national ones. Probably as important though, is that the Xweda managed to make effective use of the particular religious functions and authority they have had in southern Benin for centuries and which has been mentioned previously. The secrets and the particular relations the Xweda had to woodoos and common forefathers represented on the one hand a potential danger, but a strong means for governance. And finally, a close examination of the lineages to whom people in Pointe-Noire belonged to, reveals that many of the fishermen defining themselves as Xwla due to the location of their villages of origin situated in traditional Xwla territories, recognize that their 'real' origin is Xweda. One example of lineages with such a type of 'double identity'⁴⁹ was that of their leader Kassa Sévi. For these reasons the Xwla and the Xweda very soon came to dominate the community of the foreigners both politically and thereby also demographically.

From the outset ARB was only marginally involved in the internal economic affairs of the community. However, with the changes in mode of recruitment to production units compared to the old systems at home, and the economic complexity of the new co-ownership structure, serious conflicts on economic matters were inevitable. In the beginning these conflicts were tried solved within the framework of the extended family system, but the system quickly demonstrated an inability to reach satisfactory solutions. It was ARB who developed new sets of regulations for how to solve these conflicts, often based on far more particularistic principles than those of the families which had to take account not only of the interests of the persons present in Pointe-Noire, but also of histories and interests connected to people at home. ARB therefore developed to become a dominant judicial institution in the 1970s, known to base its verdicts on "facts" instead of on the often unclear and mingled interests which generally guide the politics of the extended families. However, careful examination of a limited number of trials demonstrate that to consider ARB regulations as basically particularistic, would be a misleading simplification. It is important to notice though, that ARB never came in a position where it had any influence or

⁴⁷ Whether they in the beginning functioned as consultants or not is a matter of discussion since this position is informal. However, today both groups are explicitly kept outside any significant political positions in the community. It is therefore symptomatic that the two Mina households still living at the beach, have chosen very different strategies both in their mode of work and in their relations to the Congolese society, than the rest of the population.

⁴⁸ It is also important in this context to mention that company system of the Mina and the Ewe were different from that of the Xwla. They did therefore not create the same type of upward mobility system as that described above.

⁴⁹ Double identity is descriptive in the sense that one observes that people of these lineages often make alternate use of Xwla or Xweda identity according to context. However, among the rest of the population, this group is often considered as "neither nor". The Xwla consider them as Xweda and vice versa.

control on one of the most important economic transactions, namely that of credits given to the fishermen in Pointe-Noire by people in Benin⁵⁰. To the extent that such control existed, it remained in the hands of the extended families involved.

The political development in the Popo community from the creation of ARB in the 1967 and during the 1970s clearly demonstrates two separate things. First that ARB, the way it developed, mainly must be understood as an expression of corporate political action between the Xwla and the Xweda present in Pointe-Noire. It is not a question of certain groups or individuals of Popo seeking to take control at the expense of others. The system of power sharing between ARB and the extended families guaranteed equal possibilities, independent of background, to practice the fishery which in the early 70s became identified as Popo fishery. It was difficult if not impossible for specific individuals or groups to utilize the political institutions in order to achieve economic benefits at the expense of others. The economic interests of Popo workers were naturally of minor concern in this system, although both the families as well as ARB could be mobilized in cases where patrons abused of their influence. However, the economic system implied that many very soon became co-owners and later chiefs of companies, provided they performed according to collective expectations and, partly as a consequence of this, were able to raise the required sums of money. Although it was external forces which pushed for a certain type of political organisation at the beach, the system as it developed, became distinctively different from the rest of ARB and must for the major part be understood as something created internally among the fishermen themselves as an answer to their specific needs.

Secondly, the development gives us clear indications of what the political organization and ARB was corporated around. As already mentioned, the most striking characteristic about ARB is its serious preoccupation and its continuous efforts to minimize all sources of conflicts with the Congolese society in general and with the Government in particular. The overall concern of the Popo in Pointe-Noire, was to be able to remain and to work in the new surroundings and to secure these rights. This preoccupation is only what must be expected when we take into account their general experience from migration as well as the fact that the events of November 1962 was something everyone knew about and continuously were reminded of. The rights of stay and work could only be achieved through the consent of the Congolese authorities⁵¹ and indirectly through the acceptance of the local Vili fishermen in Pointe-Noire, recognized to have traditional rights to the coastal area including the sea⁵². The latter was in the beginning not the less important and are reflected in the close relationship which was established the first years between Kassa Sévi and the Vili chief of village at the beach. In this perspective the strategy of minimizing all kind

⁵⁰ We know that certain leaders like e.g. Kassa tried to create such a control, but except of some specific cases connected to his home village, he never managed to enforce it.

⁵¹ This does not only mean accepting their presence. It also implies acceptance of import of gear such as canoes and to some extent also engines and nets which often were difficultly available in Congo in the beginning of the 70s.

⁵² For the customary marine tenure system among the Vili, see Nguinguiri 1988.

of conflicts with the host population and their representatives, as well as open conflicts among Popo themselves, become perfectly logic, it is a question of assuring ones rights to stay and work outside the territory where such rights are ascribed by birth.

Given the general demographic and political conditions in West and Central Africa where the mobility and dynamics of the different population groups are particularly high and ever changing and where regulations and control of frontiers are weak, the question of stay permits for the Popo (independent of how this group is defined internally) becomes a collective question. Even if individual stay permits in principle are issued by the authorities, and formal arrangements exist for a person legally to import the required means of production, this very often remains "in principle" options. The question of collectiveness is certainly not simple nor clear-cut. When the Beninois traders pushed for the inclusion of the Popo into ARB, the only reasonable interpretation of this is the recognition among the traders that the performance of the fishermen, at least indirectly, could have consequences on their own access to stay and work rights in the country. The question of collective access may therefore also include people of different occupations and different origins.

To illustrate in some details the complexity attached to the question of collective versus individual stay permits, but also to demonstrate the difficulties existing in establishing corporate political action around it, the perhaps most dramatic event in the history of the Popo in Pointe-Noire can serve as a case of illustration.

After the death of President Marien Ngouabi in May 1977 and the political changes which followed, the Congolese Government decided in early September the same year, and without any forward notification, to repatriate all foreigners who did not possess formal stay permits. In one week, after a 20 hours detention of the whole Popo community, approximately 4/5 of them were sent home via Brazzaville. Immediately after, the authorities confiscated all 166 outboard engines belonging to Popo, with the justification that proper import authorizations were lacking. Most of the ARB leadership, possessing legal stay permits remained in Pointe-Noire. In this situation, they decided that all remaining Popo should refrain from fishing other than for pure subsistence. The decision quickly led to a severe lack of fish in the markets in town and this situation prevailed for three months. Finally, the leaders of the remaining Popo were convoked to a meeting with "l'Etat major" in Pointe-Noire where they were asked why they did not fish. Answering that their engines had been taken from them, they were asked to come back the next day with whatever they could find of documents regarding the engines. ARB managed to collect most of the invoices and through negotiations they managed to retain 150 of the 166 engines and returned to their normal commercial fishing.

Three to four months after the repatriation, having heard about the recent developments in Congo, a group of four Popo who at the time of the repatriation already were in Benin for personal reasons, decided to return to Pointe-Noire. Upon arrival they were immediately put in a kind of arrest at the police station at the airport and the Popo fishermen responded immediately by returning to subsistence fishing. No new meetings were held, but after a week the four were released and the Popo returned to fish as

normal. Slowly the rest of the Popo population returned. Around 1982 the population had reached its level in 1977 and for the great majority it was the same people who returned.

Two immediate questions arise from this episode: first, how is it possible to talk of collective rights when the case clearly demonstrates that it first of all was a question of personal stay permits, and second, if ARB is to be understood as a political institution established to collectively secure the rights of stay and work, why is it that ARB did not impose on its members to have their legal permits and import documents in order?⁵³

Allowances to stay and work can of course not be seen independently from what one has to pay for them. If the costs exceed the potential profit it represents, the right is of little use. Like anyone else the fishermen will try to reduce the costs to a minimum. On the other hand, we know that at the level of the host government, individuals or groups of representatives will try to get the fishermen to pay as much as possible. Typically, my investigations among those of the Popo who had formal stay permits in 1991, on how much they had to pay for it, led me to conclude that the only answer to the question is "it depends". Even at the level of the Congolese authorities it was difficult to get exact information about which types of documentation were required and how much it would cost. Returning to the situation in 1977 it is symptomatic that ARB leaders were among the 1/5 having legal permits. Through their contacts within and their knowledge of the Congolese state apparatus they were able to get the permits for a "reasonable" price. This does not mean however, that their contacts were willing or able to deliver permits for the whole population on similar conditions. For the great majority individual access is therefore more of an illusion than a real option and they therefore had to seek other solutions in order to secure their access.

The confiscation of the outboard engines demonstrates the collective aspect even clearer since all the engines were confiscated. It is probably not possible to find out whether the Congolese authorities were in their formal right or not when they claimed import permits, but from our perspective, it is not very interesting either. In a floating situation where no one really knows what is required, this negligence may be used more or less systematically according to the purposes of different actors "representing" the government. There is always a possibility to find something which is not in conformity with certain rules or regulations, and the fishermen in fact can never count on securing their stay or their access to crucial means of production exclusively through obeying to more or less formal requests.

If it had been possible for each individual fisherman (or each company) to secure his own stay and work rights through formal means, there would simply not have been a need for ARB in the form it developed. But since that was not possible the whole rationale behind ARB was, as best as it could, to secure these rights for its members on a collective basis. It was through the creativity and flexibility, but also to some extent through the toughness of the ARB leaders that the rights were secured in 1977. Even in a critical situation like the one we have just examined,

⁵³ Both questions are essential in relation to West African migrant fisheries in general. For the most of the repatriation processes we know about in relation to fishermen have taken place on the basis of stay permits. Furthermore, it is reported from all over the region that lack of legal stay permits is the rule more than the exception.

and in spite of the inconveniences and material losses the episode imposed on the majority of the Popo, the end result was nevertheless, that the rights were retained for the Popo already established there⁵⁴ and as we have seen they all slowly returned and took up their previous activities. Opposite to what had happened in 1962 the political organization of the Popo had proved to be efficient. In terms of understanding the level of legitimacy that ARB has managed to acquire among its members, its handling of the repatriation episode remains a crucial element of explanation.

At the same time, the underlying reasons for the Popo presence in Pointe-Noire was as we argued earlier, connected to the particular relations they had to the home area including to the territory, the forefathers, the family system and its members as well as other individuals and institutions in the Popo community. In relation to that context, ARB could not be of much significance. Regulation of Pointe-Noire affairs was something completely different and involving other people than regulation of more fundamental questions connected to the basic identity of people and involving questions like marriage relations, raising of children, deaths as well as management of lineage territories. Only the system of the extended families could guarantee a proper management of these questions and safeguard the reproduction of the relations to the communities at home. The Popo political organisation as it emerged during the 60s and 70s must therefore be seen, on the one hand as a reflection of their need for corporate political action in order to secure rights of stay and work abroad, and on the other as a continuation of the old Popo system based on relatively close contacts between the migrants and their home territories.

ARB, although corporated around the rights of stay and work, also proved to be more efficient and useful for many other purposes related to the reproduction of a new production system and thereby came progressively to play the most dominant role in everyday life. However, its own legitimacy continued to depend heavily on the system of extended families which not only reproduced, but probably also reinforced the value and the use of the traditional symbols and representations such as a particular way of Popo dressing, particular foods, the use of Popo language and not the least the religious ceremonies and rituals. This particular combination of new and old, coupled with the undisputable personal capacities of Kassa Sévi as leader, led to a political system in the end of the 70s, characterized by a large degree of internal governance.

However, with respect to the reproduction of the newly established production system, the political organisation also created certain major problems. As a consequence of the particular division of functions between ARB and the families just outlined, the credit relations of the owners in Pointe-Noire had, as we have demonstrated, to be controlled by the families and not the ARB, but the ability of this institution to safeguard that people's responsibilities were fulfilled was weak. As a result and as will be demonstrated below, this particular source of funding slowly dried out. In the problem of organising control of credits during the 1970s lies a source for further change in the political organisation during the 80s which on the one hand increased the capacity

⁵⁴ In a case which dates 15 years back, we have been careful to present only the part of the story which has been possible to cross-check. Other elements on the backstage parts underline the essence of the argument even further.

of internal governance, at the same time as it also created new and serious problems in this respect.

Changes in growth patterns and political challenges in the 1980s.

The best way to illustrate that important changes occurred in the dynamics of the Popo community around 1980, is to point at an apparent paradox in the demographic development which no-one yet has investigated and which is reflected in Table 1. Although the system of company fissions, which in the 1970s probably represented the basic explanatory factor behind the demographic growth, has continued through the 1980s, the growth in male population and in canoes shows virtually full stop after the return of those who had been repatriated in 1977. In 1983 the Popo male population is reported to have been 483 (Makaya 1983) operating from about 110 canoes (Gobert 1985a). which is more or less the same figures as one finds today⁵⁵. At the same time the number of adult women has continued to grow and has almost doubled in ten years from 243 in 1981 to 420 in September 91.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ No reliable population figures exist for the period between 1983 and 1992. However, taking ORSTOM's yearly canoe surveys into account, and assuming that the rate of Popo/canoe has been more or less stable, one may assume that the population increased a bit towards 1988 to decrease again towards 1991. The canoe surveys show that from 130 canoes in 1983, the number increased towards 149 in 1988 and later fell to 134 in 1991 (Anon.unpublished).

A population figure of 1000 Popo fishermen in Pointe-Noire in 1985 which occurs in certain reports and articles (e.g. Nguingui 1991) and which is said to derive from the registration made by the 'marine marchande' must be considered incorrect. All written sources from the Popo community itself indicate that the number of fishermen never can have exceeded 550.

The difference between the ORSTOM canoe survey figures and those used in Table 1, stems from different methods of counting. The ORSTOM surveys include all canoes which have been used the last 12 months as well as a minor number of Ghanaian canoes owned by Congolese (between 3 and 5). The figures used in the table reflect those in regular use by the Popo. The difference in 1983 is 130 versus 110 and in 1991 134 versus 120.

⁵⁶ All population figures from 1991 is based on thorough elaborations of ARBs own population registers which proved to be of very high quality. They only include people actually present in Congo on the 11/9-93. The total number of Popo residing in Pointe-Noire must therefore be considered somewhat higher, since a certain number of them always is in Benin.

Table 1: Demographic development among the Popo 1970-1991

Year	# men	# women	# companies	# canoes	sources
1970	100-20 ?	5	24 ?	24	- Samba 1970
1976-7	470	200-300 ?		117	- Nguingui 1991 - Cayré & Fontana 1977
1982-3	483-500	243	75	100-10	- Chaboud 1982 - Adrien 1981 - Gobert 1985a
1991	467	424	107	120	- Own survey

Figures followed by "?" are based on estimations.

Superficial arguments often referred to, have explained this change partly by referring to that the beach villages now are overpopulated and partly to that ARB has managed to get full control and prevents new establishments. However, such arguments can not be considered satisfactory. Overpopulation in this context is a relative concept and it has been demonstrated above that the way ARB functioned in the 70s did not allow this institution to prevent its members in their strive for upward mobility without seriously losing credibility and legitimacy. If our interpretation of the development in the Popo community in the 1970s is correct, other changes in the community must have occurred which altered the conditions behind the dynamics of the demographic growth.

The best way of addressing this question is to investigate in some depth the changes and the development in the companies. On the basis of data collected by Gobert in November 1983, (1985a) and our own data from November 1992, Table 2 gives a detailed picture of how this 9 years development has taken place within 21 units, and Table 3 summarizes the quantitative data which can be read from it.

Table.3: Summarized development in means of production in 21 companies

	comps.	owners	own./comp	G.can.	can./own.	engines	eng/own.	'200'+ '400'	nets/o wn.
1983	21	65	3.09	28	0.43	66	1.01	321	4.94
1992	28	52	1.86	27	0.52	56	1.07	655	12.60

G.can.

Ghanaian canoes

engines

Outboard engines generally from 25-40 hp.

'200'+'400':

Units of pelagic driftnets of 200 and 400 meshes depth. Since a '400' net is nothing but a double '200' net, we have for 1992 added the number of '200's to the number of '400' multiplied with 2 (200+(400x2)).

Although this comparison shows several significant features, we shall for the time being dwell at the ownership structure. Tables 2 and 3 support the picture from table 1 that the fissions of companies continued. The 21 companies surveyed by Gobert in 1983 had become 28 in 1992 despite that 3 of the original ones was dissolved (Table 2). However, they also show that the number of owners decreased from 65 to 52 and the owner/company ratio decreased from 3.09 in 83 to 1.86 in 92. A closer examination of this decrease shows that 5 are dead and not substituted, 6 have failed as owners and become workers and 2 have retired and returned to Benin. Not a single new owner has been recruited to the 21 units during the 9 years in question.

The same phenomenon may also be illustrated in other ways. If we go back to Fig.2 (p.--), we see that in the period from 1969 to 79, 1 company had become 5 and the number of owners had grown from 6 to 14. After 1979 the same 5 companies have developed into 9 units, but the number of owners decreased from 14 to 13 due to the death of one (owner 7). Furthermore, the survey of all 41 production units located in the northern of the two beach villages, shows that only 3 of the 71 owners present in 1992 had become owners in 1980 or after. The remaining 68 had achieved their status as owner before 1980. In the same survey, the 20 units which was created in 1979 or earlier had an average of 3.09 owners per unit, while the same ratio for the 21 units created in 1980 or later had fallen to 1.19. There can hence be little doubt that while the number of owners in the 1970s grew steadily through the mechanism of upward mobility, this process must have stopped sometimes before 1983.

In order to understand the demographic stabilization we must therefore investigate the reasons behind the stop in the recruitment to ownership. Above we argued that the financing of new companies in the 1970s mainly was secured through the relations the fishermen had to their home communities in Benin. In terms of credits this source was difficult to utilise for many reasons. The availability of money in the home areas was limited. Those of the co-owners in Pointe-Noire wishing to become chief of company had already made use of such credits and could difficultly expect to get more, particularly since it seems that the terms of repayment were not much respected. Conflicts concerning repayment had to be treated through the extended family system which was not well adapted to deal with credits of the order required by the migrants' new production system, and over such geographical distances. It is difficult to get a clear picture of the totality of these credits, but in the few cases we were allowed to investigate (including the two reflected in Fig.1), it is symptomatic that they all date from the 1970s and that no or very little repayment has taken place. There is little doubt that the home communities slowly dried out as a source for funding new companies towards the end of the 1970s.

At the same time a new source of funding emerged through the rapidly increasing economic role of Popo women in Pointe-Noire. Many of them quickly made good profits in their processing and trade. Based on Adrien's data (1981 pp.30-1) it is relatively simple to demonstrate that women processors and traders must have disposed of fairly important sums of money already at the beginning of the decade⁵⁷.

In the last part of the 70s and into the early 1980s, the common pattern in the work of the women was personally to sell in retail the fish they had bought and smoked at the different markets in Pointe-Noire (Le Gall and Petitjean 1975, Cayré and Fontana 1977, Adrien 1981, Chaboud 1982, Makaya 1983). This way of work limited the volumes of fish each woman could handle in terms of time and Adrien seems to estimate that 100kg of fresh fish was what a woman normally could manage to handle on a daily basis. However, slowly during the 1980s, the wholesale system as described in the first section of this paper became the dominant mode of operation. That system is based, not only on sale in Pointe-Noire, but in the whole CFCO railway area from the ocean to Brazzaville. The sale of marine fish products in these areas was not new, since different enterprises handling fish from the industrial fleet and with support of the Congolese Government, for several years had been involved in the commercialisation of frozen pelagic fish in towns and villages like Loubomo, Makabana, Mouanda-M'Binda, Dolisie, Jacob and N'Kayi and Brazzaville (Le Gall and Petitjean 1975, Cayré and Fontana 1977).

The wholesale system in the artisanal sector is connected to enormous risks as the fish regularly is sent by train to the clients of the Popo women who are supposed to come to Pointe-Noire to pay their debts after an agreed period of time. The number of Popo processors who have not lost considerable sums due to problems of payment are few. However, the wholesale system also liberated Popo women timewise to concentrate her effort on the smoking and hence made it possible to handle much bigger volumes. In principle a woman together with her hired Congolese labour can easily smoke between 1 and 1.5 tons of fish per day as long as she does not have to sell it on the market. If volumes of this order only very rarely are treated by one woman, one of the main reasons is simply that the woman does not have access to that much fish⁵⁸.

⁵⁷ A proper economic analysis is not possible within the framework of this paper, nor is it the intention. However, looking at Adrien's data reveals that a Popo woman in 1981 had a profit of about FCFA 5000 for smoking and selling 100 kg of fresh fish. If we assume that about 70% of the Popo catches in 1981 were treated by the Popo women, this means that a total profit of FCFA 175 millions would have been generated among them, representing an average yearly profit of FCFA 720,000 for each woman. These figures are exclusively meant as an illustration and should not be used for further analytical purposes.

⁵⁸ This situation only concerns the most successful among the women. There are of course many women which mainly are constrained in their work by lack of money.

The development in Pointe-Noire is hence similar to what is reported to have occurred in many places along the West African coast, in that women traders in order to get increased access to fish, has started to invest heavily in fisheries. Through providing credits to new companies, some women have managed to increase their provisions of raw materials considerably. In Pointe-Noire there has been different ways of facing this general strategy. A woman can eg. support her own husband or another relative who wants to establish a new personal company, or she can provide credits to already existing companies. In the case of funding her husband, it is to increase her share of the capture (already ascribed by marriage) and in the other cases it is simply the right to buy fish which is her major concern. This is clearly demonstrated by the fact that credits from women to company owners, contrary to what is generally the case in other credit relations, do not include dates of repayment, nor interests. It is only if and when a woman decide to renounce on her right to buy fish that the question of repayment becomes relevant.

In all cases of credit assessment, and independent of the credit strategies just mentioned, one of the main concerns of a woman creditor is the number of other women with whom she will have to share the fish. No woman can under any circumstances claim more fish in a company than what the wife (ves) of the chief of company receives, without that creating serious conflicts and general moral condemnation. The size of the shares to the wives of the chief, depend furthermore upon the total number of wives married into the company. The lower the number of women, the more fish each wife and thereby the creditor can expect to receive. The fewer the wives in any (new or old) company, the more interesting it is for an outside woman to get access. But since the number of wives of course is related to the number of men (owners in particular), a potential creditor therefore tend to invest in units with few owners when assessing the creditworthiness of a company (of course in combination with questions related to its general economic performance). The same logic applies in the case of supporting the creation of a new unit. If the new chief, like in the 70s, seeks to ally with workers in order to get the funds needed, the number of wives will automatically increase. If she provides the money, the chief can establish himself individually (or at least reduce the number of co-owners) and she is thereby automatically increasing her own share⁵⁹. In table 2 we can see that individually owned units represented 8 out of 21 in 1983. In 1992, 18 companies out of the 28 existing then had become 'one man units'⁶⁰.

The switch from loans provided by people in the home communities towards loans given by Popo women living in Pointe-Noire, must have taken place gradually, but after 1980 no cases of new companies established with credits from Benin are known. From a situation in the 1970s, characterized by the continuous creation of new production units and inclusion of new owners through a system of upward mobility, new units continue to be created in the 1980s, but now without the inclusion of new owners. An obvious consequence of this change has been a

⁵⁹ In the case of funding her husband it is a bit more complicated because a wife also has to take the role of eventual co-wives into consideration. The 'best' solution is always considered to be that each co-wife invest an equal sum in the company of their husband.

⁶⁰ In the same article Gobert reports that 37 out of 41 fishing units were collectively owned (1985a, p.254). In 1992, the survey of the northern village reveals that out of the 41 companies, those collectively owned only counted 19.

cementation of the socio-economic statuses of the fishermen. In the 1980s Popo workers in Pointe-Noire have remained workers and have had few if any possibilities of surpassing the important social frontier of owner/worker. In the northern beach village only one case exists where a group of three workers (father and two sons) have been able to establish themselves as co-owners after 1979⁶¹.

The alterations in the financing patterns and the subsequent changes in the dynamics of recruitment in the companies does not in itself explain the halt in growth of the male population. Although the increase of owners stopped, the economic growth within each unit could in principle continue which again must be believed to have an influence on the recruitment of Popo workers. Table 3 shows that there has been a considerable growth in means of production in the last 9 years, both overall as well as in terms of gear/owner. However, this growth has mainly concerned the volume of nets while the total number of canoes (and thereby also engines⁶²) have remained stable and the canoe/owner rate only shows a slight increase.

The strategy of the owners in order to increase their catches seems hence to have been to increase the number of nets without increasing the number of canoes accordingly. This can be done, particularly if the canoes get bigger to allow the use of more nets per fishing trip. Data exist which demonstrate that this has happened. The average length of the Ghanaian canoes in Pointe-Noire has been in constant growth from 9.3m in 1973 (Niel 1973) to 11.35m in 1981 (Guederat 1981 quoted from Gobert 1985a) and 12.25m in 1992 (Jul-Larsen and ORSTOM, unpublished), and the length of drift nets in operation has also increased substantially during the same period. We saw that it was 500-700m in 83 (Gobert 1985a), and today the average figure probably lies somewhere between 900 and 1200m⁶³.

Although difficult to substantiate, the growth in nets seems exclusively to have concerned the pelagic driftnets and as a consequence the Popo fishery today appear more specialised in capture of pelagic species than ever. One of the immediate reasons is the introduction of a new driftnet of double depth (generally referred to as the '400 meshes') which was developed by some of the Popo themselves in 1989-90 and which have prolonged the pelagic fishing seasons by several months⁶⁴. The present use of bottom gill nets is now limited either to fishing for ceremonial

⁶¹ Some other attempts have been made either in alliance or separate from already existing co-owners. Except for the one referred to, these attempts have all systematically failed.

⁶² The decrease in the number of engines can not be considered significant since there are great uncertainties as to when to stop including an outboard engine. In the 1992 survey, all engines which were not considered 'savable' were excluded.

⁶³ No systematic data collection was performed on this issue, but continuous daily interviews and observations for 8 months allow this estimation.

⁶⁴ In general terms there are two fishing seasons for pelagic species; the main starts in March or April and lasts until September and another shorter lasting approximately one month in December and January (Gobert 1991). The introduction of the '400 meshes' prolonged the season substantially in 1991 and early 1992. However, due to the variability of the resources the timing and the duration of the fishing seasons as well as the selection of technologies, vary considerably from one year to another. In fall 1992 the potential use of '400 meshes' were reduced substantially compared to the year before.

purposes or when the pelagic stocks are considered to be absolutely out of reach. Even in these cases only a limited number of chiefs of company allows the use of their canoes for demersal fishing.

To what extent these strategies, on the one hand the specialisation into pelagic fishery, and on the other, an almost exclusive concentration on increase of nets, can be said to be the economically most profitable ones, is highly uncertain. Regarding the pelagic specialisation both price trends for the last ten years as well as some recent economic analysis (Tutuanga 1991) indicate that, from the point of view of the fishermen, the development in pelagic fisheries has been a less interesting compared to the demersal ones. However, when the economic position of the Popo processors as it has been described is considered, this specialisation becomes much more understandable. For a fish processor, the main profit potential is undoubtedly connected to smoking of pelagics and this fact is clearly reflected in their credit strategies. According to all owners, loans from Popo women are easiest to obtain for gear which are believed to increase the availability of pelagic fish. Popo women do not fund bottom gill nets. In spite of very high costs connected to the introduction of the '400 meshes' driftnets, as many as 30% of the companies in the northern beach village had acquired a sufficient number of these nets⁶⁵ in 1991, only a year after that two companies for the first time had made successful use of them. The sudden extra investments were in the majority of cases financed by the Popo women. As one fishermen put it: "the women suddenly were queuing to finance our new '400 meshes' since they had seen the year before that the nets could prolong the sardinella season by several months".

The concentration of growth in nets at the expense of other means of production is a more complicated question as it probably (on paper) would be in the economic interests of both owners and women creditors to invest in a more balanced way and increase the number of canoes. When considering this question one has to take into account the level of administration and risks connected to the operation of several canoes. If the development seems to point towards individually owned units, an owner (which in most cases remain without any formal education) who wish to invest in an additional canoe, will have to face a range of challenges: a substantial increase of the involvement of his network of confidants in Benin and thereby also a considerable increase in his risks, a doubling in the number of Popo clients which he also have to finance in order to get them to Pointe-Noire, and finally a substantial increase of the time he has to spend in general administration of the unit at the expense of other tasks. In this respect it is symptomatic that the few individual owners who operate more than one canoe, and who are all considered as particularly competent in administrative matters, are unanimous that for them, two canoes is an absolute limit of what they can manage to control. Hence, in the given system of production, one canoe seems to constitute a sort of 'marginal utility' for the individual owners.

⁶⁵ There is a need for at least 5-6 units. This represents an approximate cost surpassing FCFA 1 million. With reference to table 2 we see that more than half of them (15 out of 28 companies) had enough '400 meshes' in November 1992.

In a situation with dramatic changes, first in the relations between men and women and second in those between owners and workers compared to the previous decade, we must assume that the political situation also must have altered. The community had, in the 70s, certainly not been homogenous in social and economic respects, but in the 1980s the differentiation became more visible and pronounced, partly as a result of the increased economic role of women and partly due to the stop in the upward social mobility among men. Women have never had a place in the political institutions of the Popo, and as shown, ownership among men to a large extent followed lines of seniority in Pointe-Noire, which in most cases are coherent with the general conception of seniority on which the extended family system is based. Both women and workers were hence seriously constrained in their direct political participation whether we talk of extended families or ARB. In order to avoid conflicts which easily could lead to severe problems for the whole community, the new situation had to be attended in one way or another.

However, the way the interests of the two groups have been dealt with in Popo politics and the consequences for the two groups have been very different. As Popo, with a gender differentiated economy, women have in principle had the same economic rights as men for a very long time. When it became natural and necessary to regulate and control the new credit relations, women's interests as creditors were taken care of more or less in the same manner and according to the same rules as the relations between co-owners had been handled since the beginning of the 70s. And since the women were members of Pointe-Noire community, their economic affairs were for the major part integrated under ARB jurisdiction and control. This was unproblematic and no doubt facilitated access of loans for some as well as it liberated the production system as such from its dependence on people in the home area who only indirectly were integrated in the political system of the migrants. It also increased ARB's dominance as the main political body. The only case of economic affairs not integrated in ARB regulations seem to be those between spouses. Economic relations within marriage become too delicate for ARB to relate to on basis of 'particularistic' economic regulations which easily may conflict with the overall ideology of husband dominance in the household. Household matters always remain within the household, unless the case is so serious that the lineages (including that of the woman) have to become involved.

With their growing economic power, women could easily become a challenge and constitute a threat to the established order of the owners. As an example, one could imagine that women creditors, in order to increase their provision of fish, started offering loans to workers who wished to create their own companies or, like is the case among their Ghanaian and Togolese sisters, they could start to invest directly in fisheries by establishing their own private companies. Except for some few cases where workers have received assistance from women, and, as already mentioned, one company created in 1990 which is owned by a woman, this does not seem to take place⁶⁶. A more detailed investigation of these questions may help us understand how gender politics is played and why these strategies do not seem to be chosen by wealthy women.

⁶⁶ Another woman owned company (no.24 in Table 1) existed from earlier on and where dissolved at the death of the owner in 1988. However, that was a Mina unit where the woman had inherited her husband and continued his work.

Popo workers are extremely valuable to their patrons. In most cases the latter have brought them and he has also have forwarded their travel and instalment expenses. Furthermore the owners very much depend on their Popo labour in work. Substituting them with young Congolese can not be considered an alternative because the owners do not possess the same means of control on them. This lack of control leads to that the Congolese work force contrary to the Popo workers, continuously goes in and out of the different companies and a conflict with one owner automatically leads to the withdrawal of the worker to the benefit of another. Also, if fishing has been prosperous, the Congolese worker often choose to withdraw temporarily until he once more is in need of money. The Congolese labour has therefore always been considered unreliable by the Popo. Any attempt by Popo workers to liberate themselves is therefore strongly opposed by their patrons, and ARB effectively regulates and controls the transfer of the Popo work force from one company to another.

A woman who eventually plans to fund such a liberation must take several factors into consideration. It is always the owners who remain in control of her access to fish and provoking an owner may easily influence upon her deliveries, even if they derive from other companies. As head of household her husband, which, as have been shown, are owners in 70% of the cases, remain with the control of her stay in Congo. To provoke him or one of his colleagues may result in being transferred to his family in Benin. To profit from ARB jurisdiction and protection, any economic transaction must be done in front of witnesses approved by ARB. Funding workers in secrecy is too risky and doing it in 'transparency' quickly leads to sanctions from the owners she depends on. A woman who wishes to support other fishermen (whether they are owners or workers) can only do so in a sort of publicity which imply the knowledge and the consent of her husband. He is unlikely to agree on support to any Popo worker as that would lead to severe conflicts between him and the owners concerned and ARB will make him responsible for the problem. As long as the owners have common interests in avoiding Popo workers to establish themselves, the owners are able to make use of their political control in order to delimit eventual unfortunate consequences of the economic power and influence of their wives.

More or less the same constraints apply for a women who wish to establish her own company. Husbands in particular, will resist such an investment, unless he himself is given the command and the management which in that case means that her investment becomes like any other credit. It is symptomatic that the only woman owner operating is divorced and, according to herself, has to remain not married to a fisherman as long as she decides to continue to operate as owner. Divorce, for the woman, generally implies loss of control of her children and is not conceived as an alternative economic strategy.

To a certain extent one may say that the economic interests of women the way they have developed during the 1980s, have been integrated into the Popo political system. Through the inclusion of their credit transactions under ARB jurisdiction, women creditors have been given the necessary protection in order to secure the reproduction of these relations. Furthermore, the system puts clear limitations upon the women's economic dispositions which diminishes potential tensions between them and the owners, particularly if the women become economically

too powerful⁶⁷. It is the ARB system which provides women with the required material protection. Marriage relations and thereby the extended family system delimit their economic options, but as the marriage institution includes so many other functions and considerations, a woman does not easily avoid marriage in the pursuit of economic goals. In this way and from the point of view of the owners, ARB's more particularistic principles in economic affairs do not represent a threat to them. When the woman company owner in 1990 sued the person she had selected to manage her company because he, after a certain period, had started to perform as if he was the owner and refused to present accounts to her, the case was judged and the woman given full support according to the general rules regulating the relations between owner and manager⁶⁸. The fundamental precondition for owners to judge in such a manner is however, that the case never could have been brought in front of ARB if she was married.

In a situation where the economic relations back to the home community were considerably weakened during the 80s due to the changes in financing patterns, one could have expected that the extended family system slowly loosened its grip on politics in Pointe-Noire. If this does not seem to have been the case one important reason is probably the role it has come to play in controlling the challenges emerging from the increased economic role of women. In addition the extended families continue to play a role in the recruitment of Popo workers and children are still being sent home to the extended families for schooling and socialisation. The changes in the economy caused by the arrival of women have to some extent strengthened the principles of the extended family system in its articulation with ARB. We may say that new gender relations have favoured the reproduction of the extended family system, and this in its turn, has required continued and may-be even enforced insistence on Popo ideology and Popo traditional values. However, this insistence also reproduces the values of returning home as well as the general Popo norms and expectations concerning the role of migration and migrants which was described in an earlier chapter.

Faced with qualitatively altered conditions, the continued insistence on Popo symbols and values have created serious problems for the Popo workers. Not only have they been faced with new types of constraints which seriously delimit their possibilities to prosper economically. The ideological insistence also produces a rhetoric which emphasise that the reason for every Popo of being abroad, is earning money to bring home to the original territories in order to pay respect to and augment the esteem and prestige of the lineage and the village. In a production system which developed the way it did in the 1980s, and which excludes around 60% of the adult male population from doing exactly what the rhetorics preaches, the situation is bound to become problematic. Very soon this paradox created problems of increased tensions, problems which still has not found their solution.

⁶⁷ This has led to a situation where close economic collaboration between wives and their husbands seem to emerge as an interesting strategy for both parties, particularly within the wealthiest households.

⁶⁸ Some cases of managers operating male owned companies exist and managers have also to be appointed when e.g. the owner travels to Benin.

The workers' representation of this conflict has become intimately linked with the death of Kassa Sévi in May 1977. According to them, that is when the problems began and the owners started to become 'greedy', not giving consideration of the needs of their younger brothers. For them Kassa has become the symbol of the egalitarian part of Popo values. At the same time, the community leadership and the owners, in order to reproduce the basis for their dominance, also make systematic use of Kassa's memory as a symbol. But now it is taken to represent order, collaboration and prosperity, in other words qualities connected to ARB. In this manner Kassa has become an extraordinary potent but ambiguous symbol, embracing two directly opposed groups of interests, where the struggle of its content still continues.

The conflict between workers and owners has to a large extent become ideological where the workers challenge the representations and the rhetorics of the owners. In such a situation where the workers pretend they represent the true essence of Popo values, "management of fear" loses some of its strength. One must therefore expect that the Popo political system as it developed in the 70s, has lost parts of its basis of power in relation to the Popo workers. Nevertheless, ARB's overall authority seems to be as strong as ever. Workers may fight their owners and grumble about corruption and selfishness among their leaders, but few seem to challenge ARB as institution or the ARB leadership. If management of fear has become less effective, we must therefore assume that new sources of power have emerged during the last years.

In this respect ARB's relations with the government seem of particular significance, or more correctly two governments, since both that of the host country as well as the government of their country of origin obviously play a role in Popo politics. At the creation of ARB at the beach in 1967, we know that the Benin Embassy in Kinshasa was contacted and that it gave its approval to the written internal regulations. It is also reported that the Embassy later diffused the regulations as a kind of prototype regulations to other Popo fishing communities abroad (particularly in Gabon and Cameroon). However, the overall impression is that the Beninois government during the 70s only played a limited role in Popo politics. One should e.g. notice that no reference has been made to any direct participation or contribution in the repatriation episode in 1977, nor in the months which followed. However, the rest of the Beninois community in town was important, particularly as a guide to how to establish contacts with the Congolese authorities and with whom⁶⁹. As the Popo - Congolese contacts developed in the 70s, we have seen how the contacts with different parts of the administration became an important power base for ARB in its demarcation towards the extended family system. Although we only have limited information about the character of these relations, we assume that they in the beginning mainly must have been personal. Kassa and some of his secretaries had individuals who could be contacted each time a particular problem arose.

⁶⁹ One must keep in mind that a certain number of Beninois in town actually held positions in the Congolese administration. Although none of them as far as we know held positions of particular interest for the fishermen, it seems likely to assume that they have played a catalytic role in this process.

It is probably correct to say that in the 1970s, the ARB - Congolese relations gradually were reinforced, not only in number, but also in character. For the Congolese authorities, ARB little by little demonstrated a lot of useful sides. It supported a long range of money collections launched

by Congolese authorities⁷⁰, and it proved useful in solving a long range of matters in relation to tasks which the police, the municipal authorities a.o. had responsibility for and where the same authorities realized they would have great problems in solving them alone. When the port authorities in 1980-81, had to relocate a great number of Popo (and Vili) due to the expansion of the petrol off-shore industry, ARB played an important and constructive role. The list of examples can easily be enlarged, but a statement from a high ranking Congolese civil servant in 1992 may stand as a good illustration: *"If only our Congolese brothers were organized the way the Popo are , we would have far less problems in this country."* But ARB also demonstrated strength and internal authority. In connection with the repatriation episode, the "production strikes" they organized which led to a virtually empty fish market, made it clear for everybody that the presence of the Popo at least had some advantages. If the relations between ARB and Congolese authorities have been characterized by a certain mutual understanding, it is certainly in part explained by the fact that everyone knows what impact it will have to send the Popo away.

Although, one should be careful to avoid overstatements, it is probably not false to say that the relations between ARB and the Congolese administration, gradually have become more institutionalized, if we by institutionalisation mean that relations become less dependent on individuals. There is little doubt that many Congolese Government institutions, probably by gradually realizing the utility of ARB, today often have a more permanent type of relation with ARB, not exclusively dependent on the individuals involved. A good indicator of this is that the relations seem to be upheld in spite of considerable changes in personnel as a result of events in the central political institutions. It does however not mean that the relations have been formalized, neither does it mean that the overall relationship between the Congolese Government and ARB has ceased to be delicate and often problematic. In mid-1991, the great majority of the Popo continued to live without stay permits and other requested documents. This situation has been the basis of an ever recurring complaint from both Congolese authorities as well as people in general.

Many events in the most recent development of ARB-state relations illustrate the point of increased institutionalization, as well as an increased role of institutions from both governments in the organization and functioning of ARB. After the establishment of a Beninois consulate in Pointe-Noire in November 1991, the contacts with the Beninois state has increased noticeably. In connection with the establishment of the Consulate, the whole ARB (including the section of Beninois in town) was restructured and new boards were for the first time formally elected. An analysis of the election process at the beach illustrates very clearly how Beninois consulate officials directly influenced the elections in support of the old established leadership. Established Popo leaders got valuable support against an opposition of workers and some young owners. A

⁷⁰ During 1991 and some months of 92, more than one million FCFA was collected for "Congolese" purposes: School benches in Pointe Noire, Support to families of victims in railway accident, participation of the Congolese national team in African football championship in Dakar, and road maintenance in one of the beach villages.

new mandate and new internal regulations were also introduced⁷¹. The initiative for this restructuration came from government sources and had i.a. as a consequence that 3 women for the first time were elected as members in each of the boards. Although this restructuration to a large extent must be conceived as a formality, and the elected women were hand-picked by the existing leadership, the process still demonstrated how Beninois Government officials today may and actually do intervene in the internal Popo politics⁷². However, the Beninois Government plays its politics very carefully in respecting the way 'things work', but there is a clearly implicit wish from the authorities of a more 'modern' ARB, in the sense that more emphasis should be put on the pragmatic matters relevant for Pointe-Noire, instead of on traditional ideological ones.

Illustrating is also meetings held in Pointe-Noire in November-December 1991 that the Minister of Justice in Benin, as part of an official trip he did to Congo, had with ARB leaders. At a time when the issue of the Zaïrian immigrants to Congo was very tense and a daily part of the Congolese political agenda, the meeting mainly focused the question of stay permits for the Beninois which also has been one of the continuous preoccupation of the Consulate. Partly as a result of this meeting, ARB at the beach (and probably also in town) has started to work systematically in order to get the legal position of all their members regulated. In this connection they have also started participating in and helping Congolese authorities organizing different population surveys. In 1992 this led to a noticeable increase in the number of Popo with legal stay permits⁷³. In many ways we may say that ARB has started undertaking functions which earlier has been conceived as typical Congolese Government tasks, tasks which ARB, through their particular relations with the Congolese administration, have tried to escape.

However, if ARB has started to play a more active role in fulfilling functions on behalf of the two governments, this is, according to what has been demonstrated above, only possible if the governments themselves start performing more according to the needs of the Popo. Part of ARBs *raison d'être* remains the question of stay and work rights at a reasonable cost. In this respect, the "random" way of defining the costs of stay permits, licences and other forms of taxation are unacceptable for the Popo. In the process of putting the stay permits of the Popo in order, ARB has successfully made use of high ranking Congolese civil servants in order to avoid falling prey of people from certain parts of the Congolese administration ready to abuse of the possibilities which this campaign represented. As a consequence, costs in 1992 seem to have become more

⁷¹ These documents are a sort of blueprints of mandates and regulations of any voluntary organisation, and thereby very different from the old 1967 regulations which are much more pragmatic and normative. However, it was explicitly stated that the new internal regulations came as a supplement and not as a substitution of the old ones.

⁷² The intervention was facilitated by the fact that the president of the overall ARB in town has been appointed as consulate staff. He is himself from Grand Popo and can therefore without problems speak and act with reference to both the ARB and the extended family rhetorics.

⁷³ No figures on this increase have been possible to obtain, but according to own estimations perhaps as much as 50% of the Popo had legal stay permits by the end of 1992. Among the owners and their wives, the figure is considerably higher.

regulated and the official 'prices' are well known among the Popo. In the question of reintroducing a new municipal tax, ARB were at our departure in November 1992 "negotiating" the level of taxation with representatives of the municipality of Pointe-Noire.

As mentioned several times, a part of ARBs power base has always come from its relations and networks to representatives of the two states, but the social and economic changes in the community have probably increased the importance of the external sources of power. Enforcing their relations to the two governments, have made it possible for ARB and the system as such to handle the social tensions of internal differentiation between owners and workers which have emerged in the 1980s and reduced the escape possibilities of the Popo workers to an extent where they are left in a rather squeezed situation without or at least with very few alternatives. ARB has in the 1980s ceased being an institution almost exclusively corporated around a common interest of stay and right permits as it may be said to have been in the 1970s. Today it has also become an important tool for the owners and to some extent their wives, to maintain their economic interests at the expense of the Popo workers.

In spite of an appearingly autonomous and strong socio-political unit, the development in the Popo community, in particular since the end of the 1970s, demonstrates clearly the limitations which exist in trying to understand this development in isolation, i.e. independent from the other social entities with which it relates. The community continues to be part of what we may call the greater Popo community, and in order to govern in Pointe-Noire, community leaders continue to a certain extent to depend on acceptance and approval from family and religious leaders in Benin. Such acceptance explains e.g. how the leaders are able to put particular limitations on the economic activities of the most powerful women. On the other hand, the character of ARB has forced the Popo civil society into particular forms of articulation with both the Beninois and the Congolese authorities which in one way seem to influence the politics of the states and the way they deal with matters which are of direct relevance to the Popo, but which in another also have become crucial elements for how Popo leaders handle the internal conflicts in their own community.

Popo political leaders at present, make use of and manipulate two different systems of governance, according to which seems immediately the most opportunistic. There is hardly anything surprising in this. More interesting is that the political analysis demonstrates how the old Popo ideology continuously seem to appear a useful and efficient tool for governance, and how that in its turn reproduces and reinforces values challenging the interests of the owners and processors. Finally it demonstrates how these challenges emerging out of internally contradicting interests are tried solved through establishing alliances with the formal political apparatus of the governments. This does not mean that ARB remains negligent to e.g. the new problems caused by the stop in upward mobility. On the contrary, they work actively to find viable solutions to a conflict which many owners actually look upon with great concern because they realize that the

conflict potentially and in the long run may threaten their own future. Besides, actual conflicts between owners and workers already affect production negatively⁷⁴.

Finally, a particular consequence of the Popo political organisation should be highlighted. It has been shown how Popo politics in general and their relations to government authorities in particular, to a large extent must be understood on the basis of a collective need for rights of residence and work. Collective in this respect only means a limited number of people already part of the community. It does in no way mean Popo in general. The complete stagnation of the male population the last ten years demonstrate this point clearly. With respect to Popo living outside Pointe Noire, the particular alliance existing between ARB and Congolese authorities, effectively regulates the recruitment of new Popo fishermen into Congo. Equally, it is the same particularities of Popo politics which ultimately explains how the Anlo Ewe and Mina who tried to resettle in Pointe Noire after 1962, slowly have been marginalized and why they have left the community.

Through their particular relations to the governments, the Popo in Pointe Noire have established a *de facto* monopoly of residence and work among migrant fishermen and this monopoly contributes strongly to an almost exclusive access to certain types of resources. Other foreigners are not able to settle and at the same time Congolese fishermen who would like to compete for the same resources fail due to the lack of and the incapability among them to create, similar forms of political organisation crucial to the reproduction of the production system. It is symptomatic that all those who have tried over the years to enter into "Popo" fishery have had to do it on individual basis and that they have failed. The only competition for pelagic resources met by the Popo is that from the small industrial purse-seiners which generally operate in areas further off-shore compared to the Popo. But even against those, the Popo are competitive and several authors have noticed that in periods where the catches are big, the industrial fleet has to reduce and sometimes even stop their fishing effort. Through the processing and distribution network established by themselves (on which the purse seiners also depend to a certain extent), it is the Popo who dominate the market of pelagic fish. Their only competitors for resources are given the access as long as the market is not saturated, but when this happens it is their competitors who have to cede.

Some Concluding Remarks

The principal aim of this paper has simply been to present an analysis of the development of the Popo migrant fisheries in Congo as it has developed during a thirty years period. In a certain respect the story told is banal: community development is always a result of how its members, in cooperation and competition, internally as well as towards individuals and groups external to them, manage and choose to organize and how values, symbols and more material sources for

⁷⁴ One of the more dramatic (but probably not very viable) suggestions which was forwarded by an ARB leader, was to introduce time-limited contracts of three years for all Popo workers. Another suggestion is to seek workers among other groups of foreigners (eg. Ghanaians). They will not automatically fall under the same ideology as the Popo.

power are used and manipulated in the interests of the one or the other. The Popo community in Pointe-Noire is certainly not different from others in this respect.

However, the reason to present the analysis in this form has first of all been as a response to that part of the literature on West African migrant fisheries which through a series of oversimplifications, interpret its development within the well known framework of uni-lineal modernization. The empirical analysis demonstrates that there is nothing automatic or 'natural' in the development of the specialised migrant fisheries in West Africa. The development processes until now has been characterized i.a. by a certain growth both demographically and economically. The canoes and the engines are getting bigger and better, the volume of nets per unit and per owner has increased and many of the women processors now emerge as relatively wealthy economic actors with a considerable material security. However, we have seen how this development has been fought daily and how it emerge as a result of a combination of variables ranging from the personal qualities of the leaders, internal matters of legislation and organisation and the insistence on values and beliefs which community members identify with, and finally, the particular forms of external relations to people in Benin as well as in the host country. In this manner the Popo community in Pointe-Noire emerges at the same time as more 'traditional' and more 'modern' than what many seem to think.

Further changes and developments will evidently depend on how these different variables are handled by the principal economic, religious and political actors in the future and just as the demographic growth of males came to a sudden stop sometimes in the beginning of the 1980s, there is nothing which guarantees that the economic growth does not follow the same path. It is easy to agree on the importance lying in the threat of expulsion and repatriation and the role the Popo external relations in this respect. However, this is only one in a range of uncertainties connected to the further development of the Popo community. At present, the conflicting interests between owners, workers and women processors are governed, but at the same time these conflicts also constitute some of the main elements for the understanding of further changes. The particular type of relationship to the home community in the Lower Mono is crucial in maintaining the present level of governance and so are the intimate contacts to both the Beninois and Congolese governments. Nobody can tell what these relations will look like ten years from now. The lack of opportunities among Popo workers and the dependence of the processors on owners of the companies for raw material are also of vital importance in order to understand how politics are being defined. With the steadily growing contacts into the Congolese society, this picture must be expected to change in the years to come. We may e.g. already observe how women try to liberate themselves economically from their husbands through increasing their provisions of fish from some of the small Congolese purse seiners landing their catches in Pointe-Noire.

If the Popo fishery will continue to grow or whether it will stagnate and may-be even fall into recession, will therefore to some extent depend on changes in the social surroundings of their community. But first of all it will depend on how the community members themselves are able to handle both the existing conflicts as well as new ones which certainly will emerge as a result of changes in their social and may-be also natural environment. If one overall lesson can be drawn from this particular study, it must be that the key to understand the considerable developments in the West African canoe fisheries which has taken place during the last thirty to forty years, first

of all must be sought in the ability of the fishing communities themselves to find viable solutions to all the different challenges which they continuously are facing.

However, in spite of its empirical focus, the study may also serve as an entrance to discussions of some broader issues related to fisheries development in general and to that in West Africa more specifically. At this stage these issues can only be indicated. A more in-depth treatment will have to be taken up at a later occasion. First, the analysis serves as a reminder in the sense that understanding economic development processes requires more than a study of the immediate organisation of production. The emphasis which in much of the literature on West African canoe fisheries, has been put on the emergence of the companies is certainly not uninteresting, but it has been shown in this paper that perhaps the main key to understand how the new Popo production system emerged and how it is being reproduced, lies in the political organisation of the community. It is e.g. unlikely that the required availability of funds for reinvestments could have been maintained over time without the judicial functions in economic affairs which ARB has managed to establish.

Similar arguments have been made for long in the literature dealing with West African trade. A. Cohen's (1969 and 71) and later M. Agier's (1988) works on the Haussa cattle trade and J.L. Amselle's work (1971) on the Kooroko traders, all reveal the crucial importance of a particular type of political organisation which Cohen called the trading diasporas and which in many respects show formal and functional similarities to the ARB system in Pointe-Noire. However, little work has until now been dedicated to the study of these aspects of social life within the West African canoe fisheries, although references to similar institutions among many groups of migrant fishermen are plenty. I. Odotei (1989, 91 and forthcoming) show that Fante, Ga and Ewe fishermen in Abidjan as well as in Cotonou are established with similar associations. A. Dia (forthcoming) have made a point of the internal organisation among Wolof from Senegal, fishing near Nouadibou in Mauritania and so has Bouju (1991) when dealing with the Sierra Leonian Temne fishermen operating in Guinea. Through interviews with Popo fishermen having operated in Cameroon, Gabon and Côte d'Ivoire, we also know that "ARBs" exist and operate in these countries. In the case of the Popo it is interesting to notice how *Novincha*, a Xwla voluntary association which was created in Grand Popo in 1917 to deal with matters of common concern in the area and which still plays an important role in the politics of the Lower Mono, often are used as model for organisation abroad. In Pointe Noire however, the role of *Novincha* is to a certain extent under-communicated due to the important presence of Xweda. Although, the character and the strength of these internal associations abroad certainly will vary, there are hence good reasons to assume that the internal political organisation of the migrant West African fishermen constitutes an important element for the understanding of the considerable developments in the canoe fisheries.

The may-be most important issue however, relates to the very interesting types of relations which have been established between ARB and the different governments. No doubt, these relations indicate conflicting political strategies between the civil society and the states, but the analysis reveals at the same time an intricate and increasingly important web of collaboration which appears as a crucial element to understand how the governance of the community takes place. The way these relations have developed and the way functions of one institution seem to be taken over by another, makes it at present highly problematic to insist on a clear dichotomisation between ARB as civil society and the different government offices as the state. Just like we

argued above, that the political system of the Popo from the outset had to be conceived as an integration of the extended families and the newly established ARB, the later development indicates that, in many ways, one may now conceive the Popo political system as an integration of civil society and state institutions.

The analysis of ARB-government relations connect directly to recent debates about the role of politics and of state/society relations with respect to development. But while the current views have a tendency to emphasize the dysfunctions of this relationship and almost unilaterally consider it an impediment to economic growth and social development, the analysis of the ARB-state relations indicate that the relation may be more differentiated than what seem to be a rather general opinion within much of the political science literature. A major weakness in this analysis has been uncritically to classify ARB relations with individuals and offices which formally represent the government as society-state relations. This is of course too simple, as the persons or institutions in question easily may represent other structures and interests as well. However, if one poses the question what has been the underlying reasons having driven ambassadors, consulate employees, army colonels, party officials, police officers or town majors to enter into more or less reciprocal relations with Popo leaders, it becomes difficult to avoid factors directly connected to their professional status and a realisation on their part that collaboration with ARB represents the only, or at least the most efficient, means to exercise the kind of control expected from them and connected to their positions as government employees. It does however, not exclude that other factors like personal gain or interests of other civil societies to whom they belong, also play a role in the total picture.

The present study opens for an equally challenging perspective in relation to the questions of resource access and management. Given that state-society relations is of equal importance in the rest of the West African migrant fisheries compared to what they are in Congo, there are good reasons to believe that such relations represent a key element in understanding the underlying dynamics defining the continuously changing distribution and redefinition of resource access along the West African coast, not only among the canoe fishermen, but equally between canoe and industrial fisheries. In a situation where - at least formally - there is open access to most of the marine resources, the Pointe-Noire case demonstrates how politics influences and to a large extent defines resource access and fishing effort in a manner which considerably modifies the pattern compared to what one could expect if unilaterally referring to current bio-economic models. There are hence good reasons to believe that the level of politics and the state-society relations between fishermen and governments involved, play an important role in defining the underlying dynamics defining the continuously changing distribution and redefinition of resource access in the whole region.

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