CHAPTER 8

Drought and Marriage: Exploring the Interconnection between Climate Variability and Social Change through a Livelihood Perspective

Jonas Østergaard Nielsen

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Abstract

Understanding the feedbacks and interconnections between the social and ecological domains is a key aspect in studies of resilience, adaptation, and vulnerability to climate change. The ability of human actors to respond to environmental stimuli, like climate change, is, however, shaped by multiple non-environmental factors. A key challenge is thus how to understand the link between climate change and human actions. The present chapter suggests that a livelihood analysis approach offers a way to explore this link. Taking as its point of departure the recent drought in the West African Sahel, this chapter traces the intertwined trajectory of drought, the demise of rain-fed agriculture, circular labour migration, and social change in a small Sahelian village in northern Burkina Faso.

This volume seeks to understand how local communities meet new environmental challenges, often rooted in climatic changes that will occur, or are already occurring, due to past and present carbon emissions (IPCC 2007; UNFCCC 2007). Human adaptation to a changing environment is not a new phenomenon, but a sense of urgency has entered the scene, and researchers, policy makers, and civil soci-

ety have engaged in a race against time to understand how these challenges can be met in societies at risk from climate change impacts (Coulthard 2008).

Over the last decade, the concepts of resilience, adaptation, and vulnerability to climate change have taken centre stage in academic discourses and are widely recognized as fundamental aspects of how human societies meet the threat of current and future climate change (Adger 2000, 2006; Adger et al. 2007; Folke 2006; Smit & Wandel 2006). While diverse in scope and aim, these studies all focus on the coupling of socio-ecological systems, as 'it is not possible to meaningfully understand the dynamics of one of the domains in isolation from the other' (Walker & Salt 2006: 31; Berkes & Folke 1998; Gunderson & Holling 2002). While the emphasis is on understanding feedbacks and interconnections between social and ecological domains, resilience, adaptation, and vulnerability to climate change literature stresses that the ability of human actors to respond to specific environmental stimuli like climate change is shaped by multiple historical, political, and economic contexts. Thus, environmental changes might not be a significant driver of human actions in societies around the world. A pivotal point in much of this literature is therefore how to single out, or simply understand, the link between climate change and real-world decisions taken by individuals or groups living in places affected by climate variability and change. This chapter suggests that a livelihood strategies analysis approach may constitute a way to explore this connection by looking at the relationship between drought, the demise of rain-fed agriculture, circular labour migration, and social change in a small Sahelian village, Biidi 2, in northern Burkina Faso.

The chapter will begin with a brief theoretical review linking livelihood studies and the concepts of resilience, adaptation, and vulnerability to climate change research. It will then introduce the setting and the methodology. The analysis' point of departure is the recent drought in the Sahel and the negative consequences of this on rain-fed agriculture in the village. Circular labour migration by young men to Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, is shown to be a key livelihood strategy negating this. Having presented the relationship between

drought, the demise of rain-fed agriculture and labour migration, the chapter argues that this livelihood strategy is also connected to the payment of bride price. Finally, I explore how this link has resulted in a number of other social changes in the village, focusing primarily on changes in marriage practices and power structures.

Linking environmental and social domains through livelihood studies

Recent livelihood studies found their intellectual inspiration in an IDS discussion paper by Robert Chambers and Gordon Conway published in 1992. In their interpretation, a livelihood refers to individuals or groups striving to gain a living, attempting to meet their various consumption and economic necessities, coping with uncertainties, and responding to new opportunities (1992: 9-12). This actor-oriented perspective led to a keen interest in the world of lived human experience, and a micro-orientation became predominant, often focusing on the household (Johnston 1993). In these studies, attention was increasingly paid to household livelihood strategies as a means of capturing the behaviour of low-income people (de Haan & Zoomers 2005).

Household studies and, more specifically, the concept of household livelihood strategies, emphasize the active or even proactive role played by the poor in 'providing for their own sustenance despite their lack of access to services and to an adequate income' (Schmick 1984 cited in de Haan & Zoomers 2005: 28). Thus, poor people are shown to be able to adapt to or cope with changing circumstances and different types of crisis, such as market instability, famines, and droughts, by evolving or changing their livelihood strategies. Scoones (1998: 6) accordingly highlights how livelihood adaptation, vulnerability and resilience is closely connected to the ability of a livelihood 'to cope with and recover from stresses and shocks'. The idea that households have a veneer of free choice and a capacity to act in the face of change is hence heavily embedded in these studies. However, many have also shown that household decisions are often made within the 'confines of limiting structural con-

straints, although families nevertheless operate with a degree of relative autonomy' (Humphries 1982, quoted in de Haan & Zoomers 2005: 29).

The livelihood strategies analysis approach focuses, in other words, on many of the same issues as resilience, adaptation, and vulnerability to climate change studies. Like these studies, it emphasizes that human beings act in the face of positive or negative stimuli, but these acts are not strictly autonomous: they take place within hierarchical structures and are constrained by institutional, political, economic, and historical processes. In a study from Mexico, for example, Eakin (2005) illustrates how a focus on four livelihood strategies opens up for an exploration of how globalization, market liberalization, and climatic risk simultaneously structure the livelihood strategies embraced by local farmers. Eakin shows that economic uncertainty is more important for household decisions than environmental risk. Coulthard (2008) similarly investigates the adaptive capacity, vulnerability, and resilience of Indian fishermen through a focus on livelihood diversification, which is analyzed as a key adaptive strategy to environmental change at the household level, showing how caste and traditions along with climatic changes play a mayor role in livelihood decisions. In the Pacific, Reenberg et al. (2008) also deal with human-environmental interaction by exploring livelihood strategies, arguing that they provide a useful framework for analysing the link between humans and their biophysical environment. Again, climatic events are assessed in conjunction with wider political, economic, and historical issues, showing how all of these contexts play a part in household livelihood strategies decisions.

In all three studies, and in the analysis that follows, livelihood strategies are thus used as a means to explore what people do in the face of external stimuli. While connecting climate change to livelihood strategies remains difficult, the focus on livelihood strategies makes it possible to explore what people perceive as the driving forces behind these, and, in turn, to establish whether or not climate is one of these. In the following analysis based on ethnographic fieldwork I will focus on labour migration as a livelihood strategy aimed

at negating the negative impact of drought on rain-fed agriculture. Simultaneously, I will argue that the continued practice of this strategy is closely related to the need for young men to pay bride price.

Study area and methods

Biidi 2 was founded some 125 years ago by Fulbe herdsmen and is located approximately 14 km south-west of Gorom-Gorom, the provincial capital of Oudalan Province.[1] Oudalan belongs to the Sahel - ian zone of Burkina Faso, which receives around 400 mm of precipitation annually. Biidi 2 is surrounded by more or less continuous fields. The fields are mainly located on the pediplain and millet, sorghum, and cowpeas are grown (Rasmussen & Reenberg 1992; Reenberg & Paarup-Laursen 1997). The dune, on top of which the village is situated, is rimmed on its southern side by gardens. Agriculture, pastoralism, gardening, development project work, small-scale commerce, and labour migration constitute the economic mainstays of the village. Three ethnic groups live in Biidi 2: *Rimaiibe*, numbering 302 individuals, *Fulbe*, 167, and *Wahilbe*, 116 (as of January 2008). Of these, 246 are under the age of 15, constituting 42% of the total population. *Wahilbe*, who are blacksmiths, constitute a kind of professional 'caste', which separates them from the two other groups (see also Riesman 1977).

The data presented in this chapter come from six months of intensive fieldwork carried out between August 2007 and February 2008. Participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and focus group interviews were the main methods used. A household livelihood strategies analysis approach focusing on household composition, income sources, and material possessions was used in the study to explicitly explore household decisions and how they are related to broader contexts (Bebbington 1999; Eakin 2005). The fieldwork

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1. See Reenberg (chapter 7, this volume) for more details on the Sahel region and the village.

was hence designed to explore and assess how households in the village construct their subsistence and risk management strategies. In the semi-structured interviews and the focus group interviews respondents were asked to describe these strategies and the main changes (if any) to these over the past 50 years and to assess the main causes of these changes (if any). No indication of the focus on climate was presented for respondents at this stage in order to minimize biases in the answers. At the end of the interviews and the focus group discussions, the respondents were asked to assess their perception of climate change generally and the perceived impacts of climate change on chosen livelihood strategies, natural resources, and social aspects. When impacts were assessed as negative, the respondents were asked to explain their adaptive actions to reduce these impacts.

Besides exploring livelihood strategies, the fieldwork focused specifically on the socio-cultural consequences of livelihood diversification. Various questions were addressed, such as: what happens to life in the village when most of the young men migrate; what happens with the money earned on migration; and does migration change household structures and power relations? Often the data needed to answer these questions and explore sensitive topics such as changing marriage patterns and political issues were collected during informal conversations and observations of life in the village. Participating in a number of marriage negotiations, engagement parties, and marriages offered great insight into the practices surrounding these events and an arena in which to ask about marriage practices in the past. Similarly, observing how political decisions were made provided insight into the workings of political power and changes in this over time.

Analysis

Perceptions of climate change and variability

Drought in the Sahel is not a new phenomenon, and drought periods lasting one or two decades have been a persistent feature of this region over the past 500 years (Nicholson 1978; Rain 1999; Watts

1983; Webb 1995). Concern about climate and its impact on human populations in the Sahel was, however, an immediate response to the most recent of these drought periods commencing in the early 1970s (MaCann 1999). Averaged over thirty-year intervals, annual rainfall in the Sahel fell by between 20 and 30% between the 1930s and the 1950s and the three decades following the 1960s (Hulme 2001). This dramatic climate change caused a 'horrifying famine' and the 'death of several hundred thousand cattle' and provided the first evidence of a 'huge ecological crisis in the Sahel' (Raynaut 2001: 9). This change in rainfall had major consequences for the populations of the Sahel, who were already under stress from deteriorating political and economic conditions (Warren 1995).

No rainfall record exists for Biidi 2, but the meteorological station in Gorom-Gorom has collected monthly rainfall data since 1955. This dataset indicates a rainfall trend similar to the general development in the Sahel: the wet 1950s and 1960s were followed by a prolonged dry spell, lasting from the early 1970s until the 1990s, aggravated by major droughts in the early 1970s and early-mid-1980s. The high degree of interannual variability and an increasing trend in the yearly rainfall average since the mid-late 1990s have likewise been observed.

While rainfall in the Sahel is spatially highly differentiated even within small areas, people in Biidi 2 agree about the similarity between rainfall in Gorom-Gorom and Biidi 2. The 1950s and 1960s are uniformly cited as very wet and 'good years', whereas the 1970s and 1980s are cited as very dry and 'bad years'. The high interannual variability of the rain over the last 10 or so years has also been observed by the villagers, who often argue that 'the normal no longer exists; one year the rain is good, the next bad'. Moreover, the villagers perceive that a number of other negative climate trends have taken place over the last fifty years. The rainy season is perceived to be shorter now than in the 1950s and 1960s, with periods of more intensive rain often resulting in flooding or with long breaks resulting in drought. They also perceive it to have a larger number of 'false starts', which makes it very difficult to know when to sow. Temperatures during the cold as well as the hot season are said to have increased and both seasons to have become longer. The wind is perceived to have be-

come stronger, causing more wind erosion with the result that sand is filling up river beds and destroying crops. Degradation of the soil, the disappearance of wild fauna, plants, trees, and watering holes, and growing problems with pests are also mentioned by the villagers as consequences of the changed climate; all these aspects have made rain-fed agriculture difficult, and livelihood diversification increasingly important.

Diminishing importance of rain-fed agriculture

In the wet 1950s and 1960s, millet (the staple crop in the region) production 'was easy', as it was often expressed, because of 'good rains'. But the prolonged drought commencing in the early 1970s and lasting well into the 1980s, followed by interannual rainfall variability in the 1990s, made rain-fed agriculture extremely difficult and unreliable. Even in the best of years, the harvest today meets only between seven and nine months' requirement for food, and this only for the largest and most efficient households. In 2007 and 2008, for example, the household with the largest fields and the best access to labour only produced enough cereal to meet the household's needs for seven months and two months, respectively. The low yield combined with the intensive demand for labour (sowing, weeding and harvesting) has resulted in households giving up rain-fed agriculture altogether because 'it is simply not worth the effort', as I was often told.

The villagers, in particular the *Rimaiibe*, have responded to this situation by diversifying their livelihoods, and today off-farm livelihood strategies represent the mainstay of their income. It is difficult to assess the actual income generated by engaging in off-farm livelihood strategies, but most households earn enough money to buy food to last the whole year.[2] The money is mainly earned through development project work, gardening, and small-scale commerce,

2. Most households buy millet immediately after the harvest from more fertile regions of Burkina Faso and store it in granaries next to their huts. Well-off households often buy enough to donate to less fortunate households.

but it is circular labour migration - going away in the agricultural off-season to make money - that generates the most income.

Circular labour migration

Circular labour migration has a long history in Biidi 2. Migration in the 1950s and 1960s was mainly directed towards Ghana where 7 of the now elder men had gone either to fish on the coast or work in the large plantations. However, the drought in the beginning of the 1970s and its prolonged aftermath played a significant role in the increased labour migration seen in Biidi 2 and the rest of Sahel over the last 30-40 years (Hampshire 2006; Henry et al. 2004; Mortimore and Adams 2001; Rain 1999). Almost all young *Rimaïibe* men left to earn money, primarily for food, as the 'harvests failed and the cattle died' as it was often expressed, and labour migration mainly to Abidjan became very important for household survival 'because of the drought'.

The importance of circular labour migration has continued. Each year, after the agricultural activities have ended in November and December, a large proportion of mainly young *Rimaïibe* men leave. In December 2008, 10 youths between 15 and 25 years left, followed in the beginning of January by three more, for a total of 36% of this age group. Among the men aged between 25 and 35, seven out of 25 left, or 28%. And among the men older than 35 years, eight out of 50 left, or 16%. Two other *Rimaïibe* aged 24 and 28 were already in Abidjan, living in a small rented room. The value of this accommodation is closely related to its location near a marketplace where all the men from the village work loading and off-loading trucks and buses during the day. At night, they all work as private security guards. During this 24-hour working day, only interrupted by slow periods in the marketplace, during which they return to the room to sleep, the men earn between US$5 and US$30. The average amount the men bring home to the village after all expenses such as food and transport have been paid is between US$200 and US$300 for six months of work. A large proportion of this money is used to buy millet and other goods, but bride price is also an important motivation behind the circular labour migration.

Labour migration and bride price

Biidi 2 is made up of virilocal households. The women thus always live with the family of their husbands. As in most virilocal societies, the family of the woman is 'compensated' through a bride price. Prior to the 1970s, bride prices in Biidi 2 were always paid by the father or another older male relative of the young man (see also Riesman 1992: 76). The bride price depends, then as now, on a number of factors, such as how closely related to the young man the woman is, her ethnicity, her social standing, and how far away she lives, but it is normally around US$300.

Prior to the 1970s, the bride price was raised through the sale of millet and cattle, but due to the drought many of the fathers lost the means to pay.[3] Losing consecutive harvests and whole herds of cattle was a very common experience in Biidi 2 in the 1970s and early 1980s. The now older men and women often told stories about carcases of cattle lying along the roadside and fields devoid of any crops because the 'rain had stopped'. Such narratives were always followed by others stressing economic hardship, hunger, and large-scale migration. Abdoulaye, a now middle-aged man, explains:

> It used to be the father that had money. But when the rain stayed away the millet disappeared and the cattle died. Everything was gone due to drought and I remember that for many of us [young men] migrating, earning money to get married was almost as important as earning money to buy food.

Today, earning money to pay bride prices remains an important motivation behind labour migration. Like their fathers who left in the 1970s, the young men leaving in 2007/08 uniformly told me that labour migration provides them with more than just money for food,

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3. Only in two cases was I told that the father had paid part of the bride price in the years following the 1973-74 drought. The 1983-84 drought reinforced this trend and during the late 1980s and early 1990s I know of only three young men whose fathers partly paid. During the last 15 or so years this trend has continued. Only one young man in the village has during the last 5 years had his marriage completely paid by his father, while three more has had part of the bride price covered by their father.

a chance to get away from the boredom of village life, and a taste of adventure. 'Why am I leaving? Because I need money to get married', as Layya expressed it one afternoon.[4]

While Layya and the other young men in the village would not have had to shoulder this expense before the onset of drought, they never really complained. In fact, they seemed quite content with this new arrangement. The reasons behind this revolve around choice, the age at which they can get married, independence, and power.

Love marriages

Prior to the major drought in the early 1970s, marriage was not only paid for by the parents, particularly the father or uncle of the young man, but also arranged entirely by them. Children were either promised to each other at birth, or marriage was arranged during a prolonged process of gift giving known as 'asking'. During 'asking', presents were sent by the boy's parents to the parents of the girl. If these and the family of the boy were deemed suitable, a marriage was arranged by the parents and the final bride price settled upon.

None of the now older men and women who got married in the 1960s remembers having had any say in the matter of marriage. Walking home from a marriage in a neighbouring village with a group of older men, I was thus told that 'We did not choose. Our fathers did. We grew up knowing who we were to marry. We never questioned that'. This they contrasted to the situation in the village today: 'Now the young men choose their wife; or at least they have a say.'

Because daily life in the village is sharply demarcated according to gender, young people have very few opportunities to mingle socially. Love therefore develops during social occasions such as baptisms, religious ceremonies, engagement parties and weddings where the gender separation is less pronounced. Markets are also good

4. See Cleveland (1986; 1991), Francis (1995; 2002), Hampshere & Randall (1999), Hampshire (2006), Timaeus & Graham (1989), and Rain (1999: 207-214) for similar examples from across Africa.

places to meet as the young couple can disappear together in the crowds. When the relationship becomes serious the young couple may decide to get married. If the young man has the money he will approach his father and ask him to make contact with the uncle of the girl. At this time negotiations between father and son always takes place. The father, if he disagrees, might try to persuade his son not to marry the girl, and in some cases he might even succeed. If so, the young man will break of the relationship with the girl. This happened once during my fieldwork but the young man dismissed the situation telling me that 'he did not really love the girl anyway'. But in most cases the fathers agree. There are two major reasons for this. Either the father is content with his son's choice, or he has no say. With regard to the latter situation, the fathers unanimously mentioned their lack of power in the matter since 'my son pays the bride price'. The young men are equally blunt and I was often told that 'my father is not going to decide who I am going to marry when I am paying for it myself'. Such statements were nearly always followed by observations regarding arranged vis-à-vis 'love marriages'. Mamadou, a young man soon to be married to Fatimata, captures the opinion of many in the village when he told me that 'love marriages' last longer than arranged ones. The older men agree, and their relatively relaxed attitude towards losing the power to decide whom their sons are to marry is related to this as well as to the fact that they do not have the money.

I can't wait!

Another important reason why the young men are relatively positive about paying bride price is related to the age at which they can marry. Prior to the drought, bride price was paid by selling cattle or millet. This was not a fast way to raise cash and it often took the father years to save up for his son's wedding. Only a little millet and very few cattle could be spared for sale, and there was often more than just one son in the household. Thus before the early 1970s, the men in Biidi 2 were normally between 30 and 40 years of age before they got married. Today the money for bride price can be earned during three or four seasons in Abidjan. The young men typically

make their first trip when they are 18-20 years old, and consequently they can marry when in their early twenties, which all of them do.

In a very frank discussion with me and his two best friends, Moussa revealed how he planned to marry Digga soon and why he thought this was a good thing:

> I am off next year. On the truck to Abidjan. Imagine being more than thirty years old when you marry, or even older! It is a long time to wait for the girls. I like Digga now and would like to have a house where I could take her at night.

Moussa was 17 years old and clearly sexuality played a part in his desire to marry soon, but as Moussa continued his narrative, other factors were expressed:

> It is not just that! If I had a house, a wife, and a child I would be free to make decisions. I would make a garden, have a field, and claim the cattle my father and my future wife's father are looking after now. I would be a man.

Marriage, independence and political power

Getting married soon was important for Moussa for various reasons, but noticeably he associated marriage with independence and power. A man in Biidi 2 has a complex potpourri of traits, but crucial among these is being head of a household. A household consists of a man, his wife and their child/ren; thus in order to be head of a household, marriage is essential.

A newly established household gains access to part of the fields and garden belonging to the father of the male. Moreover, the young man and woman are given the offspring of the cattle that their grandparents gave to them when they were born and which was subsequently taken care of by their fathers. Money earned by working for development projects, participating in small-scale commerce, or through labour migration is furthermore often kept exclusively by the young men after marriage.

This status as an independent man in charge of his own household and resources is transferred to the political stage in the village. In order to have a political voice in the village, a man needs to be

head of his own household. When decisions are made regarding, for example, the village's participation in a development project, the male heads of households get together. While age and rank play an important role in the discussions, the final decision is often based on votes. Because the men now marry at an earlier age than their fathers and grandfathers, they become heads of households earlier. This means they enter the political sphere earlier than their fathers, giving them access to power earlier. Because the village population is growing (since 1995 there has been a growth rate of 3.3%) and the younger men marry earlier, the number of households in the village is expanding. In 1995 there were 43 households in Biidi 2 (Reenberg & Paarup-Laursen 1997); in 2008 this number had grown to 104. Of the 61 new households, 55 have young (<35 years of age) heads of household.

This development has shifted the political power base within the village downwards and the younger men now wield significant political power. This trend is obviously not bemoaned among the younger men, but the older men in the village are worried: 'The young men have too much of a say. How can they make good decisions? They do not know about life'. The young men dismiss this, and again labour migration plays a part:

> Know about life! What life? Life here in the village, or life outside the village? It is us [the young men] that speak French with the authorities; we have learned that while on migration. Migration has taught us how things are done today. We depend on the outside; the village is no longer enough.

Knowledge gained on migration has, in other words, given the young men a sense of subjective importance. 'We know about life in the city'; 'We know how to speak with white people', 'We know how to uses mobile phones'; 'We know what things should cost'; 'We are not cheated by traders from the South' were statements often heard when the young men were asked to contrast their knowledge with that of their parents and grandparents. These, in turn, largely accept this state of affairs. I was often told by older men and women that the young men 'speak the language of the outside world better than we do'. The older generations therefore let the younger men

negotiate with development projects organizers, cattle buyers, or official authorities, heightening the young men's sense of themselves and their importance and influence over life in the village.

To sum up, the young men's contentment with having to pay for their own marriage is related to love, sexuality, independence, knowledge, and power, and all the young men I spoke to mentioned these aspects as a good side effect of labour migration and, although always said with a smile, the drought.

Conclusion

Considering the growing need to understand how local communities around the world at risk from current and future climate change meet this challenge, focusing on how people adapt or cope with changing circumstances through livelihood strategies seems particularly relevant. While the livelihood strategies analysis approach often reveals how household or community adaptations to a changing environment are influenced by multiple external stimuli, focusing on actual observed livelihood strategies makes it possible to explore what local people perceive as the driving forces behind these. Understanding what people do and why, opens up, in turn, for an exploration of how, and if, such actions reduce or enhance vulnerability or resilience to external stimuli like climate change. In this vein, I have suggested that for resilience, adaptation, and vulnerability to climate change studies, analyzing livelihood strategies might contribute to an understanding of the drivers behind human actions and lived consequences of these.

Analyzing the intertwined trajectory in Biidi 2 of drought, diminishing agriculture, circular labour migration, bride price, and social change, the chapter has focused on social consequences of drought. It has illustrated how changing marriage patterns and power structures were triggered by the most recent of Sahelian droughts. The drought in the 1970s and 1980s, followed by climate variability in the 1990s and 2000s had a large impact on rain-fed agriculture in Biidi 2. Enough food could no longer be obtained through agriculture and the villagers responded by engaging in various livelihood diversification strategies. Of these, circular labour migration by the

younger men is the most efficient in terms of cash earnings. Consequently, a large proportion of young men migrates each year to earn money for food no longer available from the fields.

Right from the start the young men had, however, another incentive to migrate. Their fathers, who traditionally paid the bride price, had lost the means to do so. Bride prices were normally paid by selling millet and cattle, but the millet had withered away and the cattle died due to the drought. For many of the young men labour migration provided the opportunity to earn money for a bride price, and this remains a very important reason for the continued scale and importance of this strategy in the village.

Paying the bride price has resulted in a number of social changes for the young men. Arranged marriages have largely been replaced by 'love marriages', and marriage is entered into at an earlier age. This development has shifted power relations in the village toward the younger men. They now establish households earlier than their older male relatives, and political decisions are to a large extent based on votes cast by heads of households. Moreover, knowledge gained through migration is valued and the younger men use this knowledge to further cement their position. Consequently the young men often have a large say in political decisions.

How this development influences the village's vulnerability and resilience to future climate change is an open question. But considering growing evidence that future climate change will strongly affect the African continent and particularly the dryer regions (Adger et al. 2007), continued emphasis on off-farm livelihood diversifications is likely to remain necessary. As many of these, like circular labour migration, depend upon the ability to navigate in the world beyond the village, the skills the young men return home with will probably maintain a significant degree of importance. In this light, the growing power of the young men might not simply be a consequence of, but also an adaptation to current and future climate variability.

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