Preface

In 1986, I was hired by the Gambian field office of the U.S.-based nongovernmental organization Save the Children Federation (SCF) to join the staff of a rural development program operating on The Gambia's North Bank. When I arrived in June of that year, the rainy season was about to begin and the farming season was imminent. Given that my duties were to oversee the agency's "food production sector," I quickly settled into the small town of Kerewan, where the agency's field coordinators were posted, and began work. My initial project assignments were both connected in some way to SCF drought-relief programs. The first involved distributing inputs such as seed, fertilizer, and tools to men's and women's groups for use on community farms, and the second entailed digging irrigation wells for several groups of women market gardeners. Grain grown by the community groups provided short-term relief to needy families whose crops had failed, whereas the cash-crop vegetable gardens helped rural families fundamentally restructure their livelihood systems in response to drought-induced changes in North Bank growing conditions.

In theory, both of these projects encouraged cooperation at the village level through labor exchanges and other forms of mutual support. In practice, however, as I soon discovered, they sometimes served to heighten social tensions among different community groups. Group identity in Mandinka society is often determined on the basis of membership in age cohorts (Mandinka: *kafolu*). For certain community tasks,

however, all but the most junior age sets gather together along gender lines, and three main groups are established—the men's group, the women's group, and the youth group (a single group of unmarried young men and women). This division of labor formed the basis for most community development efforts organized by nongovernmental organization (NGOs) and state extension services in the 1980s, including one of the projects I helped initiate, a conflict-ridden effort to provide wells for a new women's market garden in the Upper Baddibu District community of Alkalikunda. In this project, four wells were to be dug by a team of semi-skilled male laborers who were Alkalikunda residents. The burden of the "community contribution" was to be shared by the women's and men's groups according to a formula that was quite typical of NGO-sponsored construction projects in The Gambia at the time: women were to provide sand and water, which were available locally and could be transported using headpans; and men were to provide gravel, which they had to collect with donkey carts from a gravel pit several kilometers away. Each of these components was mixed with cement to form concrete caissons used to line the wells.

While the first of the four wells was completed without a hitch, construction efforts on the remaining wells hit a stumbling block when the men's gravel contributions slowed to a trickle and finally stopped altogether. As the men explained, they saw no purpose in providing labor for a project that would benefit the women at the men's expense. Moreover, since members of the well-digging team were being paid for their efforts, the rest of the men felt it was unfair that they themselves should work for free. The slowdown was understandably frustrating for the women's group leaders, who were anxious to establish a garden nearer to the village than their traditional garden site several kilometers away. Construction of wells on the new site would give them a permanent supply of water and reduce the time spent in transit to and from their gardens. Thus, rather than allow the project to come to a halt, the women organized an effort to gather the gravel themselves, painstakingly toting individual headloads to the site until the wells were completed. This gravel collection task caused tensions to emerge among the women, however, and they carefully monitored each other to ensure that each person upheld her share of the additional labor burden. It also heightened the women's resentment toward the members of the men's group who had defaulted on their "community" commitments.

Several weeks into this stalemate, as I was meeting with the head of the men's group on an unrelated matter in his groundnut (peanut) field

several hundred meters outside town, we looked up to see a delegation from the women's group marching across the field toward us. When they reached us, the leader of the group issued a perfunctory greeting and launched immediately into the business at hand. She demanded to know whether it was true, as the men's group leader had evidently claimed, that I had *ordered* the women to thresh the millet the men's group had harvested from their communal farm. All eyes on me now, I repeated the question so as to make sure I understood it and turned to the men's group leader for some sort of explanation. When he would not meet my gaze, I explained that I had no idea what the women were talking about and that I would never commit the women to such a task without discussing it with them directly first. The women then triumphantly turned to the men's group leader and said, "We *told* you! You can forget about us *ever* threshing that millet now. Thresh it yourself, for all we care, because we'll *never* do it for you!" With that, they turned on their heels and marched back to town. When the women had gone, the men's group leader demanded to know why I had failed to cover for him in his effort to get women to thresh grain for his group. When I challenged him in turn to explain why he had lied to the women about my having ordered the women's cooperation, he had no further reply and could only shake his head in disbelief.

This passing exchange in the Alkalikunda groundnut field revealed several important dimensions of the social dynamics surrounding rural development efforts on the North Bank which gave me pause for reflection at the time and subsequently gave rise to the study I describe in this book. First, the confrontation established clearly that the way we had chosen to implement SCF's integrated community development model failed to take into account some of the complexity of community-level politics in The Gambia. Community groups were often thoroughly cooperative when working on SCF projects, but, as the Alkalikunda exchange illustrates, this cooperation could neither be taken for granted nor imposed on people. In general, men's and women's groups seemed to see less joint benefit in their respective projects than we had assumed. In some cases, it seemed that our project assistance served to aggravate social divisions at the community level rather than promote community cohesion.[1]

Second, it was quite clear from the discussion in the groundnut field that the different groups of Alkalikunda residents were attempting to manipulate me and, by implication, the rest of the SCF staff, for political and economic advantage. While I was a conduit for development aid

and had considerable leverage over local groups in connection with project activities, this episode confirms that I certainly held no monopoly on power. In this instance I was clearly being met at least halfway by project recipients in pursuit of their own goals. Moreover, women and men were equally involved in these political maneuvers. The implicit message was that no pattern of self-sacrificing behavior on the part of men or women could safely be assumed.

Finally, the Alkalikunda case gave me my first indication that women's garden projects were especially sensitive from the standpoint of intra-community relations. As it turned out, of the dozen women's garden projects I worked on over the course of my two years with SCF, virtually all were hampered in some way by conflicts between men and women. Most problems centered around the question of labor contributions to well-digging projects, but other difficulties surfaced as well. In one case, a male landholder would not allow the women's group to erect a permanent fence around their garden for fear of losing access to the site himself during the rainy season, when he used it to grow groundnuts and millet; in a second, the men's group selected a project site that most of the women in the garden group opposed (a fact that only came to light after several project wells had already been dug); in a third site in a community adjacent to the SCF project area, a delegation of men successfully lobbied the town chief to ban gardening altogether because they felt women were neglecting their domestic duties in favor of their vegetable plots (Schroeder and Watts 1991).

Part of the reason for these difficulties, I now realize in retrospect, had to do with the fact that many NGOs working in rural Gambia in the 1980s had prioritized women's projects over men's in response to the Women in Development (WID) mandate proclaimed by the United Nations (see chapter 1). While SCF's program, for example, was divided into several "sectors" (child / youth, social development, food production / water supply, health, and credit), each linked in some way to child survival and general community welfare, individual projects were often centered on women. The staff of SCF's social development sector had some of its greatest successes running numeracy / literacy training sessions for adult women. The health program produced dramatic reductions in infant and maternal mortality figures and significantly broadened the range of reproductive choices available to rural women. The agency's economic development sector ran a revolving credit program that provided numerous small loans to women while achieving nearly 100 percent repayment rates. And in terms of both levels of participa-

tion and favorable impact on rural livelihoods, my own work in the food production sector met with its greatest success through projects involving market gardens managed exclusively by women. In short, SCF's project coordinators often found working with women's groups more productive than working with men. Moreover, they saw work with women as being more central to the agency's mission of improving child welfare. Thus, in 1991, after several years of gradually refining the agency's focus, the country field office director concluded that SCF had become "primarily a women's program." As I hope to demonstrate in this book, the heavy concentration of NGO efforts in program areas favoring women during this period bred resentment on the part of many male residents of the communities the agencies served, and this gave rise to political ecological dynamics that had profound implications for the viability of both women's horticulture and the environmental stabilization projects that soon followed.

THE RESEARCH PROGRAM

The market garden sector received broad support from several different development agencies in The Gambia in the mid-1980s. NGOs, voluntary organizations, and mission groups were heavily invested in garden promotion, often in keeping with policies directed at promoting WID goals. At the same time, however, gardens were often disparaged by larger donors. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and what was then known as the European Economic Community (EEC), for example, had their sights set on expanding fresh fruit and vegetable exports to Europe. In the eyes of consultants hired by these agencies, the key to success in the horticultural sector was a group of large-scale commercial vegetable and fruit growers with farms located in the vicinity of Banjul. The primary objective for Gambian horticultural development was therefore the establishment of a "cold chain" to facilitate refrigerated storage of fresh produce and make exports more viable. By contrast, these same experts portrayed rural women's gardens as poorly managed and beset by marketing difficulties, a characterization that had considerable influence in restricting the Department of Agriculture's extension efforts on the women's behalf.

With such priorities in force, there was a paucity of even the most basic information pertaining to women's horticultural production. The broad scope of NGO and volunteer programs notwithstanding, only a handful of studies had been undertaken that explored in any substantive

way the systems of production gardeners had developed. Contrary to the impression left by development experts, women's gardens were often quite complex, involving dozens of different crops that met subsistence needs as well as market demand. While the successes of the rural market garden sector were geographically uneven, residents of many North Bank communities became heavily dependent on women's garden incomes. Yet the seasonal pattern, scope, and social significance of the income women earned from vegetable and fruit sales was largely ignored.

Filling these research gaps became the focus of a dissertation project I designed while completing requirements for a Ph.D. in Geography from the University of California–Berkeley. Formal fieldwork for the project was conducted in two phases in 1989 and 1991. I also made a postdoctoral research trip to The Gambia during the summer of 1995. My initial seven-week reconnaissance trip to the North Bank, in July and August 1989, included visits to 18 different communal garden sites and interviews with 127 individuals, including female vegetable farmers, male garden landholders, extension agents, government officials, and agricultural researchers. Scheduled during the seasonal rains, when women typically abandon irrigated gardening in favor of rain-fed rice production, this trip was an opportunity to observe the extent of vegetable production carried out during the off-season and thereby develop a keener sense of the scope of the garden boom and its impact on rural livelihoods. While brief, the visit confirmed several impressions I had formed of petty vegetable commodity production while working on a consulting contract in The Gambia in 1983, and during my two-year residence on the North Bank from 1986 to 1988.

First, I was able to establish clearly that the changes in garden practices dated from the early 1970s. This suggested that they were in some way part of a broad ecological shift that accompanied the gradual decline in rainfall in the region during this period. Second, I confirmed that women in many North Bank villages were in fact very actively engaged in gardening during the rainy season. Given that these activities took place at some cost to their rice-growing responsibilities, the emergence of rainy season gardening indicated the deepening intensification of garden practices. Third, I established that women's cash crop incomes from gardens were substantial and that they permitted women to take on a range of new social responsibilities, most notably a major share of the responsibility for supplementary grain purchases for their households. Finally, I discovered that the gardens had generated disputes—between men as husbands and landholders and women as wives and gardeners—

in several key domains: (1) gardens had become the center of an acute spatial conflict between competing uses of low-lying land resources involving vegetable, rice, and fruit cultivation and livestock grazing, each of which was gendered in very particular ways; (2) the intensification of horticultural production had generated a time-consuming labor regime that kept women away from home for long hours; this produced great resentment on the part of vegetable growers' husbands during the early stages of the garden boom because it cut into the time women allocated to their domestic routines; and (3) the incomes generated by gardeners had prompted considerable jealousy on the part of the women's husbands, both at the household level, where garden incomes frequently exceeded incomes male farmers earned from sales of groundnuts (peanuts), the country's main cash crop, and at the broader community level, where women's groups attracted a disproportionate share of attention from NGOs and other development agencies.

These preliminary findings helped shape the second phase of my research during a ten-month stay from February to November 1991. The principal site of this research was the town of Kerewan, the North Bank divisional headquarters, where I had resided previously during my employment with SCF. This was a site where women gardeners were extremely active but one where I had had no direct involvement in my professional capacity as SCF food production sector coordinator. (While SCF's project sites did not include Kerewan in the period 1986–1988, Kerewan had been incorporated into the agency's program area by the time I did my research in 1991.) I was thus able to build my research plans around a set of long-standing personal contacts with community residents who were friends and neighbors for two years prior to the research, without inviting a direct conflict of interest between my research objectives and my prior engagement on behalf of SCF.

Three systematic surveys consumed most of my time and energy during the first several months of the research. The first, carried out over an eight-week period from February to April, involved a demographic and economic census of 700 domestic units (Mandinka: *dabadaalu*) in 240 residential compounds *(kordaalu)*.[2] Among other findings, this exercise indicated that, in a community with 2,500 residents, roughly 540 women were active vegetable gardeners at the time of the survey. In a second major systematic effort, my research assistants and I selected a sample of 100 gardeners in order to gather yield and marketing data on a weekly basis for a four-month period extending from early February to mid-June.[3] The sample, which consisted of 19 percent of all women

gardening in Kerewan, included growers whose plots were located in seven of Kerewan's twelve major garden perimeters then in operation (several other fenced enclosures have been added since). Seventy of the town's *kordaalu* were represented, including three compounds in the top economic census category, fifty-two from the middle economic category, and fifteen from the bottom category, a distribution that was roughly representative of the town as a whole.[4] The women surveyed ranged from fifteen to well over sixty years of age. Twenty-four of the women selected were either unmarried or de facto heads of their own households, i.e., they were widows, their husbands were not co-resident, or they had assumed full financial responsibility for household finances due to their husbands' advanced age or infirmity. Seventy-six male groundnut growers who were married or otherwise financially linked (e.g., fathers) with these women were also surveyed to develop some sense of male income-earning capacity and provide a basis for the comparison of male and female cash-crop incomes. Comparative data were also generated for the Upper Niumi District village of Lameng (sometimes spelled "Lamin") and the Upper Baddibu District villages of Illiasa and Jumansari Baa. A third structured data collection exercise focused on production practices in the gardens. Each woman in the garden income sample[5] was asked to participate in a detailed survey on land tenure, well construction, tree planting, cropping strategies, garden techniques, labor allocation, assistance from male family members, marketing practices, and changes in consumption patterns due to increased garden incomes.

In addition to these approaches, semi-structured interviews were conducted with male landholders and women's garden group leaders on the history of site development, land and tree tenure practices, and the potential for further development programming in each of twelve garden perimeters. These sites, encompassing 19 hectares of land area,[6] 1,370 wells and nearly 4,000 trees, were each mapped, measured, and inventoried as a means of assessing the threat posed by tree crops to garden enterprises. Several disputes over production dynamics and market issues were documented via oral histories and consultation of written reports and archival records. These included a demonstration of several hundred women protesting threatened withdrawal of land use rights in 1984, a market boycott in 1989, the alleged theft of fencing materials by a landholder in 1990, and the displacement of an existing garden by a Norwegian-funded orchard project under way during the research period in 1991.

I also gathered documentary and oral history evidence pertaining to the horticultural policies and practices of state-sponsored and non-governmental organizations involved with horticultural projects. Some of this evidence was generated in formal interviews, and some in the context of over a dozen research briefings I gave to interested agencies. Near the end of the research, I also organized a day-long national workshop to debate my findings and the future of horticultural programming in The Gambia. This session was attended by representatives of the Gambian Government (Departments of Agricultural Research, Services and Planning; and the National Women's Bureau), large donors (United Nations Development Programme, United States Agency for International Development, European Development Fund, World Bank), non-governmental organizations (Save the Children Federation, Action Aid, Methodist Mission Agricultural Program), and voluntary agencies (U.S. Peace Corps, Voluntary Services Overseas [UK]) active in horticultural programming in The Gambia. It served the dual purpose of disseminating the results of the research and eliciting reactions to my findings. In addition to the groups formally represented at the national workshop (many of whom received their own individual briefings), I also provided verbal and written briefings and programmatic suggestions to representatives of the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization's (FAO) fertilizer project, researchers from the University of Wisconsin Land Tenure Center, and the Gambian-German Forestry Project.

Finally, in June and July of 1995, I made a seven-week followup visit to The Gambia to re-interview the market gardeners in my original research sample. I met with several development agents to discuss shifts that had occurred during the ensuing four years and physically inspected each of the garden sites to assess land use changes.

MALE GENDER RESEARCH(ERS)

The ways in which gender has been invoked in methodological discussions pertaining to social science research on development has changed substantially over the past twenty years. Feminist critics in the late 1970s and early 1980s highlighted the fact that most research on agriculture had up to that point been performed by men and that this gender imbalance within the research community (and the corresponding development bureaucracies) had rendered the economic contributions of women all but invisible. While acknowledging that some of these same blind spots persist in contemporary research practice, recent dis-

cussions have developed a more nuanced understanding of the concept of researcher identity and its implications for research interactions. Within the context of these discussions, scholars have been interested in exploring the theory and practice of "cross-gender" research. There have been several accounts, for example, written by female researchers of their attempts to "cross" gender boundaries and conduct ethnographic research among groups principally comprised of male research informants (e.g., Wolf 1996).[7] Most of these women stress that they were in some sense "honorary males." That is, their racial, class, or cultural status superseded their gender identities in the minds of their informants, and they were accordingly included in social situations from which other women in the societies they studied were typically barred. Thus, the assumption of a cross-gender identity gave women researchers access to data they would otherwise have been denied.

The research I present in this book was the product of a "crossing" in the "opposite" direction insofar as both my principal research assistant and I were men and our research subjects were mostly women (cf. Gregory 1984).[8] Like the women researchers who were treated as honorary males, my assistant and I were in general very warmly received by our female informants, and this reception warrants further explanation. In part, the fact that women granted us privileged access to information pertaining to their garden-based livelihoods can be explained by our individual and collective interpersonal skills and attitudes. I possessed reasonably strong Mandinka language skills and had already lived in the area for an extended period before I began the research. I was thus in a position to build the research on intimate personal relationships and had enough facility with the language to convey proper respect, communicate a full range of emotions (sadness, surprise, joy, anger, concern—the basic and ineluctable elements of empathy), and deploy a sense of humor. These kinds of connections were simply indispensable for accomplishing what we did. I also had the good sense to rely heavily on my assistant when seeking a compass to guide the research program. As a junior elder and local resident, my research assistant was old enough to have earned his peers' respect, and by virtue of a remarkably gentle disposition he was extremely well liked by people of all ages in his community. Many doors were open to us simply due to the force of his warm and easy-going personality.

We both worked hard at meeting an unspoken burden of proof through hundreds of hours of participant observation in the gardens, most notably in connection with the weekly collection of income data.

This approach is, of course, the very hallmark of intensive ethnographic research, and our efforts were thus not unique in this regard. It was in this connection, however, that our individual and collective identities may have mattered most. I was a well-educated white expatriate who had once worked for an NGO in the area, and my assistant was a member of one of the town's founding lineages, a forestry department employee and a small-scale landholder in his own right. The fact that either of us was interested enough to inquire about gardening at all when others before us had ridiculed or ignored the garden sector went a long way, I believe, toward winning acceptance for our efforts. Moreover, our privileged status meant that we might potentially make ourselves *useful* to the women. These are factors that seemed to play a role, for example, in the Alkalikunda case I recounted above. The women who felt wronged by the head of the men's group who attempted to use my authority against them resisted the temptation to jump to conclusions about my own role in the case. They could have easily assumed that I was abusing the privileges of my power and held a grudge, but instead they brought the matter to me directly. This underscores the fact that the group felt they had something to gain from their interactions with me and shows that, to a certain degree, our interactions were based on the assumption of mutual respect. I believe the research relationships my assistant and I developed in Kerewan were forged on a similar basis.

None of the foregoing should be construed to mean that I feel our gender status played no role in our research. To the contrary, the fact that both my assistant and I were male researchers studying gender relations with a primary focus on women in a rural and heavily Muslim community clearly constrained our choice of methods and limited the scope of the research project. In terms of the practicalities of the research, neither of us was able to interview any of our female research subjects at night. To do so would have invited suspicion of sexual impropriety. Moreover, as we initiated contacts with research subjects, explained the nature of our research, and ascertained their willingness and consent to participate in the study, we were also obliged to meet and discuss the project with the women's husbands, asking the men's permission to talk with their wives. In order to allay suspicion further, we conducted many interviews "publicly," i.e., in plain view on outdoor verandahs or with the doors to sitting rooms open. While the content of these public interviews was never of a very sensitive nature, women may nonetheless have felt constrained against speaking freely under these circumstances. As the research wore on and the novelty of my presence

wore off, opportunities for more confidential and potentially sensitive discussions regarding land use or marital politics emerged, and both my informants and I took advantage of them to exchange key information. Interviews conducted in the gardens (located a kilometer or more outside the town proper—see map 3) and away from family compounds were especially useful in this regard.

Ironically, the greatest resistance I encountered in making the status shift my project entailed actually came from my male research subjects. When I arrived in Kerewan for the principal phase of this research in late January 1991, women gardeners were about to begin harvesting the year's vegetable crop. This meant that my immediate priority was to choose a research sample and quickly embark on a yield and income survey. Thus, for several weeks, my research assistant and I virtually ignored the men in the community, and this bred resentment that resurfaced in later stages of the research when we made an explicit attempt to survey male farmers in the area. For example, I was told point blank by one man that my research would never "ripen" (Mandinka: *moo*), or come to fruition, because I was only talking to women and not to men. He argued—quite rightly—that I could not possibly compile a complete picture of the Mandinka agricultural system, much less learn the language properly, if I failed to incorporate men more directly in my research. I could only remain a *toubaab,* a Mandinka / Wolof term that refers to white foreigners in its most general sense, but also to educated elites of any racial or ethnic background who insist on maintaining their privileged status in their interactions with lower status groups. Here the nature of my "gender crossing" was invoked in a very different way. I was a male researcher, and this equated in my informant's mind to a particular affinity for the concerns of men in Mandinka society. When I failed to display evidence of that connection, and maintained instead a persistent focus on women farmers, this called into question the credibility of my research results.

In the latter stages of the research project, one of the husbands of the women in my principal research sample simply refused to be interviewed concerning his own agricultural practices. He complained churlishly that we had only been interested in talking to his wife for several months, and he was not about to begin cooperating with us at such a late date. In effect, with this complaint, this informant seemed to indicate that since I had chosen not to "cross" the racial / class / status divides to investigate male production systems early in my research, I would not now be allowed this crossing. In retrospect, I can also see how

my fairly exclusive early focus on the gardens mirrored the NGO focus on development projects favoring women. The resentment and occasional resistance men put up against my project is understandable in this light. Like the garden projects themselves, at a symbolic level, my research focus represented a loss of male power and prestige.

In sum, my gender identity was clearly extremely important to the outcome of my study, but in very particular ways. What seemed to matter most was precisely how I chose to act with each set of informants and how my male identity intersected with my race, class, and other status markers. Moreover, my gender identity was in some ways less an issue with women informants than I might have expected. If anything, it was more important in my interactions with men of all ages, who assessed my masculinity and the degree of affinity I demonstrated with their own decidedly "male" concerns, and sometimes found them wanting.

THE ARGUMENT

This book has two parts. The first focuses on the emergence of market gardening as a lucrative livelihood strategy for rural Mandinka women on The Gambia's North Bank, and the second outlines steps leading to the introduction of agroforestry practices by men on low-lying lands which eventually threatened the gardens through shade canopy closure, the dispossession of land rights, and the redirection of development benefits. The case study is thus centered on a conflict between two ostensibly "progressive" development objectives that emerged on the North Bank in the 1980s, one focused on gender equity and the other dedicated to environmental stability.

Chapter 1 opens with a brief description of the garden boom as it materialized in the North Bank community of Kerewan. After a review of a range of theories connecting gender, environment, and development, I argue that parallel naturalisms embedded in theories of material altruism and ecofeminism are mutually reinforcing. I maintain that these ideas merged in the 1980s and provided a powerful ideological rationale for designing development interventions to benefit women. The (re)gendering of development theory and practice coincided with a series of droughts that virtually spanned the African continent. The sudden influx of large sums of development capital generated to support drought relief, food security, and environmental initiatives dovetailed neatly with WID programs and provided the material basis for thousands of projects explicitly focused on women.

Chapter 2 shows how this pattern of gender-sensitive investments served to underwrite the boom in Gambian women's market gardening. After a brief introduction devoted to the history and ethnography of Mandinka agricultural practices on the North Bank, I review North Bank residents' interpretations of the origins of the garden boom. I show how these ideas were roughly split along gender lines, with women showing greater interest in production-related factors, such as climate change and donor contributions, and men emphasizing new consumption patterns growing out of the deepening commercialization of the North Bank economy.

Chapter 3 explores the intra-household budgetary implications of the emergence of a female cash-crop system. I provide data indicating that women's incomes from garden plots often outstripped their husbands' incomes from groundnut production and show how men and women responded to this unprecedented reversal of fortunes in the course of household-level budgetary negotiations. The upshot was a new conjugal contract that left women considerable social mobility and freed men from many of their family financial obligations. I argue that the effect of these negotiations on the garden boom was to exert unrelenting social and economic pressure on women to intensify vegetable production in order to continue securing cash for household needs.

Chapter 4 lays out the social relations of garden production that grew out of the household-level budget negotiations. I show how women carefully calibrated their garden-based production regimes so as to minimize the degree of social disruption their gardening endeavors entailed. Successfully meeting this goal meant forging secure market linkages, overcoming seasonally variable irrigation, crop protection, and disease problems, and carefully integrating domestic duties with garden work tasks.

Chapter 5 takes up the question of land tenure. I demonstrate how women gardeners were able to expand usufruct rights to garden plots to good success for the better part of a decade through tree planting, surreptitious land transfers, and strategic alliances with WID-oriented development agencies. These gains were threatened and in many cases reversed, however, as male landholders began to sense that their landholding rights were eroding. Working in concert with extension agents engaged in promotional efforts directed at agroforestry, several landholders in Kerewan began developing fruit orchards directly on top of the garden plots as a means of reclaiming the land resources in question and redirecting development aid toward personal economic objectives.

Chapter 6 traces the rationale for this rather abrupt shift in aid priorities to the emergence of a new discourse concerning connections between women and their environments. While several Gambian planning documents seemed to bear distinct marks of the influence of ecofeminist and feminist environmentalist thinking, the actual policies they espoused were inconsistent with critical gender perspectives. I describe how the ensuing changes in development practices affected several specific garden perimeters in the Kerewan area and attempt to explain the motivations of the various actors engaged in the resulting land use and labor disputes. I conclude by more precisely identifying the orchard projects as "successional" agroforestry systems premised on commodity production. I argue that such systems almost inevitably entail social and ecological contradictions that undermine many of the projects' best intentions.

Chapter 7 begins with discussion of a debate that has grown up around gender and environmental reforms that have been embraced by the World Bank and other major donors. While some analysts see these policy shifts as progressive developments, others condemn them as forms of co-optation. I underscore the highly ambiguous political character of many gender and environmental interventions undertaken by development agencies and highlight two directions for further research, the first centered on the donors' attempts to co-opt critical ideas, and the second directed at the need to sharpen critiques so as to ensure that they are not used against the very people they were intended to benefit. Finally, I note that women gardeners have made tremendous gains over the course of the past two decades in The Gambia. I argue that these gains should not obscure the fact that recent environmental interventions have worked to their disadvantage, however, and highlight the need to keep questions of power and justice central to any assessment of the political ecology of the market garden districts, particularly as they find expression in the control over female labor.

AUDIENCE

The book is intended for textbook and other scholarly use in the fields of critical human geography, gender studies, development studies, African studies, and forestry. It also speaks directly to the large community of development practitioners and activists interested in the intersection of program objectives relating to gender, the environment, and economic development. In geography, the study marks a contribution to the bur-

geoning field of political ecology (Blaikie and Brookfield 1987; Bryant 1992, 1997; Bryant and Bailey 1997; Peet and Watts 1996) and most particularly to the body of work centered on the critique of "globalized" environmental interventions; (*The Ecologist* 1993; Sachs 1993; Schroeder and Neumann 1995; Taylor and Buttel 1992). In Africa, this literature has centered on the twin problems of ecological dearth and diversity (Schroeder forthcoming). Whereas in many parts of the continent questions of protecting and preserving biodiversity are paramount (Adams and McShane 1992; Anderson and Grove 1987; Bonner 1993; IIED 1994; Neumann 1995, 1996), The Gambia is situated on the fringe of the Sahel, an area subject to periodic droughts and secular environmental degradation. The principal task facing Gambian natural resource managers has accordingly involved *producing* biodiversity through a program of environmental reconstruction (tree planting and soil and water conservation). Never a simple proposition (cf. Blaikie 1985; Blaikie and Brookfield 1987), this goal was especially difficult to achieve under the conditions of tight fiscal constraint prevailing in The Gambia in the 1980s and early 1990s. A key question faced by Gambian administrators, therefore, and one which infused the low-lying ecologies where Mandinka women's market gardens were located with political economic significance, was how the state and the various development agencies involved in natural resource management could mobilize the labor resources of rural peasants in the service of environmental restoration goals.

The fact that the state and development donors turned increasingly to women as a source of that labor in The Gambia connects the case to gender studies. There are three lines of inquiry that make this study a somewhat unique contribution to this field. First, the study provides a retrospective look at the impact of WID programs in The Gambia some fifteen to twenty years after they were implemented. The detailed historical perspective on WID interventions is itself somewhat unusual, as is the portion of the text devoted to an analysis of their impact on men, who rarely figure in analyses of the WID years. Second, the central narrative of the book describes the considerable success women market gardeners achieved in securing land rights and raising profits from vegetable sales in the face of considerable structural constraints. As I explain in greater detail below, the extensive literature on household relations in Africa (see reviews in Davison 1988; Guyer and Peters 1987; Hodgson and McCurdy forthcoming; Leach 1994; Moock 1986; Parpart 1989) reveals that virtually all social and economic decisions made at

the household level in Africa involve careful negotiation between men and women, often producing conflict. Few of these studies, however, depict women entering marital negotiations from positions of comparative economic strength, or show how they wield such political-economic leverage in relationships with men in different structural positions in their communities (but see Mikell 1997). Third, the image of relatively strong and resourceful Gambian women stands in particularly sharp contrast to the hapless victims of environmental decline who figure so prominently in much of the gender, environment, and development literature. This book makes a significant contribution to the gender and environment literature by showing how the debate over some ecofeminist claims that women possess "natural" connections to their environments (Agarwal 1992; Braidotti et al. 1994; Jackson 1993; Leach 1994; Leach et al. 1995; Plumwood 1993; Rocheleau et al. 1996) filtered through the "development apparatus" (Ferguson 1990) in the 1980s and took shape in particular forms of development interventions. Specifically, I demonstrate how the notion of women's "special" status as environmental managers was invoked to justify the use of their unpaid labor in agroforestry projects.

The succession of approaches to women and gender alluded to above speaks to a phenomenon that should be quite familiar to students of development studies, namely, the somewhat fickle nature of development interventions (Escobar 1995; Ferguson 1990; Leach and Mearns 1996; Peet and Watts 1996; Roe 1998; Sachs 1992). At every historical juncture, new development ideologies or sets of political economic circumstances have been invoked by development experts to justify shifts in the ebb and flow of development largesse. The Gambian case illustrates how the opportunities and constraints created by such shifts set in motion parallel moves by specific groups within local polities to reposition themselves and their livelihood strategies on the changed political-economic landscape. The particular pattern of shifts that took place in The Gambia in the 1980s and early 1990s was itself somewhat distinctive, insofar as both waves of intervention, the first focused on gender equity and the second on environmental stabilization, were developed in response to critiques of prevailing development practices by gender and environmental activists. The book highlights the peculiar political dilemmas that ensue when seemingly progressive critiques of development are effectively *co-opted* by donors, stripped of their critical political content, and redeployed to purposes that counter their original intentions.

Finally, the case study makes a compelling addition to the corpus of

studies devoted to the theory and practice of social forestry. In this regard, parallels to the vigorous debate among Indian scholars over connections between gender and forest management in the Chipko movement (Guha 1989; Rangan 1993, 1996; Shiva 1988), and the growing set of studies exploring the theory and practice of agroforestry (Bryant 1994; Cline-Cole 1997; Dove 1990; Fried forthcoming; Hecht et al. 1988; Leach 1994; Michon et al. forthcoming; Peluso 1992, 1996; Rocheleau 1988; Rocheleau and Ross 1995; Suryanata 1994; Thomas-Slayter and Rocheleau, 1995) are especially relevant. Regarding the latter, I establish a crucial distinction between multidimensional agroforestry systems designed to embrace a diverse array of livelihood strategies and successional systems meant to preserve the relatively powerful positions of tree cultivators against rival claimants.